

Typically, only men were permitted to join the Damascus textile guilds, though women did much of the cotton spinning, silk reeling, embroidery, and other finishing tasks. Many women lost their jobs when weavers began to use imported cotton yarns in the 1830s. In the 1870s, introduction of stocking-knitting and sewing machines, both outside the guild system, provided new sources of women's employment. Merchants provided women who worked at home with a machine on credit, and they repaid the loan from their wages. The system was ideal from the point of view of capital because it required no investment in a workshop, and female labor was cheap (Vatter 1995: 51–53).

Silk reeling and working women in Mount Lebanon

Women's work was also critical to the success of the Lebanese silk industry. Between 1840 and 1914 almost 200 mechanized silk-reeling factories, mostly owned by Lebanese Christians and perhaps fifteen Druze and Muslims, were established (Owen 1987). The first European-owned factories employed only men until 1858. By the early 1880s, 12,000 unmarried female workers, nearly a quarter of all women of working age, and 1,000 male supervisors were seasonally employed in mechanized silk reeling. The Maronite clerical hierarchy opposed the employment of women for ten years, but relented when women's wages became an essential part of family income. By the 1890s, male intermediaries no longer negotiated the terms of women's work; factory women began to deal directly with employers and retain control of their own wages. They also organized strikes to improve their appalling sweat-shop conditions: seventy to eighty women commonly worked ten to twelve hours a day in a 200-square-foot workshop with fifty fetid, steaming basins to unravel cocoons. Lebanese women's factory work transformed prevailing patriarchal social relations, but it was not generally perceived as liberating. Enhanced women's autonomy in factories coincided with a decline in silk prices, which increasingly drove Lebanese men to emigrate to the Americas seeking work. Young, married, working women were separated from their husbands for years, and single Christian women (no Druze until the 1920s) emigrated to find husbands because there were not enough eligible men at home. Factory work then, was part of a complex of social changes commonly perceived by women as undermining their economic and social well-being (Khater 1996).

Women's work in small workshops, households, and factories outside the guild system predominated in carpet knotting in Sivas, silk reeling in Bursa, tobacco sorting in Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica, cotton and wool spinning in Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, and Adana, and mohair weaving in Ankara. Expanded production of these commodities in the nineteenth

century and their ability to compete with imported European goods depended on paying low wages to young, unmarried, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women. Low wages were justified on the grounds that women's work was unskilled, temporary, and supplemental to the primary sources of family income. In fact, it was critical both in intensification of production using traditional methods and in early mechanized factories (Quataert 1991a; Quataert 1994b).

The uncertain formation of a “modern” working class

New transportation, communications, and urban utilities – the Suez Canal, railway and tramway lines, expanded port facilities in Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, Alexandria, and Beirut, telegraph and telephone lines, water supply and gas lighting – created new occupations and social relations while previous institutions and relations of production persisted. The largest employer in Egypt at the turn of the twentieth century was the Egyptian State Railways. Its 12,000 workers operated and maintained 1,700 miles of track in 1914 including the first railroad in the Middle East, the Cairo–Alexandria line constructed in 1852–54. The Cairo Tramway Company, established in 1894 by a private Belgian entrepreneur, Baron Edouard Empain, operated over 63 kilometers of track and employed over 2,000 workers in the early twentieth century. Collective action of the railway and Cairo tram workers became an integral part of the Egyptian national movement after 1907 (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 38, 49–82; Lockman 1994b). The construction and operation of the Suez Canal and the port of Salonica demonstrate the complex amalgam of old and new social structures, practices, and mentalities that formed an emergent “modern” working class.

The Suez Canal: labor relations in a site of “modernity”

The Suez Canal was the most significant project of its kind during the mid-Victorian boom. When Saʿid Pasha (1854–63) authorized Ferdinand de Lesseps to build the canal, he also agreed to provide an annual *corvée* of 20,000 Egyptian construction laborers. The peasant/workers received pitiful wages, labored under harsh conditions, and thousands died during the ten-year construction period (1859–69).

Even more incongruous with the modern image of the Suez Canal was the continuation of slavery on its banks. The southern terminus of the canal, Suez, was major entry point for East African slaves into Egypt. As late as 1873, slaves were used on coastal sailing ships operating out of Suez (Baer 1969c: 166).

Dockers, coalheavers, and other unskilled workers along the Suez Canal were typically landless upper Egyptian (Sa'idi) peasants recruited by labor contractors (*khawlis*). The *khawlis* sometimes kept their laborers in debt peonage by functioning as money lenders. They served as the intermediaries between the peasant/workers and the subcontractors (shaykhs) who dealt with the foreign-owned port service companies (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 25–27).

The coalheavers of Port Said, a city founded when construction of the Suez Canal began, exemplify the uncertain identities and contradictory practices of working classes in formation. By the 1880s there were many guilds in the city, including both workers in traditional crafts and several categories of workers in new port service occupations, including coalheavers. In April 1882, the coalheavers struck for higher wages. Baer considers this the sole example of “a class struggle [which] developed between the workers and their shaykhs who had become contractors.” In contrast, Zachary Lockman and I saw this strike as an early expression of modern, working-class collective action (Baer 1964: 136; Beinin & Lockman 1987: 27–31). Baer’s understanding of this incident proceeds from his definition of a guild as a group of urban workers headed by a shaykh. From the point of view of the government, the coalheavers were organized as a guild (Najm 1987: 77–80). On this basis, both Juan Cole and Ellis Goldberg accept Baer’s view (Cole 1993: 250, 317 fn. 52; Goldberg 1996: 171). This interpretation assumes that despite the novelty of nearly everything in Port Said, organizations called guilds and persons called shaykhs functioned as they had elsewhere a generation or more ago.

Lockman and I erred in suggesting that the significance of laborers engaging in a strike was similarly comparable across time and space. Coalheaving was a new occupation. The guild members were most probably Sa'idi peasants whose relations with their labor contractors and shaykhs were governed neither by the mutual obligations of guilds nor by the norms of “free” labor in a market economy. Reconsidering this issue, one of the few in Middle East labor history to have generated a scholarly debate, Lockman emphasized the persistence of the coalheavers’ peasant identities and the ambiguous import of their actions. His reassessment, with its hint of the future role of urban workers in nationalist politics, applies to a broad range of relations between workers and employers in new transport and service industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

For the coalheavers themselves, the 1882 strike did not signal the emergence of a new self-identification as workers that replaced older identities as peasants or Sa'idis, nor does there seem to have been any significant shift in the course of the following decade and a half. Similarly, for Egyptian and foreign contemporaries,

the 1882 strike did not signal the emergence on the social scene of a coherent and active working class. It was grasped as basically a local affair, one in which national politics may have played some part – it is likely that the coalheavers were emboldened to act by the fact that a sympathetic nationalist government was in power in Cairo – but not as a portent of things to come. (Lockman 1994c: 87)

The Jewish porters' guilds of Salonica

Port service workers in Salonica – the railhead of three railroads and along with Beirut the third busiest port in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Izmir – were also organized in guilds. The porters (*hamallar*) were overwhelmingly Jews organized in guilds based on place of work or commodity carried and often controlled by one or another large Jewish family. Each porter belonged to a non-hierarchical group (*taife*) which kept accounts and organized members' social life, which centered around sunset prayers and drinking *raki* at a pub after work each day. Wages were paid to a representative of the group who distributed each individual's share after deductions for charity and collective expenses, including drinks. Porters received sick benefits and funeral expenses from the guild. Sons had the right to replace their deceased fathers on the quay. A widow without sons could hire a permanent substitute who would be paid less than a full wage and keep the difference or sell her husband's right to work. To preserve their jobs, the porters' guilds attempted to block the modernization and expansion of the port, which was nonetheless completed around 1904. The power of the guilds was weakened in 1909 when the Salonica Quay Company agreed to allow trains onto the quay to load freight directly onto ships in the port. The porters who had previously carried goods from the train station to the port lost their jobs, though other categories of Jewish dockworkers continued to work at the port of Salonica for several more years (Quataert 1995: 59–61).

Mechanized industry and the industrial working classes

The development of industrial manufacturing was much less successful in the second half of the nineteenth century than transport and services. Little was left of Mehmed 'Ali's industrial program by the 1840s. The Ottoman central government embarked on a similar effort in the 1850s. About 5,000 workers including males, females, Christian orphans, and criminals convicted of misdemeanors were employed in state-owned armament and textile enterprises, most of which failed by the end of the decade (Clark 1974; Quataert 1994a: 899–900). Except for mechanized silk reeling in Mount Lebanon and Bursa and cotton ginning in Egypt,

there was a hiatus in the development of new industrial manufacturing projects until the 1870s. We know little about the continuities, if any, between the first state-sponsored industrial efforts and later enterprises, many involving European capital seeking investment opportunities abroad during the Great Depression.

Khedive Isma'il renewed state-sponsored industrialization in Egypt, establishing some forty state-owned enterprises by 1873. The most substantial were twenty-two sugar-crushing mills which processed cane grown on the royal estates in upper Egypt (Owen 1981a: 149–51). Only ten or eleven of the sugar-crushing mills survived the state bankruptcy in 1876. Together with a sugar refinery established at Hawamdiyya in 1881, they were eventually acquired by *La Société Générale des Sucreries et de la Raffinerie d'Egypte* – a private firm involving French, British, and local Egyptian-Jewish capital built on the ruins of the state-owned sugar industry (Beinin 1998c: 256–59). The state bankruptcy and the British occupation of 1882 shifted the initiative decisively to such multinational investment groups.

Along with modern transport, the cigarette industry was the center of gravity of the emergent Egyptian working class. Cairo's cigarette-rolling industry was established after European creditors imposed a reorganization of the Ottoman tobacco monopoly to secure revenues to repay the state debt, prompting several Greek entrepreneurs to move to Cairo. By the early twentieth century, five Greek firms controlled 80 percent of the export trade and employed some 2,200 workers. Perhaps another 2,000 were employed by others, including smaller Armenian and European firms who supplied the local market (Shechter 1999: 64–65). The elite hand rollers were primarily Greek, but included Armenians, Syrians, and Egyptians.

The least skilled workers, the tobacco sorters, were mostly Egyptian women. The 1907 census, the first to enumerate industrial workers, undercounted the number of cigarette workers and barely acknowledged the presence of women in the labor force. It enumerated 3,162 cigarette-factory workers including only 15 women (Egypt. Census Department 1909: 280). A French investigator observed twenty women working in only one of the thirty-seven factories (Vallet 1911: 95–96). Cigarette-rolling factories in Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir employed women as tobacco sorters (Quataert 1983: 18; Quataert 1995: 71). The same Greek families and production methods prevailed in Cairo. There is no reason to think that social norms in Egypt posed a greater barrier to women's factory employment.

The statistical error of the Egyptian census takers may reflect the ambivalence and uncertainty of state authorities about women working

for wages in the public sphere and how to categorize a new urban social group still largely identified with foreigners. The Greek cigarette workers formed the first union and organized the first recorded strikes in Cairo. Their struggles were initially not considered to be an Egyptian social phenomenon (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 49–54).

Around 1879, the first successful privately owned cotton-spinning mill was established in Salonica, which became the most important industrial center in the Ottoman Empire until it was annexed by Greece in 1913. Twenty thousand workers, mostly Jews, were employed in over thirty enterprises producing textiles, alcohol, soap, tiles, bricks, nails, furniture, and cigarettes; 5,000 workers were engaged in the transport sector. Three-quarters of the cotton-spinning mill workers were girls aged twelve to eighteen. A Jewish girl usually worked until she accumulated a dowry and married at age fifteen. Cigarette manufacturing was the largest industry in the Salonica region and employed 4,000–5,000 workers, including many women (Quataert 1995).

In Anatolia, the major concentrations of factory production were Istanbul, Izmir, and the Adana area. Many factory workers, including most of the 1,400 workers in the Istanbul cigarette factory, were female. By 1913 there were 36,000 workers in at least 214 factories, 92 percent of which were privately owned (Quataert 1994b: 3; Quataert 1994a: 902–04).

In the early twentieth century the urban labor force in the Middle East consisted of guild workers struggling to maintain their livelihoods and social status, peasants recruited by intermediaries to work in construction and transportation services, female factory workers who received lower wages than males and were subject to patriarchal gender relations at work and at home, and a small elite of skilled workers, often comprising foreigners or minorities, such as the Greek cigarette rollers of Cairo. Their radically different life experiences and mentalities did not prevent some of them from engaging in strikes and other forms of collective action commonly associated with a modern working class. While craft and community were the primary basis for mobilizing early collective actions, trade unionism, socialism, and nationalism were already on the scene.

Peasants and urban working people did not know they were in need of reform. Hence, during and after the Tanzimat era they had to be cajoled or coerced to accept the enhanced presence of the state in their lives in the form of new taxes, enumeration, and military conscription along with legal equality. Because the Tanzimat was a project of bureaucratic elites with little interest in democracy and minimal social links to working people, it is not surprising that subalterns resisted or evaded aspects of

the reforms that extended the reach of the Ottoman state, its European allies, and their administrative, economic, and cultural practices. The economic regimes and military expeditions of European powers became increasingly invasive in the course of the nineteenth century, culminating in outright colonial rule in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco by World War I. The enhanced European presence both continued and amplified the contest over attempts to impose European-style modernity on subaltern subjects begun by indigenous state builders such as Mehmed 'Ali Pasha, Amir Bashir II, and Sultan Mehmed II and the Tanzimat bureaucrats.

3 The rise of mass politics, 1908–1939

The accelerated global circulation of capital, commodities, people, and ideas induced by the mid-Victorian economic expansion persisted through the Great Depression of 1873–96 until the start of World War I. However, the confluence of the London-centered recession of 1906–08 and the inauguration of the era of mass politics marks a divide in the period for the purposes of this book. Through collective actions precipitated by the Young Turk uprising against Sultan Abdülhamid II on July 23, 1908, the June 1906 Dinshaway incident in Egypt, and the 1905–06 Constitutional Revolution in Iran, Middle Eastern workers and peasants established a more salient presence and discursive legitimacy in the world of politics than had previously been the case. These events, their repercussions, and their international context constituted new and sometimes competing, sometimes overlapping social categories of citizen, worker, farmer, and believer that hailed subalterns as modern, national, political subjects.

Resumption of direct capital investment and increased market demand in the 1890s integrated parts of the Middle East even more closely into the world capitalist market. European capital created new, large-scale enterprises with large concentrations of wage workers in transportation, urban services, and a few manufacturing industries and became more actively engaged in expropriating and reconfiguring the peasantry. Concurrently, many middle-strata urban professionals educated in a western style adopted European conceptions of modernity and progress encompassing science, technology, education, social reform, and cultural revival. This was a newly constituted status group termed the *effendiyya* in Egypt and the *mutanawwirun* (men of enlightenment) in greater Syria. Turkist intellectuals associated with the Young Turks played a similar cultural role. From these circles emerged the principal publicists for a political program of secularism, liberalism (in the classical British sense), nationalism, and moderate women's emancipation.

European capital became more engaged than ever before in Egypt after the British occupiers imposed political and fiscal stability. Much of the

Nile Delta was transformed into a vast plantation. Cotton expanded from 18 percent of the cultivated area in 1886/87 to 27 percent in 1904/05–1908/09 – twice the rate of growth of the total cultivated area. The proportion of lands held in estates of over 50 *faddans* rose from 42.5 percent in 1894 to 44.2 percent in 1913. Cotton and cotton seeds grew from 75 percent of total exports in 1880–84 to over 92 percent in 1910–13 (Owen 1981a: 217–19). Britain received the bulk of Egypt's cotton exports.

The collapse in the price of silver in relation to gold during the economic crisis of 1906–08 sharply reduced the value of the 1908 and 1909 Egyptian cotton crop; the harvest of 1909 was the poorest in a decade of declining yields. Adversely affected large landowners concluded that cotton monoculture and European domination of the market exposed them to unacceptable risk. Several became leaders of the new nationalist political parties. Nationalist programs following the 1911 Egyptian National Congress advocated economic diversification and industrial development.

Mount Lebanon was similarly transformed into a monocrop export economy. By the 1890s, nearly half of the cultivated land was planted with mulberry trees, and silk thread constituted half of the total value of Beirut's exports. About half of all Maronite families earned a living cultivating mulberry trees or reeling silk. France was the principal market and the main source of capital for the Lebanese silk industry. But the silk-reeling factories were operated primarily by local Christian entrepreneurs. Their profitability depended on cheap women's labor, low capital investment, and obsolete technology. These structural weaknesses led to technical stagnation and inability to compete with Japan and China. Production peaked in 1910, declined rapidly during World War I, and briefly revived in the 1920s before disappearing in the 1940s (Owen 1981a: 249–53; Owen 1987; Khater 1996).

The Public Debt Administration controlled as much as one-third of all Ottoman state revenues from 1881 to 1914. The Ottomans sought to loosen the grip of Anglo-French financial domination by granting a concession to build the Anatolian Railway to the Deutsche Bank in 1888. By establishing trading companies that imported and sold agricultural machinery on credit to farmers along the Anatolian Railway, especially in the cotton-growing plain of Çukurova (see chapter 2), the bank aspired to transform the economy of Anatolia, as British and French capital had transformed lower Egypt and Mount Lebanon. As a late entrant in the race for empire, German capital could not accomplish this objective in the few years before World War I.

Declining profitability of Lebanese silk after 1907 and unwillingness of peasant men to do “women’s work” for low wages in the silk-reeling factories were among the factors prompting the emigration of some 100,000 mainly Christian men to North and South America between 1884 and World War I (Khater 1996: 340). Perhaps as many as 100,000 more peasants from greater Syria emigrated to the Americas from the 1880s until the adoption of the US Immigration Act of 1921. Parallel processes led Iranian workers to migrate to Russia; their numbers peaked at 275,000 in 1913. About 10,000 Algerian Berbers legally sought work in France between 1906 and 1914; many more migrated illegally (Owen 1989: 33). During World War I, nearly 120,000 Algerians were recruited to work in French industry.

Middle Eastern integration into markets and modernity centered in Europe was advanced by further territorial conquests. Italy invaded the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911. On the flanks of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and Russia partitioned Iran into zones of influence in 1907, and France declared a protectorate over Morocco in 1912. The British protectorates established over Bahrain (1892), Kuwait (1899), and Qatar (1916) confirmed the Persian Gulf as a British lake. The Ottoman alliance with the Central Powers in World War I sharpened the discrepancy between nominal and actual sovereignty in Egypt. His Majesty’s Government resolved this anomaly by declaring Egypt a British protectorate in December 1914. After the war, European imperial rule was consummated by the establishment of mandates – colonial regimes supervised by the League of Nations – in several former Ottoman provinces. The British held mandates in Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine; the French in Syria and Lebanon. Related processes led to separation of most of the remaining Ottoman territories in the Balkans: Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908), Bulgaria (1909), Macedonia (1913), and Albania (1912).

From rabble to citizens of the nation

In the Ottoman lexicon “Turk” commonly meant a crude Anatolian Muslim peasant or nomad. Alternative positive connotations began to appear in the 1860s. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), Turkist intellectuals began to promote the language of Anatolian peasants as the ideal to be emulated and to acclaim them as the backbone of the Ottoman state, the heroes of the Turkish nation, and the guardians of Islam and the Anatolian homeland (Shaw & Shaw 1976–77: II, 263; Kushner 1977: 20–21, 54). Yusuf Akçura, the leading proponent of Turkism, considered peasants “the basic matter of the Turkish nation”

who deserved the greatest attention of the government (Ahmad 1983: 287). While he regarded the bourgeoisie as the "foundation of the modern state," Akçura considered the "Turkish people" to comprise small landowners or landless peasants, small artisans and merchants, and wage earners and workers (Berkes 1964: 425, 427).

Celebration of Anatolian Turkish peasants was linked to Marxist ideas and anti-imperialist struggle by the Russian-Jewish revolutionary Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus), an influential theorist and journalist of the Second International. From 1910 to 1914, Parvus lived in Istanbul and wrote regularly on economic topics in several Turkish periodicals. He contributed three articles on "The Peasants and the State" to the leading Turkist organ *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), edited by Yusuf Akçura. Parvus was well connected to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), though the extent of his direct political influence over the Young Turk regime is uncertain. Despite its pro-peasant rhetoric and the populist views of its minority elements, the CUP generally accommodated large landlords. However, the economic policies of the future Turkish republic owed something to Parvus (Berkes 1964: 335–37, 425; Zeman & Scharlau 1965: 128; Ahmad 1980: 336–37; Ahmad 1983: 288; Arai 1992: 110–40; Ahmad 1993: 41–43).

The early twentieth-century Egyptian nationalist *effendiyya* transformed their conception of the social contours of their political community even more definitively than late-Ottoman-era Turkists. Like the Ottomans, they first regarded peasants, the urban lower classes, and urban wage workers as the most backward and morally corrupt section of the people. One of them described the young women who worked in Cairo's cigarette-rolling factories as "the most wicked of girls in their behavior and the most reprehensible in their souls, the more so as it is said that a large number of them are illegally married to Greek boys" (Lockman 1994a: 167). To overcome the backwardness of the masses of poor Egyptians, the *effendiyya* sought to reform and uplift the lower orders. With proper education and discipline they would be reconstituted as workers and peasants fit for citizenship in the modern Egyptian nation. This pedagogical project enhanced the social power of the *effendiyya*, who saw themselves as the sector of Egyptian society best able to understand the European sources of modernity and nationalist political theory and to transmit them to the lower orders.

The vision of nationalist modernity embraced by the *effendiyya* spread to a mass audience for the first time during the anti-British upsurge following the Dinshaway incident in June 1906. Five British officers shooting pigeons in the Delta village of Dinshaway accidentally wounded the wife of the village prayer leader and set fire to a threshing floor. Outraged

peasants attacked the soldiers, wounding two of them. One subsequently died of sunstroke. A hastily convened military tribunal tried fifty-two peasants on the preposterous charge of premeditated murder. Thirty-two were convicted, four were hanged, and the rest were sentenced to flogging or prison. Nationalist writers denounced the verdict in the pages of *al-Liwa'* (The Standard) and other newspapers, hailing the peasants of Dinshaway as heroes of the Egyptian nation. Mahmud Tahir Haqqi's melodramatic, fictionalized reconstruction of the events featuring a peasant girl as the hero, *The Virgin of Dinshaway*, quickly became a best seller (Haqqi 1906; Haqqi 1986). Poetry and journalism about Dinshaway by the nationalist *effendiyya* integrated peasants and the urban lower classes into a new conception of the Egyptian nation (Lockman 1994a: 179–81). The popular anti-British mobilization prompted the editor of *al-Liwa'*, Mustafa Kamil, to form the Nationalist Party (al-Hizb al-Watani) in December 1907; the gradualist-nationalist People's Party (Hizb al-Umma) and its journal, *al-Farida* (The Newspaper), were founded several months earlier.

The leading intellectuals of the People's Party – Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Qasim Amin, Fathi Zaghlul, and 'Abd al-'Aziz Fahmi – were the sons of rich peasants or village headmen (*'umdas*) whose parents had realized the value of a European-style education. Their village origins allowed them to present themselves as authentic Egyptian peasants, unlike the Turco-Circassian elites. They were familiar enough with peasant life to speak to and for the peasantry, and their understanding of the representational politics of modernity and nationalism led them to believe that it was their right and duty to do so. They were also highly conscious of the superior status conferred by their landed property and modern educations.

Their sensibility and relationship with the peasantry are expressed in *Zaynab*, a novel of education and social reform written by Muhammad Husayn Haykal while he was studying law in Paris in 1910–11 (Haykal 1963; Haykal 1989). Its publication by *al-Farida* in 1914 marks Haykal's status as an *effendi* aspiring to national political leadership and gave *Zaynab* the imprimatur of the sector of the *effendiyya* most fully committed to secular, liberal nationalism. *Zaynab* criticizes the seclusion of women, arranged marriage, popular forms of Islam, and other "backward" village customs, and acclaims the liberatory power of western-style education. Hamid, the narrator and Haykal's alter ego, leaves his village to become a student in Cairo. Education allows him to observe and understand his village as both the peasants and the large landowner cannot. He contests the right of Sayyid Mahmud, the large landowner, to lead the peasants and by extension the nation because his

only concern was to sell the cotton at the highest price and rent out his land for the highest rate while exploiting the farm workers . . . It never occurred to the proprietor to extend a helping hand to them or to lift them up from their enslaved condition as if he did not realize that this working mass would be more efficient if their standard of living were improved. (Haykal 1963: 22–23)

Yet Hamid feels superior to the peasants, whose improvement he ostensibly seeks, commenting that migrant agricultural workers were “used to eternal bondage and submitted to its power without complaint” (Haykal 1963: 22). Even more revealing is Hamid’s self-reproach after a sexual encounter with an unnamed peasant girl: “How could I descend from the heights of the sky . . . to the level of people who do not think?” (Haykal 1963: 181).

Like *The Virgin of Dinshaway*, *Zaynab* exemplifies the social-romantic literary genre that lauds peasants as the quintessentially authentic Egyptians who must be lifted up by the educational work of the *effendiyya*. Other canonical works of this genre are Tawfiq al-Hakim’s *Return of the Spirit* and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi’s *Egyptian Earth* (al-Hakim 1938; al-Hakim 1989; al-Sharqawi 1990). Despite their iconic status in nationalist literary history, these novels contain few peasant voices. Like Hamid in *Zaynab*, the narrators are peasants who have left their villages to become students. This genre expresses both the centrality of peasants in the discourse of Egyptian nationalism and the success of the *effendiyya* in excluding actual peasant voices from that discourse.

The Syrian *mutanawwirun* also thought of themselves as the educators of the nation. Their writings and activities shaped an Arabist discourse and set the political agenda of the Arab government that ruled in Damascus from October 1918 to July 1920. The leading Arabist publicist, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, observed: “The great mass of the nation is composed of working people who dwell in villages and mountains, those who are breaking the soil and planting. It is to these that the educated must devote their zeal, to enlighten their hearts and advance their talents and intellectual abilities” (Gelvin 1998: 202).

One of these *mutanawwirun*, Shukri al-‘Asali – a member of a prominent Damascene family, district governor (*qa’immaqam*) of Nazareth, and subsequently a founder of the Arab Club of Damascus – established his political reputation by making defense of Palestinian peasants from the encroachments of Zionist settlers a major political issue well before a Palestinian nationalism was fully articulated. Ilyas Sursuq of Beirut acquired 230,000 *dunams* in Marj ibn ‘Amr (the Valley of Jezreel) from the Ottoman state in 1872. In 1910 he sold the lands of al-Fula (‘Afula) to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The peasants refused to vacate their plots, and al-‘Asali supported them by defying the order of the provincial

governor to deliver the title deed to the new owners. Al-ʿAsali published several anti-Zionist articles in the newspapers of Damascus, Haifa, and Beirut, linking the dispossession of the peasants with patriotic appeals. He even sent troops to drive off armed Zionist settlers who tried to occupy al-Fula. In January 1911, the governor intervened, expelled the peasants, and allowed the Zionist settlers to occupy the land. Al-ʿAsali's support of the peasants of al-Fula became the emblem of his campaign to represent Damascus in the Ottoman parliamentary by-election that month. He won the seat and became a leading parliamentary opponent of Zionism. Unfortunately, the existing accounts of these events do not present the voices of the peasants who were their subjects and whose interests were at their center (Mandel 1976: 106–07; Khalidi 1997: 106–09).

The discursive articulation of nations as legitimate political communities led nationalist intellectuals throughout the Middle East to revalorize peasants and workers as fully human subjects. “The masses are thereby endowed with a potential for agency: they become a constituency which can be mobilized by the nationalist movement, and their interests and demands can be subsumed within the national struggle” (Lockman 1994a: 181). Political interest, paucity of evidence, and the difficulty of unraveling multiple and contradictory popular consciousnesses foster a proclivity for nationalist intellectuals and historians to obscure the agency, interests, and demands of peasants and workers. The formation of new classes and political agendas was not solely due to the discursive work of the intelligentsia. In addition to the social structural factors at work, peasants and urban working people contested the political programs of intellectuals and legitimized their own social demands through their participation in nationalist movements (Gelvin 1998; Ahmad 1993; Ahmad 1995; Batatu 1978; Swedenburg 1995; Beinín & Lockman 1987). Popular conceptions of the boundaries of political communities, the collective interest, and the capacity to realize them were formed and reformed through experience in specific political and economic contexts.

Urban workers and the 1908 Young Turk Revolution

Local struggles over declining wages, loss of jobs, crop failures, food shortages, and high prices during 1906–08 formed the social context of the Young Turk Revolution of July 23, 1908 (Quataert 1983: 103–13; Quataert 1979; Karakışla 1992: 156). The revolution was initiated by the actions of units of the Macedonian army linked to the Salonica-based Committee of Union and Progress followed by an upsurge of popular collective action. Despite Sultan Abdülhamid II's “Declaration of Freedom”

restoring the 1876 constitution, he was deposed following a failed counter-revolution in April 1909. Thereafter, the CUP ruled indirectly through its influence on the government and directly after the coup d'état of January 1913.

Workers and urban crowds construed the Declaration of Freedom as a warrant to advance their economic and social demands and launched an unprecedented wave of strikes and demonstrations. There were some fifty recorded strikes in the Ottoman territories from 1872 until July 24, 1908. From July 24 to the end of the year there were 111 strikes concentrated in Istanbul (39), Salonica (31), and Izmir (13). As many as 100,000 of the 200,000–250,000 urban wage laborers throughout the empire went on strike during 1908. Most sought higher wages, overtime pay, or paid vacations to compensate them for the decline in real wages since 1903 and price increases of 20 to 30 percent in the two months following the revolution. The strikes were partially successful in this respect. Average daily wages in Anatolia rose 15 percent from 1905 to 1908; white-collar workers generally did better than blue-collar workers. Union recognition and an eight-hour day were also common demands (Karakışla 1992: 154–55, 159).

The incipient labor movement encompassed several different forms of struggle and organization. Strikes against foreign concessionary enterprises – the railways, the Istanbul Quay Company, and the Zonguldak coal mines operated by the Ereğli Company – were among the fiercest, most violent, and most successful. The foreign character of these enterprises inclined the CUP and the government to support the workers. But fear of social disorder led them to break strikes with bloody consequences at the coal mines, the Aydin Railway, and the Tobacco Régie factory in Samsun. Strikers at the Istanbul Tramway Company and the Anatolian Railway demanded the removal of foreign directors: an expression of anti-imperialist opposition to foreign capital, xenophobia, and naive personalization of grievances, or all three simultaneously.

The union of the Anatolian Railway workers founded in October 1907 was led by a Greek doctor, Arhangelos Gabriel, and represented predominantly Ottoman Christian, white-collar employees. They were the most insistent in demanding the removal of the Swiss director of the company during the September 1908 strike. Muslim laborers recruited from villages were more interested in higher wages. The least-skilled workers may not have been members of the union at all. These divisions allowed the Deutsche Bank and the government to split the workers and break the strike and the union, although both white-collar employees and laborers won wage increases (Quataert 1983: 71–93).

In contrast to the ethno-religious disunity of the railway workers, the

tobacco workers of Salonica and its environs were among the first to establish a class-conscious trade union in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution. Their organization of about 3,200 members included 2,000 Jews, 500 Greeks, 400 Turks, and 200 Bulgarians – a veritable proletarian international. The tobacco workers' union was the bulwark of the Socialist Workers' Federation founded in 1909 by Sephardi Jews and Bulgarians. It operated a workers' club and published a newspaper in Ladino, Bulgarian, Turkish, and Greek. Fourteen trade unions affiliated with the federation, enabling it to mobilize 7,000 workers for a May Day demonstration in 1911. The federation was the most important socialist organization in the Ottoman Empire until Salonica and Macedonia were annexed by Greece in 1913 (Velikov 1964: 31, 35–38; Harris 1967: 17–18; Dumont 1980: 384–88; Quataert 1995: 73–74).

The workers most effective in winning their demands under the new regime were not trade unionists, but the members of the porters' and lighter boatmen's guilds of Istanbul. Like the porters of Salonica, they had been struggling against the French-owned Istanbul Quay Company's plan to modernize the port and eliminate their jobs since 1894. They were virtually defeated after striking in June 1907. The government abandoned their cause and acceded to the demand of the company and the European powers to implement the port modernization in exchange for increasing the Ottoman customs rate from 8 to 11 percent. Forty-two porters seized the occasion of the 1908 revolution to reclaim their jobs, and the largely Jewish boatmen forced the company to use their lighters rather than its new floating docks to load and unload ships. The CUP supported the porters and the boatmen, though it forcefully suppressed a strike involving all the port workers on August 13, 1908. The porters and lighter boatmen retained their power on the docks of Istanbul until 1924, when the republican government dissolved their guilds (Quataert 1983: 95–120).

The government's exceptionally sympathetic treatment of the Istanbul port workers was partly due to discovering that they could help achieve its political objectives. On October 5, 1908 the Hapsburg Empire annexed Bosnia–Herzegovina, which had been autonomous since 1878. In response, crowds in Istanbul blocked entry to Austrian shops, initiating a commercial boycott that lasted until the end of February 1909, when the Ottoman government accepted an indemnity in exchange for recognizing the annexation. The main force behind the boycott was a coalition of the CUP and Young Turk supporters and port workers' guilds in Istanbul, Salonica, Trabzon, Tripoli, Beirut, and Jaffa. In Izmir, where foreign merchants predominated, the boycott was less popular. Muslim Turkish and Kurdish port workers used the boycott to secure their jobs at the expense

of Greeks and Armenians, who were less committed to the action. The Young Turks were prepared to ally with the porters' and boatmen's guilds because they served the government's interests and did not seem to pose the same threat as trade unions, with their foreign workers and new ideas (Quataert 1983: 121–45).

Striking workers who appealed to the CUP and the government to support their demands – the traditional stance of guild members towards the Ottoman state – were generally disappointed. The modern Young Turk regime considered strikes an infringement of public order. CUP members attempted, with some success, to mediate strikes and persuade workers to return to work, but the government did not hesitate to suppress strikes forcefully if that failed. The CUP responded to the strikes of September 1908 that paralyzed the Anatolian, Rumelia, Aydin, Oriental, and Beirut–Damascus–Hama railways by proposing a law banning strikes in public enterprises (Karakışla 1992; Quataert 1983: 113–18). The legislation enacted on October 10, 1908 slowed but did not break the strike wave. Moreover, despite strict government control over workers' associations, fifty-one trade unions and artisans associations were established in Istanbul alone from 1910 to the end of World War I (Ahmad 1995: 76).

Nationalism and an Egyptian working class

Unlike the Young Turks, Egyptian nationalists did not yet rule a state. This may explain why some of them were more willing to recognize and embrace the social power of urban wage workers. The Nationalist Party sought to organize and educate urban working people in ways comparable to the relationship of the People's Party with peasants. The champion of the pro-labor orientation of the Nationalist Party was Muhammad Farid, who became party leader after Mustafa Kamil's death. He maintained ties with Keir Hardie, leader of the British Independent Labor Party, and other European socialists and trade unionists.

In 1908 the party established a network of people's schools (*madaris al-sha'b*) where student party sympathizers instructed urban craftspeople and wage workers in literacy, arithmetic, hygiene, history, geography, religion, ethics, and, by extension, modern, national identity. At the four Cairo night schools, "the carpenter, the shoemaker, the stonecutter, were shoulder-by-shoulder with the cook, all seeking education" (al-Rafi'i 1961: 151). Commingling members of different guilds in the schools encouraged them to develop a new understanding of themselves as a working class and as citizens of the nation possessing inalienable rights.

The Nationalist Party used its base in the people's schools to form the

Manual Trades Workers' Union (MTWU – *Niqabat 'Ummal al-Sana'i al-Yadawiyya*) in 1909. Craft workers and proletarians, notably workers at the Egyptian State Railways, joined the MTWU. The combination of these elements is suggested in the name of the organization, which combines the usual modern Arabic term for workers (*'ummal*) and terminology suggesting manual craft work (*al-sana'i al-yadawiyya*). The MTWU was one of the first workers' organizations to use the word *niqaba*, which subsequently became the common term for trade union.

The distress caused by the 1906–08 economic crisis, the effects of which lasted until World War I, prompted workers at the Cairo Tramway Company and the workshops of the Egyptian State Railways to engage in well-publicized strikes. With a new understanding of the political potential of the lower classes in the aftermath of the Dinshaway incident, these actions were embraced by the nationalist movement (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 57–82). Workers at both enterprises protested against twelve-hour days, low pay, favoritism, arbitrary fines, promotions, and dismissals. They also complained that the foreign inspectors and managers beat and verbally abused them. The railway workshop workers struck in October 1910, and the tramway workers struck in October 1908 and again in July–August 1911 supported by the Nationalist Party. *Al-Liwa'* congratulated and exhorted the tramway workers after their second strike, writing:

Your cause is the cause not only of the tramway workers, but of all the workers in Egypt. Your strike coming after that of the [railway workshop] workers is proof that a new power has emerged in Egypt that cannot be ignored – the awakening of the power of the working class (*tabaqat al-'ummal*) in the countries of the East and their becoming conscious of their interests and rights and desire to be men like other men . . . Unite and strengthen yourselves and increase your numbers through combination and through unity with the European workers, your comrades; form unions and finance them to provide a large permanent fund from which you will benefit in time of need. (Quoted in al-Ghazzali 1968: 45–46)

The suppression of the Nationalist Party and the exile of Muhammad Farid in 1912 temporarily suspended the reciprocal relationship of the Egyptian nationalist and trade union movements. It resumed with greater intensity after World War I.

World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the end of the Ottoman Empire

The war years were catastrophic for working people. Martial law was proclaimed in both the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. Strikes and other forms of economic protest were suppressed. Peasants and their draft animals were conscripted. Over 1.5 million Egyptian peasants served in the Labor

Corps or the Camel Transport Corps; many were killed or wounded during the Gallipoli campaign or the battle for the Suez Canal (Schulze 1991: 185). Service was ostensibly voluntary, but village headmen used coercive methods to fill quotas they were given by British authorities (Lloyd 1933–34: I, 241–42). From 1914 to 1919 the cost-of-living index for basic foods rose from 100 to 239 in Cairo; in Istanbul the retail price index soared from 100 in 1914 to 1279 in 1923 (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 85; Shaw & Shaw 1976–77: II, 373). Replacement of food crops with cotton grown to take advantage of high prices due to military demands caused a food-supply crisis in Egypt in 1917. There was famine in greater Syria due to a series of natural disasters in 1914–16 and the Entente naval blockade; rationing was imposed in 1916. Poor nutrition and the breakdown of municipal services exposed the urban population to a series of epidemics (Gelvin 1998: 22–23). The deportation and annihilation of over a million Armenians in 1915–16 violently rent the social fabric of Anatolia. Banditry became a major problem by 1917.

The political framework of Ottoman sovereignty was destroyed by World War I. A new configuration of national states and Anglo-French imperial rule took its place. Two rival notable families of the Arabian Peninsula – the Hashemites of the Hijaz and the Al Sa‘uds of the Najd – allied with Britain against the Ottoman sultan. The correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Hashemite sharif of Mecca, Husayn ibn ‘Ali, during 1915–16 on the one hand and the treaty negotiated between the India Office and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Sa‘ud in 1915 on the other promised each of the Arab parties quasi-independent rule over much of the same territory at the end of the war. After capturing al-Hasa from the Ottomans in 1913, the Sa‘udis fought the pro-Ottoman Rashid tribe of the north central Arabian Peninsula during World War I, thus protecting the southwest flank of the British force that occupied Basra and Baghdad in 1917–18. The Arab army led by the Hashemite scion, Faysal ibn Husayn, and guided by T. E. Lawrence covered the eastern flank of the British expedition that conquered Palestine and occupied Damascus on October 1, 1918. French troops landed in Beirut in 1919, poised to occupy Lebanon and Syria in accord with the 1916 Sykes–Picot agreement that envisioned partitioning the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between France and Britain. Greece seized the opportunity of the Ottoman defeat to invade Anatolia with British, French, and American naval support in May 1919. Encouraged by misleading British and French promises and endorsement of the right of nations to self-determination by both Woodrow Wilson and V. I. Lenin, Arab, Zionist, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Kurdish nationalists claimed pieces of Ottoman territory.

The Russian revolutions of 1917 made socialism part of the global political lexicon. Iranians who had migrated to Russia in search of work learned something of socialism which was expressed in the short-lived Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran established in the northern province of Gilan in 1920 by an alliance of the newly formed Communist Party of Iran and the Jangalis – a guerrilla movement of small landowners led by a Muslim cleric (Abrahamian 1982: 111–12, 116). Turkish workers and students in Germany participated in the revolutionary uprising of the Spartakusbund in January 1919; the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey was founded in Berlin later that year (Ahmad 1993: 134). The first Iraqi Marxist, Husayn al-Rahhal, was also living in Berlin in 1919 and discussed the revolutionary uprising with his schoolmates, some of whose parents participated in the events (Batatu 1978: 390). The Communist Party of Egypt and its associated trade union federation, the Confédération Générale du Travail, were established in 1921, led by a Palestinian-born Russian Jew, Joseph Rosenthal. In the early 1920s the Confédération was the leading force in the Alexandria labor movement (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 137–54).

By the mid-1920s there were 100,000 Algerian migrant workers in France, living culturally and economically on the margin of French society. The communist-sponsored Union Intercoloniale convened a congress of North African workers in December 1924. This led to the establishment of North African Star (ENA – Etoile nord-africaine) – the first Algerian nationalist organization – in 1926. By 1928 it grew to 4,000 members; the leadership consisted primarily of communists or members of the communist-led trade union federation (Ruedy 1992: 136–38).

Russian Jews immigrating to Palestine after the 1903 Kishinev pogrom developed the theory and practice of labor Zionism (Shafir 1989; Lockman 1996). In 1909, settlers of this second wave of immigration (*'aliya*) founded the first kibbutz – the emblematic Zionist colonization and settlement institution. Labor Zionism was organizationally consolidated in the next wave of emigration with the establishment of the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel (Histadrut) in 1920.

Resistance to European plans to partition the Ottoman Empire and demands for political independence intersected with the economic grievances of peasants and urban working people which had been exacerbated by war. Nationalist movements, armed mobilizations, strikes, demonstrations, and newly formed socialist parties were part of the international popular upsurge inspired by the Russian Revolution. They were not, however, orchestrated by Moscow in the way that British and French imperial officials often suspected. The roles of workers and peasants in nationalist movements depended on local configurations of forces.

Resistance to the Greek invasion that culminated in the secular Turkish republic in 1923 regrouped elements of the Ottoman military and bureaucratic apparatus and infused them with the recently articulated Turkish secular nationalist ideology. Military victory legitimized this ideology and the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This and the substantial continuities between the Young Turk era and the republic made the new regime relatively independent of popular collective action. The friendly attitude of the Bolsheviks to Turkish nationalism led Atatürk to tolerate briefly the Communist Party of Turkey, established in 1920, and other radical forces that sought to extend the anti-Greek resistance into a rural social revolution.

At the end of World War I, political figures previously associated with the gradualist People's Party formed a delegation (Wafd) under the leadership of Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha and sought to place the demand for immediate Egyptian independence on the agenda of the Versailles peace conference. The Wafd leadership recognized the need to mobilize the lower classes in order to prevail over the British Empire's determination to maintain its occupation. Although its leaders were primarily large landowners, the Wafd adopted a populist image. Zaghlul proudly called himself a "son of the rabble" (*ibn al-dahma*).

In Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan the Hashemite family's ability to redeem the promises it received in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence depended on collaborating with the British. The Arab government established in Damascus by Faysal ibn Husayn during October 1918–July 1920 was wary of popular sentiment. After being ousted from Damascus by the French, Faysal was installed as king of Iraq, where he had no popular support. The demise of the Arab regime in Damascus led Palestinian nationalists to begin organizing independently, rather than as Arabs or southern Syrians.

Socialism and the formation of the Turkish republic

During the resistance to the Greek invasion of Anatolia a peasant guerrilla force known as the Green Army (Yeşil Ordu) formed in the Eskişehir region controlled by partisan units commanded by the communist leader, Nejat Ethem. Green Army officers advocated an amalgam of socialism, nationalism, and Islam. When Atatürk felt threatened by the Green Army, he engineered a split in the Communist Party, declared Ethem a traitor, and attacked the troops that remained loyal to him (Harris 1967: 67–89).

The military campaign against Greece coincided with an upsurge of working-class organizational activity, followed by a wave of strikes in the

second half of 1923. Students and munitions workers returning from study in Germany and influenced by Marxism formed the Turkish Workers' Association (Türkiye İşçi Derneği) in 1919; Greeks and Armenians formed a Union of International Workers (Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı) the same year. Building from a base among the Istanbul tramway workers, a General Workers' Federation of Turkey (Türkiye Umum Amele Birliği) with thirty-four constituent unions and 44,000 members was established in 1923 (Ahmad 1993: 134–37; Ahmad 1995: 79–86; Yavuz 1995: 102–03; Harris 1967: 39–41, 127). The Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party (Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası), the Istanbul transplant of the party formed in Berlin in 1919, adopted a more confrontational policy towards the republican government. In 1923, after the victory over Greece, it organized the first large May Day demonstration in Istanbul. The regime responded by dissolving the Union of International Workers and arresting socialist workers and intellectuals.

Atatürk was sufficiently cognizant of the contribution of urban workers to the national struggle and their potential as a social force to invite their representatives to the 1923 Izmir Economic Congress. Despite the regime's efforts to manipulate and coopt them, the "Workers' Group" articulated an independent program calling for an eight-hour day, a paid weekly day off, and an annual vacation after one year's service in an enterprise. It also asked that the 1909 anti-strike law be modified, that trade unions be recognized, and that May 1 be recognized as the holiday of Turkish workers. The Workers' Group sought public recognition of the emergence of a new social class by proposing that the term for worker be changed from *amele*, connoting general, unskilled physical labor, to *işçi*, the word commonly used in Turkish today.

Some of these demands were reiterated on May 1, 1924 in a demonstration in front of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara. The government reacted by arresting workers' leaders, closing pro-labor journals, and enacting a law making May 1 the Spring Festival. The General Workers' Federation of Turkey ceased activity due to political obstacles. Its successor, the Workers' Advancement Society (Amele Teali Cemiyeti), was less militant and operated within the confines allowed by the regime until it was banned in 1928.

The early Turkish socialist movement was composed primarily of intellectuals. A salient exception is Yaşar Nezihe, the daughter of an unemployed municipal worker. Despite her father's opposition, she learned to read and write. None of her three husbands supported her; she worked her entire life. Eventually she began publishing poems. Her ode celebrating May 1, 1923 appeared in the socialist weekly, *Aydınlık* (Light) (Ahmad 1993: 135–336; Ahmad 1995: 80–82). This excerpt from her

poem for May 1, 1924 shows that, although the Turkish working class was fragile and largely dispersed in small-scale enterprises, the ideals of the international socialist movement were beginning to be meaningful for some working people.

Oh workers! May Day is your day of freedom
 March forward, there's light [*Aydınlık*] to lead you.
 The workshops are silent as though the world sleeps.
 The exploiters shake, in fear.
 Today the Red Flag spreads its inspiration
 Opening the path to liberation tomorrow.
 Don't tire of demanding your just rights.
 The bourgeoisie always deceive with their lies.

...
 The greatest celebration will come only when you seize your rights.
 What a sweet thought is liberation from exploitation!
 Always be united and show your strength!
 Don't abandon unity if you want victory.
 You are no plaything in the patrons' [bosses'] hands.
 Raise your head and make them bow before you. (Ahmad 1995: 81)

All oppositional political activity was banned after the outbreak of the Kurdish rebellion led by Shaykh Said in February 1925. The left-wing press supported suppression of the rebellion because it was motivated primarily by opposition to secularism. Nonetheless, the left was banned along with conservatives inclined to support the rebels.

Peasant rebellion and labor upsurge in Egypt

British authorities refused to permit Sa'd Zaghlul and the Wafd to attend the Versailles peace conference. To demonstrate their popular mandate, nationalist students gathered signatures from workers, peasants, and the *effendiyya* on petitions authorizing Zaghlul and the Wafd to present Egypt's demand for independence. Nonetheless, Wafd leaders were surprised by the extent of the popular upheaval set off by the arrest and deportation of Zaghlul and his colleagues on March 8, 1919. Within days, demonstrations and strikes by workers, students, and lawyers broke out in Cairo and Alexandria.

Peasants joined the movement, and for two months the countryside was in revolt. Attacks on the railway system were the most prominent peasant challenge to British authority: sixty-three railroad stations were burned down and the line was damaged at over two hundred points. Ellis Goldberg proposes a rational-choice explanation for the peasant insurrection, arguing that it was motivated by food shortages and high food prices in rural areas due to requisitioning of supplies for the British army

and resentment over conscription of draft animals to the Camel Transport Corps and peasant men to the Labor Corps during World War I. Thus, attacks on the railroad line were a “rational” effort to keep food-stuffs and men in the countryside (Goldberg 1992b). These grievances are expressed in a popular song of the period.

Woe on us England
 Who has carried off the corn [wheat]
 Carried off the cattle
 Carried off the camels
 Carried off the children
 Leaving us only our bare lives
 For the love of Allah, now leave us alone! (McPherson 1985: 150,
 variant in Goldberg 1992b: 271)

Goldberg avoids the extravagant claims common among proponents of rational-choice theory. His attribution of peasant motives is more plausible than the view that the peasants were aroused by antipathy towards non-Muslims or xenophobia, or the claims of some British officials that the uprising was a Bolshevik plot (Safran 1961: 104–5; Vatikiotis 1980: 265). But rational choice does not explain many peasant actions directed against the institutions of rural power and social structure.

Peasants destroyed some one hundred villages, police stations, and large estates, including nearly every *‘izba* in Daqahliyya province. They robbed banks, wrecked irrigation works, and inundated fields. Reinhard Schulze argues that peasants in the major cotton-growing areas of the central and inner Delta – where *‘izbas* prevailed and 70 percent of the cultivated area was owned by large landowners – directly attacked the cotton economy and the *‘izba* system in an effort to restore their economic positions. Peasants and bedouin in other regions sought their own local objectives (Schulze 1991). Inequities of the rural social structure explain peasant attacks on the cotton-growing *‘izbas* of the Delta, but do not account for aspects of the revolt directed against British imperial rule.

Nathan Brown notes that many peasant attacks against railroads, telegraph lines, and government buildings were led by rural notables who had economic grievances similar to those of peasants and encouraged them to direct their anger at the British regime. During the war peasants evaded the demands of the British rulers to the extent they could – a common “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985). With the emergence of the Wafd, nationalist rural notables signaled to peasants that they were authorized to rebel against the British. Brown emphasizes that the 1919 events were a nationalist uprising, not simply economically motivated, minimizing the significance of radical peasant actions against landlords. While acknowledging the centrality of peasant actions in 1919, he concludes: “The role

of notables and local officials was critical in assuring peasants that they could act and even in selecting targets for them" (Brown 1990: 213).

Because peasants rarely leave records explaining their actions, Goldberg and Schulze must ultimately rely on functionalist explanations of peasant motives, while Brown directs our attention to the motives of rural notables. Goldberg's emphasis on rationality does not account for the full range of peasant collective actions. But his insistence that peasants responded reasonably to their experiences as they understood them is sound. Schulze emphasizes the intersection of rural class struggle and rural nationalism and suggests that peasants had more capacity for independent social and political thought than either Goldberg or Brown acknowledge. Some peasants very probably did feel aggrieved by disruption of the village moral economy due to the spread of cotton-growing *'izbas*, but their capacity to act was limited by the character of their leadership and the broader political context. Fear of the radical social potential of a sustained peasant revolt probably inhibited rural notables and the *effendiyya* from leading a peasant-based nationalist revolution like those in China, Mexico, Vietnam, or Algeria. Hence, the framework of the nationalist movement both enabled and limited the extent of peasant actions.

The peasant insurrection lasted about two months. Then the focal point of nationalist struggle returned to Cairo and Alexandria. Concurrently with the peasant uprising, a strike wave during March–April 1919 encompassed the Cairo, Heliopolis, and Alexandria tramways, the railway workshops and printing press, the Government Press, the arsenal, government workshops, the Helwan electric railway, the Cairo electric company, post office, port, lighthouse, customs employees, and taxi and carriage drivers. Wafdist lawyers installed themselves as counselors to trade unions and encouraged workers to strike and participate in urban demonstrations against the British. The initial wave of strikes following Zaghlul's arrest was followed by another in August 1919. By the end of the year dozens of new trade unions had been organized (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 83–120).

Until the 1930s, most wage workers in large-scale enterprises in Egypt were employed and supervised by foreigners or permanently resident Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Syrian Christians, and Jews (*mutamassirun*). Consequently, both workers and the general public commonly perceived strikes and economic demands made on such enterprises as part of the nationalist movement. Workers in large-scale urban enterprises comprised a highly concentrated mass relatively easily mobilized through their trade unions for nationalist political action. The economic demands of urban workers posed less of a threat to large landowners, who were prominent among the nationalist elites, than peasant demands. Conse-

quently, a strong reciprocal relationship between the nationalist movement and the trade union movement developed, and national and working-class identities became closely intertwined.

After failing to reach an agreement with the Wafd, in 1922 the British unilaterally declared Egyptian independence, subject to four reserved points. The close relationship between the labor movement and the national movement established by the events of 1919 rendered trade unions an important component of the Wafd's urban political base by the time the party first assumed office in January 1924. In March–April 1924 'Abd al-Rahman Fahmi Pasha, one of Zaghlul's lieutenants, organized a General Federation of Labor Unions in the Nile Valley under Wafd patronage, the first of many Wafd attempts to exercise tutelage over the trade union movement.

Muhammad Kamil Husayn, a lawyer identified with the Nationalist Party, was one of several non-Wafd *effendis* and workers who contested Wafd's role in the labor movement. He had emerged as a leader of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union during the strike of August 1919. In February 1924, misjudging the popularity of the new Wafd government, Husayn and several tramway workers attempted to organize a strike. They were arrested for violating public order and insulting the prime minister. Sa'd Zaghlul was unwilling to countenance anything that might discredit the Wafd government or his claim to lead the nation. The Wafd similarly smashed the Communist Party and the Confédération Générale du Travail after they organized a series of strikes and factory sit-ins in Alexandria in February–March 1924 (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 110, 113–15, 128–35).

The Wafd believed that the labor movement should be subordinated to the nationalist movement, of which it was the sole legitimate representative. Workers should join in strikes and demonstrations against the British and their Egyptian collaborators when authorized by the Wafd to do so. But they should submit to the Wafd's vision of an orderly, bourgeois, nationalist, modernity, as 'Abd al-Rahman Fahmi stated clearly.

We want the worker in his factory to be like a soldier on the field of battle. There is a time for work and a time for leisure. At work there should be devotion, diligence, and sacrifice, at leisure freedom and renewal. We want him properly behaved, moderate in his habits, sincere in his desires and relationships, pious in all situations, pure and clean in his actions. He should respect law and order and preserve peace and public security, meritorious in the eyes of men and rewarded by God. (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 161)

From 1930 to the middle of World War II the most prominent alternative to Wafd leadership in the trade union movement was Prince 'Abbas Halim, a cousin of King Fu'ad (r. 1917–36), who cultivated a populist

image as a manly, workers' prince. Nonetheless, the prince saw himself as a beneficent intercessor on behalf of his social inferiors, and like the Wafd, 'Abbas Halim saw the labor movement as an adjunct of the nationalist movement (al-Shantanawi 1935). He began his checkered career as a labor leader by collaborating with the Wafd to revive trade union organizations weakened by the repressive regime of Isma'il Sidqi Pasha (1930–33). The Wafd attempted to control the trade union federation led by 'Abbas Halim, provoking a split in 1935 that seriously weakened the labor movement.

As modern transport and industry expanded the ranks of urban wage laborers, the Wafd and its rivals used trade unions to mobilize an urban constituency. Workers, Wafdist *effendis*, and Prince 'Abbas Halim engaged in a complex tug of war in which each party attempted to use the others to establish its legitimacy and achieve its own ends. In the process, trade unions became a permanent fixture of urban life, the "labor question" was inscribed on the public political agenda, and the existence of a social collective designated as the working class was affirmed.

Peasants, Druze communalism, and Syrian nationalism

Because the popular classes of Damascus were not unanimously enthusiastic about Faysal's Arab government of 1918–20, the regime and the Arab Club sought to mobilize urban guilds to support the Arabist cause while preventing independent political action on their part. In May 1919 the Damascus municipality organized a demonstration of the guilds to welcome Faysal on his return from France. Each guild was directed to carry a banner with the slogan "Long Live Arab Independence" and to cheer "Long Live the Amir" as Faysal arrived. Police monitored the demonstration to ensure compliance. Representatives of over fifty guilds testified before the King–Crane Commission in favor of Syrian independence. But Christians of Aleppo complained that some of these guilds were fronts for the Arab Club and composed exclusively of Muslims, whereas many of the crafts they purported to represent included Christians and Jews (Gelvin 1998: 231–33).

When economic conditions deteriorated in late 1919 and early 1920, urban working people did not restrain their economic demands in solidarity with the Arab government. Railway and tramway workers, printers, glass and textile workers, electric company workers, and artisans launched a wave of strikes demanding higher wages. In February 1919, Aleppo natives attacked the Armenian refugee community, killing forty-eight and wounding two hundred. The motives for the riot included resentment over alleged preferential treatment accorded to the refugees

by the Arab government and its foreign allies and the unemployment, overcrowding, and economic competition resulting from the influx of refugees. One refugee camp alone contained 4,000 hand looms. In the spring of 1920 urban rioters in Hama and Aleppo demanded lower prices for bread and creation of a grain reserve (Gelvin 1998: 44–45).

Faysal's dependence on British good will and his own social conservatism led him to avoid embracing the anti-Ottoman rebellions of Druze and 'Alawite peasants that broke out towards the end of World War I (Hanna 1975–78: I, 268; Hanna 1990: 254–58). Moreover, these peasants' heterodox religious identities and the orientation of the 'Alawite region and much of northern Syria towards Anatolia rather than Damascus put these movements on the margin of Faysal's sense of Arab identity. Even had Faysal allied with them, he was unlikely to have averted defeat by French forces at the Battle of Maysalun in July 1920 and the imposition of the French mandate regime over Syria.

The Great Syrian Revolt of 1925–27 and the Moroccan Rif Rebellion of 1921–26 were the strongest challenges to French imperial rule between the two world wars. Both began as regional revolts, and that is primarily how the French authorities and historians who adopt their outlook understand them (Andréa 1937; Miller 1977). Contesting this imperial perspective, nationalist historians seamlessly integrate these revolts into the grand national narrative (Rabbath 1982; Hanna 1978: II, 94–95). These peasant-based insurrections did become part of the Moroccan and Syrian national movements, but in ways that elude both French imperial and uncritical nationalist understandings.

The Syrian Revolt was set off by the aggressive drive of the French governor of Jabal Druze to impose private-property relations on the traditional agrarian system (agricultural land was annually reapportioned, and the Druze shaykhs received one-third of the best lands) and to forcibly recruit peasants to work on road construction and other modernization projects. Moreover, the autonomy of Jabal Druze was undermined by the imposition of a French governor on the district in violation of the 1923 Franco-Druze treaty, which stipulated that a Druze would occupy the post (Khoury 1987: 152–67). The leader of the Druze revolt, Sultan al-'Atrash, had been in contact with nationalist figures in Damascus since 1916, but did not coordinate his actions with them in advance. The primary element in al-'Atrash's appeal to Druze peasants as he toured the villages to win support for the revolt was "saving the honor of the Druze community" (Batatu 1999: 116). He undoubtedly also sought to preserve his family's leading position in Jabal Druze.

After the revolt broke out, peasants of the Ghuta oasis on the outskirts of Damascus joined in, as did nationalist politicians and disaffected

lower-class elements in Damascus and Hama (Khoury 1987: 168–204). Nonetheless, the revolt was not an undivided expression of the national aspirations of the Syrian people. Sectional rivalries limited its extent largely to the south and Hama. In the Ghuta, small peasant proprietors enthusiastically supported the revolt, whereas landless peasants did not (Batatu 1999: 115). Thus, the 1925–27 revolt was not unambiguously national in character. Nationalists subsequently appropriated it for the cause. However, it did mark a change in the configuration of political communities. The Druze leaders who initiated the revolt embraced the nationalist political figures of Damascus, forging an alliance beyond their traditional ambit. The peasants of Jabal Druze and the Ghuta jointly bore the brunt of the French suppression of the revolt; this encouraged them to think they shared something in common. Through the revolt and subsequent opposition to French rule, a new Syrian political community was forged, even as the territorial boundaries of that community were imposed by France.

Shi'a peasant rebellion and the formation of Iraq

As in Syria, the working people and local elites of Iraq were not eager to embrace the Hashemite family and its Arab nationalist ambitions. At the end of World War I Britain occupied the former Ottoman provinces of Basra and Baghdad. It sought to establish a mandate regime including them and oil-rich Mosul, though the latter had been promised to France in the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement. Approval of this objective by the April 1920 San Remo Conference and the experience of direct British rule, taxation, and water-management practices that harmed the rice crop prompted a tribal rebellion from July to October 1920. Like the Great Syrian Revolt, this uprising was subsequently appropriated by Iraqi nationalists. But Iraqi nationalism barely existed when it erupted, and the borders of the future Iraqi state were still highly contested.

The revolt was led by large landowners of the shi'a Shamiyya tribe who claimed descent from the Prophet (*sadah*). They did not seek national independence, but “freedom to rule over their estates and peasants in the way to which they had been accustomed, that is, by and large as they pleased” (Batatu 1978: 174). Moreover, “the nationalists of this period were . . . ‘tribal nationalists,’ . . . numerically insignificant nationalists [attempted] to use the tribes for nationalist ends” (Batatu 1978: 119). The revolt drew the shi'a Arabs of the south closer to the sunni Arabs of central and northern Iraq. But Kurds and Assyrians living within the borders of the future Iraqi state were beyond the purview of the infant nationalist movement.

After defeating the tribal revolt, the British installed Faysal as king of Iraq in 1921. Faysal understood that his task was simultaneously to create an Iraqi nation and to keep it from threatening the imperial air route to India and British oil interests. More populist political figures had a different agenda. Ja'far Abu al-Timman, a shi'a merchant who had attempted to turn the 1920 revolt into a national movement, led the establishment of the National Party in 1922. It drew support from handicraft workers and small merchants of Baghdad. The government banned the party soon after its formation. Abu al-Timman went into exile until 1928, when he returned to reactivate the party.

The revived National Party initiated an Artisans' Association (Jam'iyyat Ashab al-Sina'a) in 1929 led by Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz, a mechanic who became Iraq's first labor leader. Its members included handicraft workers and merchants as well as workers in the Baghdad headquarters of the Iraqi Railways, the largest enterprise in the country. Like the Egyptian Manual Trades Workers' Union, the Artisans' Association combined aspects of a guild and a trade union and commingled working-class and nationalist identities and politics. It organized a fourteen-day general strike in July 1931 against new municipal taxes that mobilized country-wide opposition to the British-sponsored monarchy. The government responded by banning the association and arresting al-Qazzaz.

In 1932 al-Qazzaz founded the first Iraqi trade union federation, the Workers' Federation of Iraq. Like the Artisans' Association, the federation was broken after organizing a month-long boycott of the British-owned Baghdad Electric Light and Power Company in December 1933–January 1934. The government banned trade unions and arrested their leaders, and the labor movement suffered a decade of repression until it was revived under the leadership of the Communist Party of Iraq (Batatu 1978: 295–97; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1983: 147–49).

Islamic revivalism, peasant revolt, and Palestinian nationalism

Palestinian Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration, which enunciated the British policy of "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" was led mainly by urban notables, large landowners, and religious figures organized in the Arab Executive. They believed that dialogue with Britain would secure Arab interests in Palestine. Even al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, who became the most prominent elite nationalist leader, adopted this strategy and accepted appointments from the British Mandate authorities as grand mufti of Jerusalem and head of the Supreme Muslim Council.

Popular mobilization against Zionist colonization was inspired by Muslim religious sentiment as well as Arab and local Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian Muslims gathered annually for a week-long popular religious festival (Nabi Musa) and a pilgrimage to a mosque near Jericho believed to be the tomb of Moses. Arab nationalists sought to turn the April 1920 celebration into a demonstration of support for Faysal, recently crowned king of Syria. After hearing speeches supporting extension of Faysal's rule over Palestine, the crowd, including some Christians, marched through Jerusalem. A bomb of unknown provenance exploded as the procession passed the Jaffa Gate, and the crowd responded by attacking the Jews of the city.

The salient example of the fusion of religious and national sentiments is the conflict over dispute the Wailing Wall/al-Buraq in Jerusalem. In August 1929, intensified by right-wing Zionist provocations, a dispute over Muslim and Jewish rights at the site erupted into countrywide Arab riots and attacks on Jews and the British. Amin al-Husayni at first tried to restrain the violence. Ultimately, he was propelled into national leadership by this outburst of popular rage (Mattar 1988: 33–49).

A British investigation concluded that dispossession of Arab peasants as a result of Zionist land purchases was a major factor underlying the violence. The 1930 Passfield White Paper advocated sharp restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald repudiated these recommendations in a February 1931 letter to Chaim Weizmann, which was denounced by Arabs as the "Black Letter."

The Black Letter and sharply increased Jewish immigration after Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933 radicalized Palestinian Arab sentiment. The ineffectiveness of elite nationalist leaders, some of whom had actually sold lands to the Zionist institutions, and the increasing economic distress of the peasantry widened the cleavage between the elites and the peasant majority (Stein 1984: 229–39; Khalidi 1987). Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam addressed the frustrations and anger of the popular classes: peasant tenants distressed by high rents, falling commodity prices, heavy debts, and the possibility of losing their livelihoods altogether should their lands be sold to the Jewish National Fund; seasonal migrants seeking industrial work; and permanent workers fearing loss of their jobs because of the labor Zionist policy of imposing exclusively Hebrew labor (*'avodah ivrit*) on employers whenever they could (Meswari-Gualt 1991: 16–42).

A graduate of al-Azhar and an adherent of conservative-populist Islamic revivalism, al-Qassam participated in armed resistance to the imposition of French rule over Syria and then fled to Haifa in 1921. In the

Istiqlal mosque, established to serve the needs of Haifa's growing number of industrial and port workers, al-Qassam preached against the political impotence and factional rivalries of the nationalist elites. He amplified his message by organizing literacy classes after prayers and circulating in villages around Haifa in the course of his duties as a marriage registrar. As early as 1925, he began recruiting workers and peasants to become fighters (*mujahidun*) in a militant movement of resistance to British rule and Zionist settlement. In opposition to the moderation of al-Husayni and other elite nationalist leaders, al-Qassam called on "the bootblack to exchange his shoebrush for a revolver and to shoot the Englishmen rather than polish their shoes" (Kimmerling & Migdal 1993: 62).

In November 1935 he led a band of followers to the hills near Jenin. They planned to begin guerrilla warfare against the British and inspire a peasant uprising. Within a week British forces discovered and attacked the group, killing al-Qassam in combat. His death debilitated the movement, though surviving Qassamites continued political and military action. The shaykh's status as a nationalist symbol was secured by the participation of thousands of workers and peasants in his funeral procession.

'Izz al-Din al-Qassam's movement was the harbinger of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39. The revolt was ignited on April 15, 1936 when three Qassamites seeking to commit a robbery to raise money for the movement ambushed a caravan of cars and killed two Jews in the attack (Farah 1991: 77). Zionist militias retaliated by killing two Arabs. Further beatings and killings sparked Arab protests throughout the country. Nationalist committees comprising Qassamites and other radical forces formed in several towns and, adopting a tactic used earlier in the year by the Syrians, proclaimed a general strike. Seeking to put themselves at the head of this popular upsurge, on April 25 elite nationalists formed the Arab Higher Committee and endorsed the strike (Mattar 1988: 69–70). Arab port workers of Jaffa, the Vehicle Owners' and Drivers' Association led by Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani, and other Arab workers who had previously cooperated with the Histadrut participated actively in the strike (Lockman 1996: 240–41). Peasant guerrilla bands, several led by Qassamites, began operating in the Galilee and the hill country of what is today called the West Bank in May. The general strike ended on October 12, 1936 after Arab rulers promised to intercede with "our friend Great Britain, who has declared that she will do justice" (Mattar 1988: 80). Not coincidentally, the strike was halted before the orange harvest season began, preserving the incomes of Palestinian Arab citrus growers. The elite nationalists failed to provide countrywide coordination and leadership for the revolt; many virtually abandoned the movement after the initial upsurge.

In response to a British proposal to partition Palestine, the banning of the Arab Higher Committee, and the removal of Amin al-Husayni from his religious offices, peasants in the hill country resumed armed struggle in the fall of 1937. In its last phase, in addition to its anti-British and anti-Zionist aspects, the revolt had a strong anti-landlord and anti-elite character. Peasant rebels imposed a moratorium on all debts, canceled rents on all urban apartments, and seized the property of wealthy urbanites who had fled and sold it at a mock public auction for nominal prices, leading the British high commissioner to conclude that "something like a social revolution on a small scale is beginning" (Porath 1977: 269). On August 26, 1938, when the peasant movement was at its height and had gained control over several towns, rebel leaders decreed that all Palestinian women should wear headscarves and men should adopt peasant headgear: the *kufiyya* (or *hatta*) and *igal*. This allowed peasant rebels to circulate in towns without being easily identified and captured. It also humbled the urban middle and elite classes who had to abandon the fez (*tarbush*), which had become a symbol of modernity, education, and *effendi* status. The social conflict signified by the imposition of peasant headgear is expressed in a ditty of the Nazareth *kufiyya*-sellers (Swedenburg 1995: 30–37):

Hatta, hatta for ten *qurush* [piasters]
Damn the father of whoever wears a *tarbush*

Class was not the only social cleavage to be exacerbated in the latter stages of the revolt. Tensions among Muslims, Christians, and Druze also sharpened (Swedenburg 1995: 91–94; Porath 1977 269–73). Muslim-Christian unity was restored. But the murder of twenty Druze shaykhs of Shafa 'Amr by a rebel commander and rebel attacks on the Druze villages of Mount Carmel, which had cooperative relations with the Zionist Haifa Labor Council, led most Druze to withdraw from the Palestinian national movement and to collaborate with the Zionists in 1948 and beyond.

The Arab Revolt was suppressed by the combined force of some 25,000 British soldiers, 3,000 Jewish "Colony Police," and special night squads comprising labor Zionist militia (Haganah) members trained in commando operations by Captain Orde Wingate. With the banning of the Arab Higher Committee by the mandate authorities, the elite nationalist leadership was defeated and disoriented. Amin al-Husayni fled the country and did not return until 1949, when he briefly headed the All Palestine Government based in the Gaza Strip. The general strike allowed Hebrew labor to enter sectors of the economy previously dominated by Arabs. The special night squads became the core of the future elite unit of

the Zionist armed forces (Palmah). These developments prepared the way for the Zionist victory in 1948.

The events described above and their meaning have been fiercely debated. Most Palestinian and Arab narratives assume the nationalist character of the Qassamite uprising and the Arab Revolt but de-emphasize al-Qassam's Islamic revivalist teachings, the role of peasants, their conflicts with landowning elites, and tensions with the Druze ('Allush 1978; Kayyali 1978; al-Hut 1981). Left nationalist accounts acknowledge that peasants were the main force in the revolt and criticize the timidity of the elite leaders but cast doubt on the capacity of peasants to organize and initiate political and military action independently of urban elites (Kanafani 1972; Farah 1991). In nationalist discourse, the elites or the infant left are the representatives of modernity and the nation who were unable to overcome the traditionalism and backwardness of the peasants.

Standard Zionist accounts deny the national and radical social content of the Qassamite movement and the Arab Revolt and describe the peasant rebels as gangs of bandits, rioters, or terrorists (Elpeleg 1978; Arnon-Ohanna 1982; Lachman 1982). Yehoshua Porath, author of a standard history of the Arab Revolt, has a more positive view of peasants. Nonetheless, he regards their prominence as one of the causes of the failure of the revolt and criticizes them and the entire Palestinian nationalist movement for failing to adopt the same vanguardist practices as Zionism: "If one considers the broader aspects of this abortive attempt at a revolution, one finds a confirmation of the basic tenets of Leninism: there is no revolutionary action without revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary party" (Porath 1977: 269).

More critical Israeli historians, who have become prominent since the late 1970s, acknowledge the national and social character of the Arab Revolt. Meira Meswari-Gualt argues that peasants were part of the nationalist movement, but participated on terms derived from their understandings of their own experiences.

Peasants joined the national revolt only when it suited them, i.e. in May and June [1936] after the harvest, and they chose to participate only in methods that were appropriate to their own motives and way of life . . . An armed attack was . . . suitable for peasants because they could involve themselves in it between harvesting and planting and because they already had a long tradition of rural resistance either as bandits or guerrillas . . . they were [not] completely devoid of nationalist ideology . . . their nationalism was not based solely on the modern secular ideology of the upper classes . . . Palestinian peasant nationalism during this period was based on their economic experience in the villages and towns, experience made bitter by their own landlords, the British government, and Zionist colonialism. The ideology of Islam[ic] populism brought to them by preachers like . . . al-Qassam rang familiar and comfortable. (Meswari-Gualt 1991: 58–59)

This explanation rectifies the marginalization of peasants in Palestinian Arab and Zionist nationalist histories but gives too much coherence and clarity of purpose to peasant actions. To avoid this pitfall, Ted Swedenburg adopts Gyatri Spivak's dictum that "if the story of the rise of nationalist resistance to imperialism is to be disclosed coherently, it is the role of the indigenous subaltern that must be strategically excluded" (Spivak 1987: 245, quoted in Swedenburg 1995: 18). Swedenburg elucidates the social conflicts and subaltern voices intimated by the incoherent and contested memories of the Arab Revolt refracted by subsequent historical events without attempting to reconstruct a "true" past. He explores both the central role of peasants and conflicts among the religious communities, instances of Arab collaboration with the Zionists, and internecine violence in the Arab Revolt that marked the revolt as it unfolded. Actions of this sort are inevitable in mass social movements because subalterns do not discipline their behavior with respect to elite norms. But Swedenburg does not consistently uphold Spivak's injunction. Ultimately, he quite reasonably maintains that the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 was an expression of the Palestinian nationalist movement and that armed actions of peasants were a central component of the revolt. Although Swedenburg's primary purpose is ethnographic investigation of memory and not comprehensive historical reconstruction, his effort demonstrates the possibility and value of writing histories of workers and peasants into national narratives while exercising care not to conflate the two.

The formation of new national political fields in the wake of the demise of the Ottoman Empire both enabled and constrained the political expression of hitherto marginalized social groups: peasants, workers, and women. Elite nationalists acknowledged these subalterns as functionally differentiated elements of the nation and sought to discipline them and contain their collective actions within the boundaries of the national project as they understood it. The discourse of nationalism limits the political participation of subalterns to domains and issues authorized by nationalist leaderships. Contests over the boundaries of political action and the "true" understanding of the national interest define the terrain of the nationalist movements.

4 Fikri al-Khuli's journey to al-Mahalla al-Kubra

Despite this book's focus on workers and peasants, their voices have made only minor appearances in the text so far. In part this is because a synthetic overview of any subject, by attending to "the big picture," is predisposed to emphasize large-scale structures and historical trends at the expense of microsocial histories which might allow more scope for subaltern voices. It is also because working people were commonly illiterate before the twentieth century and have left very few records. Often, the best that can be done is to reconstruct their presence in historical processes through the reports of elite and middle-class sources. Even when working people gained access to education in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the great majority of those who did record their experiences and understandings of the world around them did so using the language and conceptual categories of modernist, nationalist, or religious elites.

There are many published autobiographies and labor histories by trade union leaders demonstrating that they were not simply manipulated by the elite and middle-class elements of twentieth-century nationalist movements (al-'Amara 1975-76; al-'Askari 1995; 'Isawi 1969; Kamil 1985; al-Mudarrik 1967-69; 'Uthman 1982-94). They describe the efforts of trade unionists to assert their own agendas and carve out zones of autonomy from the political forces that competed for the loyalties of the labor movement. These accounts also indicate that many trade union leaders did orient their lives and their understandings of themselves around the modern, national categories and institutions promoted by the political classes. They may have disagreed with the policies of one or another sector of those classes. But their identities and life activities as they report them are extensively enmeshed with vocational training schools, large-scale transportation and industrial enterprises, foreign capital, trade unions, political parties, nationalist movements, and the state. Authors of autobiographies and histories who represent their experience primarily as a relationship with the institutions of modernity – schools, capitalist enterprises, and the nation-state – have in some important respects transcended their social origins and are no longer, strictly speaking, subaltern subjects.

Subaltern experience and consciousness are, by their nature, not wholly coherent (Gramsci 1971: 52, 54–55). They are not primarily composed of politically conscious resistance to domination, but include accommodation, everyday subversive acts, and hybrid attitudes and understandings that simultaneously reflect participation and alienation from elite and middle-class modernity. Subalterns have no access to the press and other communications media. They do not win public office or address national political forums. Consequently, they are almost always represented by others – in police reports, personnel records of enterprises where they are employed, government legislation, and accounts of erstwhile subalterns who rise above their origins. Does the near impossibility of recovering unmediated subaltern voices mean that we have no access to subaltern experiences and consciousnesses?

Other than occasional colloquial poems, I am aware of only one text by a worker or peasant author who does not present his/her life and its historical circumstances primarily in terms of the categories, institutions, and narratives of modernity. *Al-Rihla* ('The Journey') is an autobiographical memoir/novel in three volumes by Fikri al-Khuli, an Egyptian peasant boy who became a worker at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in the Nile Delta town of al-Mahalla al-Kubra (al-Khuli 1987–92). This narrative has affinities to other works of colloquial poetry and prose that became popular as the Egyptian reading audience expanded in the 1920s. Such works often addressed aspects of popular experience and culture outside the ambit of the subjects approved by nationalist elites and the *effendiyya*, such as prostitution or petty gangsterism (Yusuf 1920; al-Usta Hanafi [1923]; 'Atiyya 1926). But *al-Rihla*'s sustained attention to the daily experience of work in large-scale industry is unique.¹

Al-Khuli eventually became a communist and composed *al-Rihla* while he was imprisoned at Kharga oasis during 1959–63 together with most of the other Egyptian communists. The author's political commitments and the distance between the date of the text's composition and the events it relates raise questions about its reliability. Is this merely an ideological justification of al-Khuli's political path or a clichéd exercise in socialist realism? Doesn't al-Khuli's political consciousness at least partially attenuate his subaltern status? Some of the misrepresentations that might result from these circumstances may be partly corrected by the fact that al-Khuli's explicit motive for writing *al-Rihla* was to correct his communist comrades' illusions about the modernity of the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill. In an introduction to an unpublished and highly abridged English translation of *al-Rihla*, he explained:

In prison there is plenty of spare time, so we used to meet together and tell stories . . . One day one of us was telling of an outing he had gone on . . . to al-Mahalla al-Kubra. He described the textile factory, how fine it was, and how there was housing for the workers and a hospital. He described the huge buildings and the beautiful modern machines . . . He came to al-Mahalla as an outsider and marveled at the town and the factory and enjoyed it all, but I listened to what he said and I was shattered. Here was a worker like myself, yet he saw the factory in a completely different way from mine.

I began to speak and tell them that it was not as simple as it seemed, and that the factory was really quite different from the way my colleague described it. (El-Messiri 1980: 386)

During the 1970s, as part of the rollback of the policies of President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, the Egyptian government permitted the publication of many memoirs and histories of the communist movement by communists who had been imprisoned in the Nasirist era. However, *al-Rihla* was not published until the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then by a tiny enterprise operated by Kamal 'Abd al-Halim, a former leader of the Communist Party of Egypt on bad terms with the party and many former members. The only public acknowledgment of its existence until then was the partial translation previously mentioned, which eliminates much of the cultural specificity of its language and offers little explication of the text or its significance.²

Why wasn't the publishing house associated with the Communist Party of Egypt (Dar al-Thaqafa al-Jadida) or another of the more established progressive presses interested in a book written by a working-class comrade? In addition to whatever personal and political rivalries may have been a factor, three reasons come to mind. First, *al-Rihla* is a long and rambling narrative that cannot be considered a great work of art by prevailing aesthetic standards.

Second, *al-Rihla* is written largely in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, reinforcing its status as "not good art" among most intellectuals. While its language is closer to actual usage than any other available account of modern Egyptian workers, this may actually have embarrassed even left intellectuals. Even leftists who embrace colloquial poetry, which can be consigned to a niche on the margin of modern Arabic literature as "popular culture," usually have little tolerance for colloquial prose. As part of the *effendiyya*, they participate in the project of educating workers in nationalism and modernity, albeit in different terms than those the Wafd and other bourgeois nationalists employed. Moreover, since the 1950s Marxists and other leftists have usually insisted on writing in standard Arabic as a cultural expression of their commitment to pan-Arab nationalism. Writing in colloquial Egyptian Arabic

undermines Egypt's Arab identity and its claim to leadership of the Arab world.

Finally, *al-Rihla* reveals aspects of the experience of workers at Mahalla that may disrupt the expectations of Marxists as much as those of bourgeois nationalists. Al-Khuli preserves the earthy sense of humor, the fierce local rivalries, the plebeian sense of manliness, and the fatalism that were part of the world of workers at Mahalla but are missing from the narratives of most labor leaders. He lovingly portrays the quotidian particulars of life in the mill and the petty incidents that unexpectedly explode into struggles, transforming the situation. He also relates in intimate detail taboo topics such as prostitution, the unsanitary toilet facilities used by the workers, and flirtatious dalliances with peasant girls during his return to his village (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 91-108, 212-24).

Al-Khuli and the colloquial poet Salah Hafiz, who wrote the introduction to the first volume, regard *al-Rihla* as an authentic, unmediated record of al-Khuli's subaltern experience. This is a naive appreciation. No evidence can have this character. It is, however, a singular text that refuses to conform to the expectations of prevailing literary forms or organized currents of political opinion. Consequently, *al-Rihla* is a highly subversive work in many different contexts. Situating the subjects of the text in relation to other sectors of Egyptian society and bearing in mind the conditions of its publication enable us to use it to uncover something of the presence of peasant/workers, their discourse, and the social relations of production at Misr Spinning and Weaving, and by implication other enterprises like it, that would otherwise be totally inaccessible.³

The Misr Spinning and Weaving Company

Bank Misr was established in 1920 during the high point of the nationalist movement. It proclaimed itself "an Egyptian bank for Egyptians only" and announced the intention of breaking the monopoly of foreign financial capital in Egypt and providing capital to establish Egyptian-owned, large-scale, industrial enterprises. Hence, the bank was regarded as an expression of the nationalist movement. Tal'at Harb, the founder and managing director, vigorously promoted the industrial ventures financed by Bank Misr in the 1920s and 1930s, arguing that their particular interests, such as a protective tariff on imported cotton goods that raised the price of cloth for poorer consumers, served the national cause (Harb 1939: 68-73, 98-101, 138-44). In practice, Bank Misr and its enterprises were not nearly as nationalist as Harb's proclamations (Beinin 1998a:

326–27). Nonetheless, Bank Misr and its flagship industrial enterprise, Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, were the emblems of economic nationalism between the two world wars.

Misr Spinning and Weaving Company – the first mechanized textile enterprise owned by Muslim Egyptians – was established in 1927 in al-Mahalla al-Kubra. The firm undertook the entire textile-manufacturing process including spinning, weaving, and dyeing. Soon after beginning full-scale operations, it employed some 15,000 workers. By the end of World War II, Misr Spinning and Weaving employed over 25,000 workers and was the largest industrial enterprise in the Middle East. Bank Misr established two other major mechanized textile enterprises at Kafr al-Dawwar, near Alexandria, in 1938 employing some 11,000–12,000 workers. Both were joint enterprises with British firms, but the social relations of production were similar to the mill at Mahalla.

Launching Misr Spinning and Weaving required the company to recruit peasants and train them to become factory workers, raising their educational level, self-discipline, productive capacity, and patriotic consciousness in the process. Tal'at Harb touted his firm's commitment to the social advancement of its workers. Of course, the active agents of progress were to be the managers of the company and the political leaders of the country. Just as 'Abd al-Rahman Fahmi Pasha and others had suggested (see chapter 3), workers and peasants were to be the disciplined beneficiaries of instruction and improvement.

Peasants, workers, Egyptians

Bank Misr chose al-Mahalla al-Kubra as the site for its spinning and weaving mill partly because it was a traditional center of handicraft textile production. The company hoped to draw on the expertise of the craftsmen, and they did become an important part of the production and marketing complex that grew up around the mammoth mechanized mill. However, the great majority of unskilled and semi-skilled workers at Misr Spinning and Weaving were former peasants from villages around Mahalla.

The *effendi* who came to Fikri al-Khuli's village of Kafr al-Hama to recruit peasants to work in the mill explained Misr's mission of national economic development:

Bank Misr has established a factory to spin the cotton you grow. It will make it into cloth that you can wear. For a long time we grew cotton and the English took it from us. Today, we will grow cotton and turn it into cloth. We are the ones who will plant the cotton, spin it, weave it. It will all be Egyptian-made – a national industry. (al-Khuli 1987–92: I, 17)

In 1928, at the age of eleven, al-Khuli went to work at Misr Spinning and Weaving shortly after the mill opened. Adults in his village knew something about national politics and the economics of growing and marketing cotton (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 207). But al-Khuli claims he had no political consciousness: "I had heard of Sa'd Zaghlul and the demonstrations against the English . . . I heard my mother and other women in the village trill for Sa'd and the Constitution, and the men applauded the Wafd when it returned to power [in 1927]. [But] I was not aware of what went on around me" (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 15). Though he had attended the village school (*kuttab*) and knew how to read and write, al-Khuli was unaware of the geography of the nation. Tanta, the largest city in the Delta, lay only 3 kilometers from his village, and he had to pass through it on his journey to work at the mill. But he wrote, perhaps exaggerating the isolation of peasant life, that he did not know where it was (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 18).

Arriving in Mahalla young Fikri noticed that people on the street wore clothing similar to that worn by people in his village (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 22). If *al-Rihla* were written as a teleological allegory of the nation coming into its own in the style of many other writings of Egyptian trade union leaders, this recognition of similarity might be developed into a recognition of national identity. But al-Khuli undermines this expectation by repeatedly reporting that the dominant basis of identity in and around the mill was the sharp antagonism and rivalry between the local residents of Mahalla (*mahallawiyya*) and the peasants recruited to work at the Misr enterprise (company men, or *shirkawiyya*) (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 55ff). The *shirkawiyya* identified themselves by their villages of origin, as non-Mahalla residents, and as Muslims. Even when they came to believe they had common interests and to act on them, they often regarded the Mahalla residents as their enemies as much as the Misr company management.

Similar frictions developed among the workers when the company decided, perhaps to undermine unionization efforts that had recently begun (see below), to employ females in the mill. Most of the males fiercely opposed the entry of females to their workplace. Some even physically attacked them (al-Khuli 1987-92: III, 51-64).

The *mahallawiyya-shirkawiyya* rivalry was so intense that in one of the central scenes of the first volume of *al-Rihla*, it explodes into a violent brawl between the two factions (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 145-53). The fight provided an occasion for 'Abd al-'Azim to establish himself as a leader of the *shirkawiyya* by organizing self-defense "just the way we do things in the village . . . If the Mahalla people are united by the desire to get rid of us, we are also united by making our living" (al-Khuli 1987-92: I, 145).

The potential for class and national consciousness is evident in this statement. But al-Khuli does not allow the political commitments he ultimately developed to interfere with acknowledging that at the time of this incident in the late 1920s, local identities clearly predominated over class or national identities. The voice of the desired future is present, but secondary, in the narrative. When the *shirkawiyya* asked 'Abd al-'Azim to organize them to beat up the *mahallawiyya*, he refused, saying, "We have the same concerns as they. All of us are one country and have one interest, but that is a matter that will become clear tomorrow" (al-Khuli 1987–92: I, 158).

The matter does begin to be clarified in the course of the first strike at the mill (al-Khuli 1987–92: II, 33–44). The workers wanted a wage increase to enable them to buy blankets so that they could sleep through the cold nights. Al-Khuli, by this time a respected mechanical loom operator despite his youth, initiated the strike by stopping his machine while an engineer was walking through his section of the mill. Other workers followed his lead and presented their demand to the engineer. After conferring with the general manager, the engineer returned and reiterated the educational mission of the *effendiyya* as it applied to the mill: "We've brought you here from the village. Every one of you is from a different village. We brought you here to train you" (al-Khuli 1987–92: II, 41).

The company did not agree to a general wage increase, which would have acknowledged and conceded to the collective interests and power of the workers, something managers of private enterprises are nearly always loath to do. Instead it established a new piece-rate wage system. Piece rates tend to pit workers against each other: younger and quicker against older and slower, veterans acquainted with the production system against unseasoned newcomers, and so on. Employers commonly prefer piece rates because they allow them to treat workers as individuals without regard to the social context: seniority, disability, etc. Individuals are the units of modern society. As consumers in the capitalist market and citizens of the nation they possess equal rights in principle, but vastly unequal capacities to realize those rights. Treating people of unequal capacities equally multiplies injustice. Workers at the Misr firm seem to have understood this, and opposed the transition to piece-rate wages. After hearing the engineer one concluded:

They've tricked us, and now they're going to make us sweat blood . . . They say we'll be paid according to production. What production? Is that better than a daily rate? We'd know how much we were going to make and plan accordingly. Now they've confused our world. They haven't given us a raise or left us in peace. They've left us with our same miserable life. (al-Khuli 1987–92: II, 42)

This worker believed that he and his mates would be better off being paid a daily (or hourly) rate and that solidarity among workers is better than competition. He may have formed this opinion based on his understanding of his experience in the mill; or, he may have adapted a previously held moral economy outlook, which would have been common among both peasants and urban guild workers, to the new circumstances of industrial wage labor.

The prince and the workers

In 1936, Prince 'Abbas Halim visited al-Mahalla al-Kubra to organize the Misr Spinning and Weaving workers into a union under his leadership. Amidst much fanfare, the prince, borne on the shoulders of workers, entered a marquee where he was to address an assembled crowd. When he began to speak in a stammer, al-Khuli and the other workers were distressed that they could not understand him. "What's he saying? Is he speaking Polish?" they asked each other. "Is he speaking to us? He's speaking to the mechanics." One said, "He's speaking a foreign language." Another said, "Of course he's ignoring us, man. Why should he talk to us? He'll speak to people who understand him" (al-Khuli 1987-92: III, 31).

Like many members of the royal family from Khedive Isma'il on, 'Abbas Halim had spent much of his childhood in Europe. He was educated in Germany and never perfected his Arabic. On this formal occasion he may have thought it appropriate to address the workers in standard Arabic rather than colloquial Egyptian. The better educated skilled mechanics probably understood his language far better than uneducated or minimally educated unskilled workers. Stammering in imperfect standard Arabic would only have compounded the comprehension difficulties of the less educated. At the conclusion of 'Abbas Halim's speech, in response to a worker's complaint that he had understood nothing, one of the prince's aides summarized his words in colloquial Egyptian. Although the prince's stammer and flawed Arabic complicated matters, many Misr workers apparently had difficulty understanding the national language of Egypt if that language was to be modern standard Arabic rather than colloquial Egyptian, as the great majority of the *effendiyya* believed was proper.

The problem was not only lexical. After 'Abbas Halim departed, the workers carried on a lively debate about whether he or anyone else who lived in Cairo could help them. Those in al-Khuli's circle had not known that 'Abbas Halim was to visit them and were skeptical of what he could accomplish for them. But reluctant to pass up an offer of assistance, they

agreed to pay their dues and join the union (al-Khuli 1987–92: III, 35). In fact, 'Abbas Halim never returned to Mahalla; this effort to organize a union was unsuccessful. The workers eventually resolved to write up their grievances themselves (al-Khuli 1987–92: III, 81).

Workers and others

The social distance and mutual incomprehensibility between the Misr workers and 'Abbas Halim is normal in any situation involving subalterns and a royal personality. But the workers also had little confidence in and no identification with any of Egypt's Cairo-centered national institutions – the government, political parties, or trade unions. They believed that bringing their problems to the attention of the government was useless: "Who does the government belong to? We're in one valley and they're in another. Do we know any of them? What did they do when [our fellow worker] was seized and beaten to death?" (al-Khuli 1987–92: II, 13). The workers were also alienated from the management *effendis* they saw every day. When one of the foremen died in a work accident, al-Khuli was amazed that the company did not stop the machines even for a moment to acknowledge the dead man. "They must be different from us," he thought. "All their lives they've lived apart from us. They live in palaces. They're sons of village headmen (*zawlad 'umad*). No one has ever insulted them or beaten them. They've made their lives by beating up other people" (al-Khuli 1987–92: II, 18). The behavior of the supervisors appeared arbitrary, cruel, and calculated to break the workers' spirit and human dignity. The harsh system of fines deducted from workers' wages for even the most minute infraction, beatings of workers by foremen, and other aspects of the administration of discipline in the mill appeared unreasonable to workers compared to the norms of their villages. When al-Khuli was cheated out of his wages because he was falsely accused of spoiling a bolt of cloth, some workers not only felt that it was humiliating to complain to management about the problem, but useless as well, because "no one would take sides with poor people like us" (al-Khuli 1987–92: I: 189).

Labor, capital, and the nationalist movement

Like many others in similar circumstances, workers at the Misr mill did eventually come to feel a collective solidarity which they directed against their immediate supervisors and the company management. On July 18, 1938 they struck in support of their demand for a higher piece rate and an eight-hour day in place of the twelve-hour shifts they had been working – a much larger and more comprehensive strike than the one previously

mentioned (al-Khuli 1987–92: III, 165 ff). The intensity of the strike took the company by surprise. It closed down for forty-five days during which the weaving mill was reorganized into smaller workshops to diminish the danger of future collective action. About a hundred workers were arrested for their role in the strike and paraded through town as an example; fifty-five were convicted for participating in the strike. The judge who presided over their case articulated the prevailing sentiment of Egypt's political classes in expressing the court's

strong regret and astonishment at this foolish action on the part of the weaving workers of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company at Mahalla . . . they have departed from fulfilling their duty toward a company which helped them, supported them, and opened a door for them which they might enter while they were still ignorant . . . The workers must . . . cooperate with the company for production and sacrifice every personal interest in order to serve the fatherland, develop its commerce, and not lose the fruits of that gigantic effort because of the influence of dangerous opinions which we do not like to see among the workers, whatever the reason . . . strikes and destruction have nothing to do with Egyptians. These acts are completely repulsive to them by virtue of their education, their circumstances, and their religion, which is based on forgiveness, cooperation, and nobility of character. This young company, one of the pillars of our current renaissance, did not overwork the workers and did not ask more than their capacity, wages being determined in accordance with output. (Quoted in Eman 1943: 183–84)

According to the court and those who shared its outlook, ignorant peasants should be grateful for the opportunity to become industrial wage workers. This enabled them, perhaps unwittingly, to participate in the great project of modern, national economic construction, which required them diligently and obediently to sacrifice their personal interests for the good of the nation. Only the workers' susceptibility to subversive outside agitators obstructed their recognition of these truths.

A simulacrum of modernity?

Why were most Egyptian elites and *effendiyya* of the interwar period so unable to appreciate the aspects of work and life at Misr Spinning and Weaving reported by Fikri al-Khuli? The political classes sincerely desired certain cultural, social, and institutional changes associated with modernity, nationalism, and economic development. However, the privileges they acquired and maintained through the projects of the newly established nation-state and large-scale capitalist industry prevented them from engaging with the necessarily disorderly and dirty daily processes in specific modern institutions such as textile mills. Consequently, the judge who convicted the striking workers and very probably had

shared interests with the Misr managers was unable to appreciate the conditions that motivated their action.

Outright denial was also a factor. During King Faruq's visit to Misr Spinning and Weaving in 1937, Tal'at Harb expressed his pride that the company "did not spare any effort . . . to advance [its workers'] health and social conditions by insuring them against work accidents and building first aid stations and a mosque devoted to the performance of religious obligations" (Harb 1939: 40). These claims are totally contradictory to Fikri al-Khuli's account of working conditions in the mill.

Another barrier to understanding was the development of modern representational techniques that defused idealized images of mechanized textile mills as citadels of modernity, national progress, and economic development very broadly throughout Egyptian society during both the monarchy and Nasirist periods, even among Fikri al-Khuli's communist comrades. Néstor García Canclini argues that in Latin America "[modernity is] a simulacrum conjured up by elites and the state apparatuses . . . they only ordered some areas of society in order to promote a subordinate and inconsistent development; they acted as if they formed national cultures, and they barely constructed elite cultures, leaving out enormous indigenous and peasant populations" (Canclini 1995: 7). If Canclini means that the simulacrum of modernity is consciously conjured up by elites, then his approach is too conspiratorial to explain broad social and cultural structures.

However, some of Tal'at Harb's promotional efforts did portray Misr Spinning and Weaving literally as a simulacrum of modernity. The third volume of his collected speeches contains a $9\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$ -inch fold-out, full gray-scale photograph of the mill at Mahalla (Harb 1939: following 138). On close examination, this turns out not to be a picture of the mill at all; it is a photograph of an architect's model of the facilities. The photograph has an eerie quality and contains no human beings or any other sign of life or motion. It eliminates all the messiness associated with industrial manufacturing in favor of an image bearing only a shadowy resemblance to the production process and its attendant social relations.

Such images were appropriated and circulated to a wide audience by the mass media. *Sayyidat al-Qitar* (Lady of the Train) – a film produced in the last months of the monarchy and screened shortly after its demise – is an outstanding example of the popular idealization of mechanized textile production (Chahine 1952). It features two major figures of twentieth-century Egyptian mass culture – director Youssef Chahine at the beginning of his career and singer/actress Layla Murad towards the end of hers. As the convoluted plot approaches resolution, Layla Murad, who is (as a woman, most improbably) "head of the workers" (*ra'isat al-ummal*) in a

mechanized textile mill owned by her family, appears on the shop floor singing a romantic, nationalist ballad to the machinery – “Dur ya mutur” (Turn, motor!).⁴ The lyrics echo Tal’at Harb’s message about the national character of the mechanized textile industry: “Free Egypt would rather go naked than dress in imported fabric.” As Layla Murad sings, automated spindles and looms thump away in time with the music. The operators are well-dressed men and women who love their supervisor, who has graciously organized a party for their benefit. No element of social realism impinges on this idyllic scene.

The pedagogy of modernity

The repressive measures of the Misr Spinning and Weaving management succeeded in maintaining stable labor relations at al-Mahalla al-Kubra for several years. In 1941 Tal’at Harb was removed as director of Bank Misr. The new management team are dubbed compradors in Egyptian nationalist historiography. There was a brief strike in June 1946. Then, in September 1947 there was a massive strike – the largest collective action in the history of the Egyptian labor to that date (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 353–56). Although this was a major episode in the radicalization of the post-World War II nationalist movement, and communists were heavily involved in organizing the workers and promoting their cause, it is not included in *al-Rihla*. The narrative breaks off in 1942 when al-Khuli stopped working in the mill, undermining the teleological nationalist understanding of workers’ collective action as part of the resistance to British rule and its local allies.

After the 1947 strike, the Misr company and the state authorities collaborated to repress all expressions of independent trade unionism at Mahalla. However, Misr’s harsh labor policies ignited a fierce strike at its Fine Spinning and Weaving Mill in Kafr al-Dawwar in August 1952, shortly after the Free Officers’ coup of July 23, 1952 which put an end to the Egyptian monarchy. The striking workers hailed General Muhammad Naguib and the Revolutionary Command Council, believing that the new order would be more responsive to their demands than the old regime had been. But the government repressed the strike and rapidly convened a military tribunal that sentenced two of the leaders to death by hanging (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 421–26).

Despite its harsh repressive actions at Kafr al-Dawwar, the new regime was concerned about conditions at the Misr mills and similar enterprises throughout Egypt. Acting out of the same corporatist and paternalist understanding that had informed the relations between most of the *effendiyya* and workers, it sought to introduce reforms that would obviate the

need for independent trade unions and collective action initiated by workers. The regime and the company cooperated with William Carson, who undertook a study of labor relations at Misr Spinning and Weaving in 1953 funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation. Although couched in the language of value-neutral social science, Carson's report criticized the Misr company management harshly.

Full production cannot be realized under the present conditions because of the chaotic system of supervisory discipline and the complete absence of production incentives for the worker. The present labor control system in the mill conspires to maintain a constant state of tension among the workers and an ever present danger of strife.

The superior is expected to maintain production through the agency of a rigid disciplinary system which is the consequence of the opinion that the workers are "too ignorant to understand" and therefore must be ruled through fear . . . Communication has come to mean punishment and for this reason the worker stays away from his supervisor . . . The disciplinary system . . . reduces all production to the level of the poorest worker rather than raising it to the level of the good or excellent worker.

. . . Negative pressure has now created a feeling of solidarity and common cause in the labor force and antagonism toward the company.

Workers consider the present level of wages low and as an insufficient reward for their work. It is apparent that a large number are not receiving proper diet because of low income and high number of dependents . . . the workers tend to resent strongly the large differential between themselves and their supervisors and higher management whom they believe receive these salaries at their expense. It amounts to open accusation of starving them and their families. Undernourished workers are not capable of full production. (Carson 1953: 1-3)

Carson's report suggests that the *effendiyya* and upper management failed in their mission to instill national loyalty and modern attitudes in its workers at al-Mahalla al-Kubra. Any feelings of national identity and solidarity that existed among the workers in the plant were directed against them. The *effendiyya* and upper management also failed in their national economic construction mission. Building the mill and others like it was a substantial achievement, but the transformative capacity of these enterprises proved to be much less than Tal'at Harb and others hoped. The original machinery at Misr Spinning and Weaving was purchased second hand from European firms who were moving on to technologically more advanced equipment. The number of workers per loom at Misr's enterprises was far greater than in European and American textile mills. Low labor costs generated little incentive to increase efficiency. Maintaining a larger than necessary labor force and controlling it by harsh discipline was economically "rational" in the short term. Most managers probably did not believe that the peasants recruited to work in the mill were capable of

understanding the tasks they were expected to perform. Certainly, they did not think workers might offer proposals to increase productivity.⁵ The material limitations of capital and technology and culturally structured disdain for subalterns undermined the capacity of the *effendiyya* to achieve their national and economic objectives. In a typically pragmatic, American, liberal fashion, Carson advised that better communication between management and labor, paying workers adequately, and treating them respectfully would improve economic efficiency and, by extension, promote nationalist modernity.

Tal'at Harb, the judge who sentenced the participants in the 1938 Misr Spinning and Weaving strike, the producers of *Sayyidat al-Qiār* and dozens of other films with comparable themes, and the Egyptian elites and *effendiyya* promoted a specific bourgeois vision of modernity and nationalism that inspired many concrete achievements, such as the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill. It also established and reinforced their positions of social privilege and by extension the existing social hierarchy. For them, nationalism and modernity entailed ending the British occupation and maintaining their own leading positions in the process of remaking Egypt in Europe's image.

The difficulties in publishing *al-Rihla* were, at least in part, likely due to its disruption of the idealized images of mechanized textile production which were central to this vision of modernity: its blurring of the boundaries between peasants and industrial workers, between the village and the city, between Egypt's past and its desired future. The view of the condition of workers in the mill articulated by Tal'at Harb and the judge who convicted the striking workers and lectured them about their national duty stands in sharp contradiction with Fikri al-Khuli's accounts of the prevalence of work accidents, lung disease, restrictions on the use of toilets during work hours, physical beatings of workers by foremen, and the like. We can not determine the absolute truth of any particular incident related in *al-Rihla*. But clearly al-Khuli and his mates at Misr Spinning and Weaving thought they were working in a very different sort of place from the one imagined by the judge at the 1938 strike trial, Tal'at Harb, Youssef Chahine, or Layla Murad.

Thus, like all historical circumstances, Egyptian modernity emerges as a hybrid and untidy phenomenon incorporating attitudes and practices that its Egyptian and Euro-American promoters labeled "traditional," "backward," "premodern," etc. In the specific semi-colonial situation of Egypt, "modern" institutions and practices – such as the cultivation and export of cotton for the world market or the local manufacture of cotton goods – depended heavily on the persistence of "premodern" institutions and practices – such as the *izba* system, with its extra-economic means of

surplus extraction, and the coercive labor-control practices at Misr Spinning and Weaving. This hybrid structure was kept in place from 1923 to 1952 by the collaborative interaction of the Egyptian monarchy, its affiliated elites, most of the *effendiyya*, the British imperial presence, and privileged permanently resident foreigners. The gap between the pristine theory of nationalism, industrial development, and modernity and the power that accrued to their promoters in the course of its hybrid practice blocked the managers of Misr Spinning and Weaving and those associated with them from apprehending the experience of workers in the mill as reported by Fikri al-Khuli.

Therefore, modernity and the nation might best be understood as ensembles of materialities, institutions, practices, and ideas, and fields of social struggle that are not created or constrained solely by state-centered individuals, institutions, and ideologies. Fikri al-Khuli is, of course, not an authentic or objective chronicler but a participant in that social struggle. By injecting the presence, experience, and consciousness of subalterns into a leading site of Egyptian modernity and economic nationalism, he exposed its "impure" character and the daily struggles over production processes and social hierarchy which the elites and *effendiyya* were unwilling and unable to acknowledge.

5 Populist nationalism, state-led development, and authoritarian regimes, 1939–1973

Until the mid-1930s the majority of the political classes of the Middle East espoused liberal projects of cultural and social reform and political and economic development that they expected would set their countries on what they understood to be the historical trajectory of France and England (Hourani 1962). These projects recruited peasants and workers to send their children to schools where they would learn to be productive citizens of secular nation-states, to work to build the national economy, and to participate in national political life on terms determined by their social betters. Higher wages, access to agricultural land, and other social issues were to be postponed in the name of the national cause. Liberal economics, politics, and culture were undermined by the depression of 1929–39, the impoverishment of the peasantry, the social demands of expanding urban working classes, the growth of an underemployed, young intelligentsia, the challenges of communism, fascism, pan-Arab nationalism, and Islamism, and the glaring discrepancies between liberal theory and Anglo-French imperial practice.

The Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936–39 exemplifies the transition between political and social movements of the liberal era and the subsequent period. Palestinian notables did not initiate the revolt; they tried, but failed, to contain it; and their failure sparked a peasant-based struggle that challenged Zionism, British imperialism, and their own social and political dominance. The 1939 White Paper limited Jewish immigration and land purchases and attempted to accommodate Palestinian Arab demands without abandoning British rule or the principle of establishing a Jewish national home. Refusing to grant immediate independence to the Arab majority and imposing restrictions on Jewish immigration when the Jews of Nazi-ruled Europe were already imperiled convinced many Arabs and Jews alike that British liberalism was a facade for a morally and politically bankrupt imperialism.

The nominally independent states formed in the former Ottoman Arab provinces exercised limited sovereignty. Iraq became independent in 1932, but the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 allowed British forces to remain

as guardians of the oilfields and the imperial air route to India. The limits of Iraq's independence were demarcated in the wake of the April 1941 coup d'état that installed Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani as prime minister and prompted the flight of the regent, 'Abd al-Ilah, and the leading pro-British politician, Nuri al-Sa'id. Al-Gaylani refused to declare war on Germany or break diplomatic relations with Italy, and he attempted to prevent the British from expanding their base at Basra. Consequently, British forces reoccupied Iraq, reinstated 'Abd al-Ilah as regent, and restored the power of Nuri al-Sa'id. The collaboration of the monarchy, the political elite, and the large landowning shaykhs with Britain increasingly discredited the regime.

The Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 expanded the scope of Egypt's independence but did not eliminate British preeminence. The prevailing relations of power were exposed by the infamous incident of February 4, 1942. As German troops advanced towards Alexandria, British tanks surrounded the royal palace, and the British ambassador demanded that King Faruq appoint the reliably anti-Nazi Wafd leader, Mustafa al-Nahhas Pasha, as prime minister. Collaboration with the British occupation, inability to enact a land reform, urban economic distress, and internal schisms diminished the Wafd's popular appeal during the last ten years of the monarchy.

Despite the proclaimed anti-imperialism of the Socialist and Communist parties, the 1936–38 Popular Front government of France could not agree to grant independence to Syria and Lebanon or overcome *colon* opposition to extending the franchise to the 25,000 "evolved" Algerian Muslims who had adopted French culture. North African Star, the nationalist organization based among Algerian workers in France, criticized the proposal to extend the franchise as inadequate and demanded independence. Consequently, in January 1937, the movement was proscribed. Its tactically more moderate Algeria-based successor, the Algerian People's Party, was also banned in 1939. Disappointment with the Popular Front's colonial policy led two Syrian Sorbonne graduates, Michel 'Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, to form the circles of students who became the nucleus of the Ba'th Party.

Depression and world war: the beginnings of state-led industrial development and the growth of urban working classes

The open economies imposed on the Middle East by the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention remained in effect until the depression of the 1930s. Declining industrial production in Europe and North

America reduced exports to the Middle East and created space for development of local industry. Turkey, Egypt, and to a lesser extent other countries adopted state interventionist industrial policies and experienced counter-cyclical economic growth along with an increase in the number and social significance of urban wage workers.

Turkey's new economic policy of state-led industrialization and autarkic development was embodied in the Five-Year Industrial Plan adopted in 1934. It featured a huge textile mill in Kayseri opened in 1935 with machinery and technical assistance provided by the Soviet Union and an iron and a steel complex established in 1938 with British financial assistance. Manufacturing output doubled from 1932 to 1939. A quarter of the production came from some twenty state-owned industrial and mining enterprises. Still, at the start of World War II, only about 10 percent of the labor force was employed in manufacturing, utilities, and mining (Keyder 1987: 110; Owen & Pamuk 1999: 18, 244).

Harsh labor-control measures accompanied state-led industrial development. Istanbul workers were fingerprinted in 1932. The Labor Laws of 1934 and 1936 established a corporatist regime modeled on Italian fascist legislation. Trade unions and strikes were banned. Instead of unions (*sendika*) workers were encouraged to form corporations (*birlik*). Class-based associations were banned in 1938 (Ahmad 1993: 99; Ahmad 1995: 92; Yavuz 1995: 100–01; Keyder 1987: 104).

Following the abolition of the Capitulations in 1937, Egypt enacted protective tariffs and initiated new industrial enterprises, including joint ventures with foreign firms. Except during the despotic Sidqi regime (1930–33), trade unions and workers' collective actions were repressed less severely than in Turkey, though unions were not formally legalized until 1942. The Cairo suburb of Shubra al-Khayma became a center of the textile industry and radical, working-class collective action. In 1937–38, dissatisfied with the tutelage of the Wafd and Prince 'Abbas Halim over the labor movement, Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik and other trade unionists from the Shubra al-Khayma area founded the Commission to Organize the Workers' Movement. The commission advocated trade union independence from party politics – an articulation of its aspiration to assert the autonomy of the working class as a social force.

World War II accelerated state-led industrial development and the growth of working classes. Revived European and North American manufacturing served Allied military needs and did not compete with nascent Middle Eastern industries. The Anglo-American Middle East Supply Center established in Cairo in 1941 encouraged local industrial development in order to reduce nonmilitary imports into the region.

Private entrepreneurs and the Allied forces employed local workers for

military production, transport, and auxiliary services, especially in Egypt and Palestine, the principal British bases in the Middle East. In late 1943, Allied forces employed 263,000 workers in Egypt. By 1945, in a nonagricultural wage labor force of approximately 2.5 million, there were some 623,000 industrial workers, including 165,000 still employed by Allied forces (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 260–61). The largest employer of urban wage labor in Palestine until World War II was the Palestine Railways; its Arab–Jewish workforce peaked at 7,800 in 1943. Consolidated Refineries in Haifa began production in 1940 and employed over 2,000 Arab, Jewish, and British manual and clerical workers. By 1944 there were 100,000 Arab non-agricultural wage workers, about 35,000 of whom were employed at British military bases along with 15,000 Jewish workers (Lockman 1996: 12, 267, 292, 351). Perhaps another 80,000 Arabs and Jews were employed in war-related activities (Owen & Pamuk 1999: 69).

Even in Saudi Arabia, war-related oil production brought a tiny working class into existence. The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) began production in 1939. After an initial cutback, output was expanded in 1943 to provide fuel for Allied forces in east Asia. Consequently, ARAMCO's workforce grew from 2,882 in 1943 to 11,892 in 1945, including nearly 7,500 Saudi nationals (Owen & Pamuk 1999: 87).

As a neutral country, Turkey did not benefit from Allied-sponsored industrial development. Industrial and agricultural production dropped sharply during the war, while inflation soared. Social unrest was controlled by martial law and the National Emergency Law in 1940, which virtually militarized the economy. Workers in mining and industry were required to work overtime and forbidden to leave their workplaces. An eleven-hour day was imposed, even on women and children. Weekly days off were banned (Güzel 1995).

The Democrat Party (DP) regime of 1950–60 loosened the state's grip on labor somewhat. In the 1950 election campaign the DP pledged to legalize strikes, but it failed to fulfill this promise (Işıklı 1987: 315). With assistance from the American Federation of Labor and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the DP encouraged the formation of the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk İş – Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu) in 1952. The DP insisted that this be an apolitical, business union led by one of its supporters.

The peasant question

Rural poverty and inequitable distribution of agricultural land placed the peasant question on the agenda of local reformers and international

development agencies in the 1940s (Warriner 1948). In Egypt, Iraq, and Syria inability to enact land reform came to be considered a salient failure of the newly independent regimes. Land distribution was most inequitable in Algeria, but no reform was possible under colonial rule. Ironically, Turkey, which was least in need of an agrarian reform, was the first country to enact one, though it was not primarily directed at redistributing large holdings.

Egypt: landed power and political paralysis

In 1939, 53 percent of all rural households in Egypt neither owned nor rented land and subsisted solely on wage labor. By 1950, 60 percent of the rural population, 1.5 million families, was landless. Two million families, 72 percent of all landowners, held 13 percent of the land in plots of less than 1 *faddan*; about 12,000 families, less than 0.5 percent of all landowners, held 35 percent of the land in plots of over 50 *faddans* (Radwan & Lee 1986: 7).

Population pressure on agricultural land induced steady migration from the countryside to the cities. The combined population of Cairo and Alexandria, 1.24 million in 1917, rose to over 3 million by 1947 – over three times more rapid growth than that of the overall population. Only a small fraction of new urban dwellers found work in manufacturing.

Despite these appalling conditions, the political dominance of large landowners prevented land redistribution from receiving serious consideration in the 1930s. ‘A’isha ‘Abd al-Rahman, the first woman from a peasant background to attend Cairo University, worked with the Wafd on rural questions for a time and wrote two books bitterly protesting against the misery of the peasants (Bint al-Shati’ 1936; Bint al-Shati’ [1938]). Mirrit Ghali and Hafiz ‘Afifi, representing the views of “enlightened” landowners and industrialists respectively, published widely acclaimed calls for social reform (Ghali 1938; ‘Afifi 1938). All these manifestoes ignored or opposed redistributing agricultural land.

At the end of World War II, Mirrit Ghali altered his stand and endorsed agrarian reform as a way to direct capital from agriculture to manufacturing and commerce, deepen the domestic market, and ensure “economic independence and social dignity” (Ghali 1945: 9). Neither the minority governments of 1944–50 nor the Wafd regime of 1950–52 seriously considered this. The Wafd could not adopt policies inimical to landed interests because village headmen and local notables were the basis of its rural strength, and party strongman Fu’ad Sirag al-Din Pasha owned 8,000 *faddans*. No other significant political force took up the peasants’ cause. Ahmad Sadiq Sa’d, a leader of the New Dawn communist group, wrote a

pamphlet advocating agrarian reform, but the Marxists concentrated their attention on urban workers (Sa'd 1945).

The preponderant power of landed wealth and lack of effective urban allies prevented peasants from organizing a coherent social or political movement. They did clash with landlords, local officials, merchants, tax collectors, and the police over rents, evictions, taxes, illegal drugs and arms, and water rights. Partial and unsystematically compiled reports indicate that there were twenty or twenty-one such collective actions from 1924 to 1936, and thirty-seven from 1944 to 1952: a marked increase in peasant collective action in the last twelve years of the monarchy compared to its first twelve years (Brown 1990: 128–47). Moreover, in the earlier period only five actions appear to have been aimed directly against landlords, while in the later period there were twelve openly anti-landlord actions. They were concentrated during the three successive upsurges of the nationalist movement: fall 1945 to July 1946; fall 1947 to May 1948; and mid-1951 to January 1952. During the Wafd regime of 1950–52, peasant collective actions increased sharply on large estates in the outer Delta, including several strikes demanding lower rents or higher wages. The minister of social affairs, Dr. Ahmad Husayn, reported “unmistakable signs of revolution” in the countryside (*al-Ishraqiyya*, September 15, 1950, Quoted in Brown 1990: 108).

These words seem to anticipate the uprising on the al-Badrawi family estate (*izba*) at Buhut in June 1951. After an overseer attempted to collect extra rent, peasants marched to the al-Badrawi mansion to air their grievances. One of the al-Badrawis fired on the crowd. Peasants responded by torching the mansion and other estate property. This incident was especially politically salient because the al-Badrawis were the largest landowners in Egypt outside the royal family and were related by marriage to the minister of interior, Fu'ad Sirag al-Din Pasha.

Iraq: tribal shaykhs, political elites, and rural poverty

The British Mandate and the Iraqi monarchy encouraged the growth and legal recognition of a large landowning class comprised of shaykhs who privatized the holdings of their tribes and political elites who acquired large plots. The cropped area expanded nearly five times from 1913 to 1943 due to increased use of irrigation pumps, facilitated by a 1926 law that exempted crops on newly pump-irrigated land from taxes for four seasons. Installation of pumps allowed shaykhs and others with wealth to privatize state-administered (*miri*) land, and this was further encouraged by the land settlement laws of 1932 and 1938. By the 1950s, 72.9 percent of all landholders held only 6.2 percent of the agricultural land in small

plots of less than 50 *dunums*, while 55.1 percent of all privately held agricultural land was held by less than 1 percent of all owners in large plots of over 1,000 *dunams*. Some 600,000 rural household heads out of a total rural population of 3.8 million were landless. Property holding was most concentrated in the southeastern provinces of Kut, 'Amara, and other regions where irrigation pumps and barrages had recently been introduced and tribal social relations remained strong (Batatu 1978: 54–56; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1987: 31–32). There were five peasant revolts in these areas from 1952 to 1958, though we know little about them (Haj 1997: 162).

Landless peasants, especially from 'Amara, migrated to Baghdad and Basra. From 1947 to 1957 the population of greater Baghdad increased from 515,000 to 793,000. In the early 1950s some 92,000 recent migrants to Baghdad lived in 16,400 huts made from palm branches (*sarifas*). Many impoverished *sarifa* dwellers from 'Amara found employment in the Baghdad police force. Hence, they found themselves representing the popular uprisings of January 1948 and November 1952 in which many of their compatriots participated prominently (Batatu 1978: 133–36; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1987: 34).

Syria: large landlords and peasant politics

French mandatory rule in Syria accelerated trends that had begun earlier and encouraged the consolidation of a large landholding class by abolishing tax farming, strengthening private property rights, and fostering a pro-French landed elite. The expanded use of mechanical pumps and tractors from 1948 to 1952 and the cultivation of cotton on the middle Orontes River forced many sharecroppers off the land and turned them into seasonal workers (Batatu 1999: 129). By the early 1950s, owners of plots of more than 100 hectares constituted less than 1 percent of the agricultural population but held half the cultivable area, while 60 percent of the agricultural population owned no land at all (Hinnebusch 1989: 88, 119–20). Substantial peasant ownership of small plots of 10 hectares or less persisted in the provinces of Hawran (47 percent of the land), Latakia (32 percent), and Jabal Druze (30 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, 56 percent of the land in Hama province was held in plots of over 100 hectares, while only 2 percent was held in plots of 10 hectares or less. Small and medium peasants held the majority of land around Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. Large landowners were less entrenched in Syria than in Egypt and Iraq, but they formed the most powerful economic interest group and the largest bloc of parliament members during the Mandate and the first decade of independence (Gerber 1987: 97, 101).

The extreme concentration of agricultural land in the Hama region in the hands of the Barazi, 'Azm, and Kaylani families motivated the formation of an exceptional peasant-based political movement (Batatu 1999: 124–30). In 1939 a pan-Arabist lawyer from Hama, Akram Hawrani, formed the Youth Party (Hizb al-Shabab). The other founding party leaders were also members of the urban new middle class, but peasants were its main supporters. In 1943, the party adopted a radical pro-peasant, anti-landlord orientation expressed by its slogan “Fetch the Basket and Shovel to Bury the Agha and the Bey.” Some 800 party members volunteered to fight in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. Hawrani returned from Palestine convinced that “feudalism” was the cause of the Arab defeat and that the agrarian question and the Arab national cause were closely linked. The party marked its transformation into the Arab Socialist Party (ASP) in 1950 by convening a peasant congress in Aleppo attended by at least 40,000 people. The ASP's 10,000 members included sunni and Christian horticulturalists and sharecroppers from Hama and other regions, 'Alawis, and Druze, making it an all-Syrian class-based peasant party. The ASP supported direct parliamentary elections and a secret ballot so landlords could not intimidate peasant voters; it also used violence against landlords who abused their sharecroppers. In 1952 the ASP merged with the Ba'ath Party. Though only eighty leading ASP members formally joined the Ba'ath, Hawrani's peasant followers remained loyal to him and lent a popular character to the Ba'ath, which had had a very limited and primarily student following until then.

Algeria: colons and landless peasants

The distribution of agricultural land was most inequitable and the status of peasants most dire in Algeria. By 1954 some 22,000 French landowners held over 2.7 million hectares of the best land, the great majority in large plots of over 100 hectares. The 631,000 Muslim landowners held almost 7.7 million hectares, mostly in small and medium-sized plots of 50 hectares or less. As grapevines replaced wheat as the leading crop, landless peasants shifted from sharecropping in wheat to wage labor in viticulture, which required five times more work days per hectare than wheat. This created a large, seasonally employed, agrarian semi-proletariat whose numbers peaked at 571,000 in 1954 (Bennoune 1988: 61–62; Wolf 1968: 231).

Underemployment of the rural population accelerated migration to Algiers, Oran, and other cities. Between 1936 and 1954 the total number of urban Muslims rose from 722,800 to 1.6 million. Many peasant migrants who failed to find work in the cities continued on to France,

especially after the 1947 legislation permitting free movement between Algeria and France. The annual number of Algerian migrants peaked at nearly 202,000 in 1955, when there was a total of 400,000 Algerian workers, mostly former peasants, in France (Bennoune 1988: 69, 77–78).

Turkey: peasant family farms and rollback of Kemalism

Unlike the Arab countries, 72.6 percent of Turkish agricultural holdings were owner operated in 1950, rising to 85.3 percent in 1963. Most of these were peasant family farms of less than 10 hectares (Margulies & Yıldızoğlu 1987: 276, 283). The Land Distribution Law of 1946 permitted redistribution from large to small owners. But the great majority of the 3.15 million hectares distributed to small holders and landless peasants between 1947 and 1959 consisted of state lands and communal pastures. Marshall Plan aid financed the importation of tractors and other machinery, which primarily benefited rich peasants and large landowners. Land distribution and mechanization increased the cropped area by 55 percent, which contributed to the spurt of growth in agricultural production from 1947 until the end of the Korean War in 1953 during which both peasant family farms and large landowners prospered (Hansen 1991: 341; Owen & Pamuk 1999: 106–10). These favorable conditions allowed the Democrat Party to leaven its pro-business, agriculture-led economic policy with a certain populism. Seeking to roll back Kemalism, the DP ended the most substantial intervention of the state in village life: the village institutes established in 1940 to instruct peasants in secular modernity (Ahmad 1993: 83–84). Hence, the DP was popular among peasants despite its pro-business outlook.

Declining crop prices after the Korean War and hopes for a better life in the city led one out of ten Turkish villagers to migrate to an urban area from 1950 to 1960. The size of the four largest cities increased by 75 percent, and urban dwellers grew to 26 percent of the total population (Keyder 1987: 137). In the early 1960s some 45–60 percent of the population of Ankara, Istanbul, and Adana and 33 percent of the population in Izmir lived in squatter settlements known as *gecekondus* (Karpas 1976: 11).

Nationalism and urban social radicalism

The prominence of the Soviet Union in the international anti-fascist coalition brought Marxism to the attention of many intellectuals in the 1930s and 1940s. The concepts of class, exploitation, and imperialism offered a plausible explanation for the dismaying conditions of peasants and urban working classes and the collaboration of large landowners and

other elites with European political and economic domination. Allied wartime promises raised expectations for a postwar era of independence and economic development. Coalitions of intellectuals and urban workers infused postwar demands for independence with a new social radicalism. In addition to Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq which are discussed here, there were comparable developments in Sudan and Iran (Warburg 1978; Abrahamian 1982).

Palestine: Marxism and national conflict¹

The Palestine Communist Party (PCP) spoke in the name of both the Arab and Jewish working classes and sought to provide an alternative to the contending nationalisms. Opposition to Zionism and the leadership of the Arab Higher Committee marginalized the party in both communities, and Arab-Jewish unity was badly strained by the 1936-39 Arab Revolt. The growth of the Arab working class during World War II allowed Marxism to become a significant force in the Arab labor movement, while the Soviet Union's leading role in the anti-Nazi struggle after 1941 made it attractive to a larger Jewish audience than before.

There were four trade union organizations in Palestine in the 1940s. The Histadrut was the central institution of labor Zionism and the entire Jewish community and the vehicle for implementing the labor Zionist policy of promoting exclusively Hebrew labor. It included the great majority of Jewish workers except known communists, and many non-workers as well. Inspired by the labor Zionist notion that Jewish settlement would bring economic development to Palestine and liberate Arab society from domination by the landed notables, the Histadrut tried half-heartedly to organize Arab workers in the Palestine Labor League (Ittihad 'Ummal Filastin/Brit Po'alei Eretz Yisra'el). Some Arab workers cooperated with the Histadrut in certain circumstances. Even they were justifiably suspicious that it would eventually seek to place Jews in their jobs.

The Palestine Arab Workers' Society (PAWS - Jam'iyyat al-'Ummal al-'Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya) was established in Haifa in 1925. Its core was comprised of the Arab members of the short-lived Arab-Jewish railway workers' union who left the joint organization when the Jews refused to sever their ties with the Histadrut. In 1942, new branches were established, some led by communists and other leftists who preferred to remain in the PAWS despite its conservative social orientation and the undemocratic leadership of Sami Taha. The nominal national membership of the PAWS in the mid-1940s was about five thousand, though less than five hundred paid dues.

In 1942 young Marxist intellectuals led by Bulus Farah, who had recently been expelled from the PCP for his nationalist views, established the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies (FATULS – *Ittihad al-Niqabat wa'l-Jam'iyat al-'Arabiyya*). By the end of the year, it recruited 1,000–1,500 members, including workers in the Haifa-area petroleum sector, the Haifa port, and the British military camps. Thus by 1943 Marxists led much of the organized Arab working class.

The cost-of-living index rose from 100 in 1936 to 103 in 1939, 269 in 1943, and 295 in 1945, sharply eroding real wages. Government workers received a cost-of-living allowance (COLA) in late 1941. This proved inadequate as prices continued to rise. Wages and working conditions at the British military bases were worse than average, and the camp workers did not receive the COLA. In April 1943 the Histadrut began competing with the PAWS to organize and speak for both Jewish and Arab camp workers. The Histadrut decided not to cooperate with the PAWS and unilaterally proclaimed a strike on May 10 to obtain the COLA. Thousands of Arab workers joined the strike, but the majority refused to follow the Histadrut's leadership and responded to the PAWS appeal not to strike. The issue of Arab–Jewish cooperation faded away in June when the government announced that it would grant a new COLA that would apply to camp workers.

The May 10 camp workers' strike was the proximate cause of the demise of Arab–Jewish unity in the PCP. Arab communists active in the PAWS, in accord with party policy, tried to convince the Arab workers not to strike. Most Jewish communists, though critical of its unilateral action, sought to rejoin the Histadrut and refused to ask Jewish workers to break the strike.

The camp strike and the dissolution of the Comintern the same month encouraged young Arab intellectuals in the PCP influenced by Bulus Farah to assert a more national orientation. They provoked a split by distributing a leaflet describing the PCP as an "Arab national party." By early 1944, most Arab Marxists regrouped in a new Arab organization – the National Liberation League (NLL – *'Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani*), which adopted as its organ the previously established weekly of the FATULS, *al-Ittihad* (Unity). The NLL was a social movement representing the young, mostly Christian intelligentsia and the nascent working class: social strata that were marginal to the existing Palestinian Arab political system. Its program advocating working-class social demands, democracy, and national liberation was a common post-World War II communist strategy.

Both the FATULS and the left wing of the PAWS supported the NLL. When Sami Taha attempted to dictate the composition of the PAWS del-

egation to the founding congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions in August 1945, the left wing of the PAWS joined with the FATULS in forming the Arab Workers' Congress (AWC – Ittihad al-'Ummal al-'Arab), which quickly became the largest and most important Arab labor organization in Palestine. It claimed 20,000 members in 1945 and was the leading Arab union federation in Jaffa, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Nazareth. In Haifa, it challenged the historic primacy of the PAWS. Two AWC leaders – Fu'ad Nassar, the former head of the Nazareth PAWS branch, and Khalil Shanir, a veteran communist and former head of the Jaffa PAWS branch – joined the NLL central committee.

Because of the internationalist background of many of its leaders, the AWC was amenable to joint action with the Histadrut on economic issues. In September 1945, the two unions organized a seven-day strike of 1,300 workers at the British military workshops outside Tel Aviv. They demanded union recognition, payment of the COLA, relaxation of disciplinary rules, and rehiring of unjustly fired workers. Arab and Jewish strikers established picket lines at the work site and marched through Tel Aviv chanting in Arabic and Hebrew, "Long live unity between Arab and Jewish Workers."

The partial success of this strike encouraged the Histadrut to collaborate with the AWC in addressing the demands of the camp workers. The PAWS was stronger than the AWC among the Arab camp workers and less inclined to work with the Histadrut. But prompted by the announcement of a new round of layoffs, the three unions agreed to call a one-day strike of the 40,000 workers on May 20, 1947. The Histadrut leaders declined further joint action because they feared that a protracted strike might advance the Arab nationalist cause just as the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine was due to arrive in the country. They believed Sami Taha was an ally of the exiled titular head of the Arab Higher Committee, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni.

In fact, a rift between Taha and al-Husayni had been developing since late 1946, when the PAWS adopted a resolution endorsing a vague socialism. Taha had begun to speak about forming an Arab labor party and to explore the possibility of a compromise with the Zionists. On September 12, 1947 he was assassinated. The assailant was never identified but was widely presumed to be acting on behalf of Amin al-Husayni.

The AWC and the NLL were severely weakened by splits in the wake of the Soviet Union's support for the UN proposal to partition Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. Unlike all the other Arab political forces, the NLL recognized the civic rights of Jews in a future democratic state of Palestine and distinguished between Zionism and the Jews of Palestine. But it envisioned a unitary state whose character would be determined by

the fact that there was a large Arab majority in Palestine up to 1948. The split over the partition question, the closure of *al-Ittihad* by the British authorities in 1948, and the expulsion and flight of over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs during 1947–49 incapacitated the AWC and NLL. The left-national movement they promoted was too young and the Arab–Jewish working-class solidarity they aspired to build too limited to withstand the force of the Arab–Zionist conflict.

Egypt: the rise and limits of working-class radicalism²

Towards the end of World War II, some 250,000 Egyptian workers were dismissed from war-related jobs. Unemployment was exacerbated by sharp fluctuations in production and intensified mechanization in the textile industry. The cost-of-living index rose from 100 in 1939 to 331 in 1952, and real wages did not keep pace. These conditions, along with the escalating agrarian crisis, the military defeat in Palestine, the debauchery and corruption of King Faruq, and the continuing British occupation informed the amalgam of radical trade union and nationalist mobilization that contributed to the demise of the monarchy.

By 1942, the Shubra al-Khayma textile workers' union, led by Taha Sa'd 'Uthman, Mahmud al-'Askari, and their allies in the future New Dawn communist group, established itself as the most militant and politically independent-minded group of Egyptian workers. In September 1945 the textile union leaders, along with Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik and the labor lawyer Yusuf Darwish, founded the Workers' Committee for National Liberation (Lajnat al-'Ummal lil-Tahrir al-Qawmi) and a newspaper, *al-Damir* (The Conscience). Alarmed by these developments, the police and army instituted heavy patrolling of Shubra al-Khayma in mid-December, precipitating a nine-day strike in January 1946 that targeted both the government and continuing layoffs in the textile industry. The Society of Muslim Brothers challenged the leadership of the Marxists and their allies during this strike and afterwards. Despite support from the government, they achieved only limited and temporary successes.

A police attack on a student demonstration demanding evacuation of British troops on February 9, 1946 prompted the formation of the National Committee of Workers and Students (NCWS – al-Lajna al-Wataniyya lil-'Ummal w'al-Talaba) – a coalition supported by the communist groups – New Dawn, Iskra, and the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (EMNL – al-Haraka al-Misriyya lil-Tahrir al-Watani) – and the radical wing of the Wafd, the Wafdist Vanguard. The NCWS called for a general strike and demonstration on February 21,

1946, designated as "Evacuation Day." Thousands of workers from Shubra al-Khayma joined a crowd estimated at between 40,000 and 100,000 in the Cairo demonstration.

The fusion of radical trade unionism and militant nationalism embodied in the NCWS inspired efforts to establish a national trade union federation. After some initial factional contention, trade unionists linked to the EMNL and New Dawn agreed to join forces, just as a second strike broke out at some nineteen textile mills in Shubra al-Khayma in May 1946. The united federation, the Congress of Trade Unions of Egypt (Mu'tamar Niqabat 'Ummal al-Qatr al-Misri), called for a general strike on June 25 to support the Shubra al-Khayma strikers and to demand a government campaign against unemployment, restoration of all fired workers to their jobs, and immediate evacuation of all British forces from the Nile valley. This was far more than a newly formed, Cairo-centered organization could realistically attain. Isma'il Sidqi Pasha had been reappointed prime minister in February with the understanding that he was to crush the working-class and nationalist upsurge. When the labor radicals overextended themselves, he struck. On July 11 he arrested the labor federation leaders and proscribed all the left and labor periodicals and associations, including the nascent trade union federation.

Despite this setback, a new wave of labor and radical nationalist collective action began in the fall of 1947 after the Sidqi-Bevin talks failed to renegotiate the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty. The most dramatic event of this period was the strike of the 26,000 workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill in al-Mahalla al-Kubra in September 1947 in response to layoffs and the harsh and paternalistic regime of labor control. This upsurge was ended by the declaration of martial law on May 13, 1948, two days before the Egyptian army invaded Palestine.

From mid-1951 until January 1952 suburban Cairo textile workers once again emerged as the center of gravity of the radical current in the workers' movement. Their most prominent leaders, Muhammad 'Ali 'Amr and Muhammad Shatta, were members of the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL – al-Haraka al-Dimuqratiyya lil-Tahrir al-Watani), formed by the merger of Iskra and the EMNL in 1947. Communists also established themselves in other sectors, including the Congress of Egyptian Joint Transport Drivers' and Workers' Unions founded in June 1951 and led by DMNL members Hasan 'Abd al-Rahman and Sayyid Khalil Turk. Trade union and nationalist struggle converged once again when the 71,000 workers employed at the British base in the Suez Canal Zone went on strike to support the Wafd government's abrogation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty on October 8, 1951.

In this atmosphere of popular mobilization, DMNL trade union

leaders formed the Preparatory Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (PCGFETU – al-Lajna al-Tahdiriyya lil-Ittihad al-‘Amm li-Niqabat ‘Ummal Misr). This effort to build a national trade union federation by promoting working-class-inflected nationalism won the DMNL many new allies. By December, 104 unions with nearly 65,000 workers – nearly half of all union members – adhered to the PCGFETU. The organization planned a founding congress for a national trade union federation on January 27, 1952. The Cairo fire of January 26 and the proclamation of martial law prevented the conference from convening and signaled the impending end of the monarchy.

The DMNL was the only communist group to support Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir and the Free Officers who overthrew the Egyptian monarchy on July 23, 1952, but its hope to exercise influence over the new regime was quickly disappointed. The Free Officers’ first act in the realm of economic and social policy was to suppress the strike of textile workers at Kafr al-Dawwar in August 1952 and hang two of its leaders. ‘Abd al-Nasir refused to allow the founding congress for a national trade union federation to convene until 1957, after several campaigns of arrests eliminated communists from most of their positions of influence in the trade unions.

Iraq: communism and the end of the monarchy³

The number of Iraqi industrial and transport workers employed in enterprises of one hundred or more increased from 13,140 in 1926 to 62,519 in 1954, or 375 percent. Over half of them were employed in greater Baghdad or Basra. Maldistribution of oil wealth augmented normal wartime inflation, making the gap between the wealthy few and the poor majority exceptionally wide. From 1939 to 1948 the price-of-food index rose 805 percent, while average wages of unskilled workers increased only 400 percent. Salaries of civil servants, teachers, clerks, journalists, and army officers also lagged far behind the rate of inflation. These rapidly growing sectors of the urban population, along with students, formed the base of support of the Communist Party of Iraq (CPI). Led by Yusuf Salman Yusuf (Fahd), the CPI became the only truly national political party and the best-organized force in the trade union movement in the 1940s.

Twelve of the sixteen trade unions legalized during 1944–46 were led by the CPI. The largest and most important of these, the Railway Workers’ Union, enrolled a third of the 10,800 railway workers; its president was the communist locomotive driver ‘Ali Shukur. On April 15, 1945 most of the 1,265 workers at the Schalchiyya railway workshops in Baghdad and some workers outside the capital struck the British-

managed Railway Directorate demanding a 30–50 percent wage increase. The strike committee was arrested and the union suppressed, but the workers won wage increases of 20–30 percent. Lack of a recognized union did not deter the railway workers from responding to further strike calls from the CPI on February 27, 1946 and three times in March–May 1948.

The 3,125 members of the Basra Port workers' union, 60 percent of the total workforce, were led by the communist 'Abd al-Hasan al-Jabbar. They struck for five days in May 1947, demanding higher wages. The government responded by dissolving the union and arresting the leadership. The union was broken after three additional strikes in April–May 1948.

The oil industry employed 12,750 blue- and white-collar workers in 1946. After their request to form a union was denied, a committee led by four communist workers organized a strike on July 3, 1946. Some 5,000 workers, most of the local labor force, marched peacefully through Kirkuk on July 4. On July 12, mounted police attacked workers who had gathered in a garden to hear news of the strike, killing ten and wounding twenty-seven. This unprovoked police attack radicalized the oil workers even though they received a daily wage increase from 200 to 310 *fi*ls, and the CPI's organizational capacity was weakened by the arrest of the strike committee.

Leadership of these strikes prepared the CPI to play a major role in the largest popular insurrection of the monarchy: the *wathba*, or leap, of January 1948. As in Egypt, British refusal to accept full Iraqi independence combined with urban social distress to forge a coalition of students and workers. On January 16, 1948 the Portsmouth Agreement, extending the presence of the British air bases in Iraq, was announced. The Student Cooperation Committee, led by communists and supported by the other opposition forces, responded with three days of strikes and demonstrations. On January 20 the students were joined by the Schalchiyya railway workers and poor migrants to Baghdad from 'Amara and the southeast. Police fired on the demonstrators, who returned the next day to face the bullets once again. The massive popular response forced the regent's renunciation of the Portsmouth Agreement and the resignation of the prime minister.

The social mobilization of the *wathba* continued with a strike of over 3,000 oil workers at the K3 pumping station near Haditha in April 1948. They demanded wage increases of 25–40 percent. After striking for three weeks, the workers, led by the CPI, began to march towards Baghdad on May 12. They were warmly supported by the people of Hit and Ramadi. At Falluja, some 70 kilometers from Baghdad, the police intervened and arrested the strikers. Despite its failure, the Great March became a legend

in Iraqi politics and enhanced the CPI's prestige among workers and other opponents of the regime.

The CPI was seriously weakened by successive waves of repression in the 1950s. Nonetheless, it retained sufficient strength to participate in the nationalist upsurges of 1952 and 1956. It was a key component of the civilian coalition that supported the Free Officers led by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim who overthrew the monarchy on July 14, 1958.

Armed struggle in Algeria and Yemen

The post-World War II Algerian nationalist movement differed from those of Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq due to its peasant base, the marginal role of communists, and the armed struggle. North African Star and its successors infused Algerian nationalism with a strong working-class, Marxist-influenced element. Its leader, Messali Hadj, never joined the National Liberation Front (FLN), which launched the armed struggle for independence on November 1, 1954, though most of his followers did.

The dire situation of peasants and agricultural wage workers impelled the radical orientation of Algerian nationalism. Even the relatively moderate Manifesto of the Algerian People drafted by Ferhat Abbas after the Allied landing in North Africa in November 1942 demanded "the abolition of feudal property by a major agrarian reform and the right to well being of the immense agricultural proletariat" (Ruedy 1992: 146). The political program formulated by the FLN at its Soummam Valley Congress in 1956 endorsed agrarian reform and a vague commitment socialism. To the extent that the FLN's armed struggle succeeded, it was a peasant-based movement.

Workers' economic struggles became a component of the nationalist movement because most employers were *colons*. In response to the refusal of the communist-affiliated trade union federation to address the national demands of Muslim Algerian workers, Messali Hadj founded a nationalist union federation in February 1956. The next month the FLN established the Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA), seeking to outflank its rival. The UGTA functioned as the legal urban arm of the FLN, though its leadership was more consistently left wing. It organized a general strike in January 1957 to coincide with the debate on Algeria at the UN. After the FLN defeat in the Battle of Algiers, the UGTA went underground, and its leadership went into exile. It remained neutral in the factional violence that tore the FLN apart as it came to power at the end of the French colonial regime in 1962 (Alexander 1996a: 61–62).

The South Yemeni struggle against British colonial rule is the only other case of a successful armed struggle against colonial rule. Urban

workers were more prominent in South Yemen than in Algeria, and the post-colonial regime was more firmly committed to socialism. The Aden Trades Union Congress, formed in 1956 with twenty-five constituent unions, combined trade union and nationalist struggle. It supported the armed struggle that began in 1963 and ousted the British from South Yemen in 1967; and it was a champion of the socialist policies of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (Murshid 1981).

Post-colonial, authoritarian-populist regimes

The grievances and collective actions of workers, peasants, and their allies among the intelligentsia popularized the notion that truly independent national governments would serve the needs of workers and peasants. Except in Algeria and South Yemen, they were not the decisive forces that dislodged the colonial and semi-colonial regimes and the structure of landed power. In the monarchies of Egypt and Iraq and the newly independent republic of Syria, in which the landed classes remained dominant, the old regimes were overthrown by army officers, many of whom, especially in Syria, had their roots in rural areas. Even in Algeria, the regular armies based in Morocco and Tunisia during the revolutionary war, not the peasant-based guerrillas, became the dominant power after independence.

Egypt under Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, Syria under several military regimes, especially Ba'ṯh rule since 1963, Iraq after the Free Officers' overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, and independent Algeria were authoritarian-populist regimes speaking in the name of "the people," "the toilers," or the "popular classes." The political discourse of these regimes was infused with the vocabulary of class, exploitation, and imperialism drawn from the Marxist lexicon. Like similar ideologies in Africa and Latin America, Nasirism, Ba'ṯhism, and other varieties of Middle Eastern authoritarian-populism rejected the notion of class struggle in favor of corporatism. Trade union and peasant federations were linked to the state apparatus. Collective actions of workers and peasants that exceeded authorized boundaries were quashed. The magnanimity of the state, not popular initiative, was the source of improvements in the standard of living and social status of workers and peasants.

The key economic and social policies of these regimes were state-led development, agrarian reform, import-substitution industrialization, and social benefits for workers and white-collar employees in a greatly expanded public sector – a package commonly designated "Arab socialism." This was often accompanied by a commitment, if only rhetorical in many cases, to pan-Arab nationalism. This political orientation became

so popular that even Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba, distinguished by his pragmatic pro-western views, authorized a "socialist experiment" during the 1960s, albeit with a rather anti-labor and pro-business, pro-landowner orientation.

Because of the absence of a colonial past, political currents in Turkey differ from those in the Arab countries, but its course of economic development after 1960 is comparable. Economic growth stalled after the Korean War, and the Democrat Party was compelled to adopt some statist measures. A coup by junior army officers on May 27, 1960 reinstated state-led, import-substitution industrial development and economic planning. The 1961 constitution guaranteed workers' rights to unionize, to strike, and to engage in collective bargaining for the first time. Nearly 300,000 of the 869,000 eligible workers were union members at this time (Işıklı 1987: 316). The more permissive atmosphere allowed the formation of the Turkish Labor Party (TLP – Türkiye İşçi Partisi) in 1961, though the Communist Party remained illegal.

Land reform in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria

The coup of July 23, 1952 ended the Egyptian monarchy and was popularly legitimized by the land reform enacted in September 1952. The law set a rather high ceiling of 200 *faddans* on land ownership (300 for a family), gradually reduced to 50 *faddans* (100 for a family) by 1969. Accompanying measures – an agricultural minimum wage, tenancy reforms, and limiting agricultural rents to seven times the land tax – probably contributed more than land redistribution to raising peasants' standard of living. The reform was substantial, but not revolutionary. It broke the political power of the large landowners. But their property was not expropriated, and the agrarian system continued to be based on highly unequal distribution of privately owned land. Large owners were allowed to sell all their lands over the limit. The buyers were primarily middle and rich peasants, whose numbers increased as a result of the reform. After the 1952 reform, 94.4 percent of landowners held 46.6 percent of the land in plots of less than 5 *faddans*; 0.4 percent of owners held 20.3 percent of the land in plots of 50 *faddans* or more. About 15 percent of the cultivable land was redistributed, and the landless rural population was reduced from 60 percent in 1950 to 43 percent in 1970. The share of the agricultural income received by wage workers and owners of less than 5 *faddans* doubled. Government-sponsored cooperatives replaced large landowners in organizing production and marketing, providing credits, and supplying seeds and fertilizers (Abdel-Fadil 1975; Hinnebusch 1985: 27; Radwan & Lee 1986: 8–9).

Land reforms in Syria and Iraq had similar social and political effects, though somewhat more land was confiscated from large owners. Syria enacted a modest land reform after joining with Egypt in the short-lived United Arab Republic (1958–61). The Ba‘th regime that came to power in 1963, and even more so the radical Ba‘th rule of 1966–70, reduced the ceilings on ownership, accelerated the pace of reform, and ultimately confiscated 22 percent of the cultivated land. Large landowners retained 15 percent of the cultivated area, including much of the best land (Hinnebusch 1989: 87–100; Batatu 1999: 29–37, 162–70).

The Iraqi land reform of September 1958 limited individual holdings to a generous 1,000 *dunums* of irrigated or 2,000 *dunums* of rain-fed land. The March 1959 uprising of Nasirist army officers demanding that Iraq join Egypt and Syria in the UAR briefly led ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim to ally more closely with the communists. The CPI used this opportunity to organize extensively among peasants. The regime authorized the establishment of peasant societies, and Qasim addressed the founding congress of the Federation of Peasant Societies on April 15. By the end of 1959, communists had won leadership of 2,267 of the 3,577 peasant societies. The spread of communist influence in the countryside was stemmed by Qasim’s rebuff of the communist bid to share power and the repression of the party after Kurdish communists participated in a massacre of Turkmens in Kirkuk in July 1959. The second Ba‘th regime that seized power in 1968 initiated more radical and sophisticated measures, canceling compensation payments to large landowners, reducing the ceilings on ownership, and recalculating the size of plots to be redistributed to take into consideration fertility and access to water. By 1973, 22.7 percent of the cultivable land was redistributed to peasants and 34.5 percent was rented out to peasants by the State Organization for Agrarian Reform. The Iraqi land reform was more radical than those of Egypt and Syria, in part because of the influential role of the communists in 1958–59. Nonetheless, in 1972, 2.7 percent of all landowners still owned 31.3 percent of the cultivable land, including much of the most fertile lands (Gabbay 1978: 108–20, 129–31; Batatu 1978: 1116–20; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1987).

Redistribution of land in Algeria began as a revolutionary initiative of agricultural workers. During 1962, the UGTA encouraged workers to seize the farms and businesses of departed *colons* and manage them as cooperatives. At its height, this experiment in self-management (*autogestion*) encompassed 30 percent of the cultivable land. The FLN originally embraced *autogestion* but abandoned it after 1965. The land became state property, and farms were centrally managed by the state apparatus. The 1971 Charter of Agrarian Revolution abolished *sharecropping*, canceled

sharecroppers' debts, and proclaimed that absentee owners of more than 5 hectares were to be expropriated. But by 1977 only a third of some 3 million eligible hectares had been transferred to the agrarian reform sector, largely due to the resistance of medium and large landowners. Algeria was much less successful than Egypt, Syria, and Iraq in redistributing land and raising agricultural productivity (Clegg 1971; Pfeifer 1985; Ruedy 1992: 221–23).

The Kamshish Affair: agrarian reform in a culture of fear

The authoritarian-populist regimes broke the political dominance of the landed elite through land reforms, but middle and rich peasants were the main beneficiaries. In many cases, families from the second stratum of local notables under the old regimes preserved much of their wealth and influence. Agrarian bureaucracies deepened state intervention in rural life more than they empowered poor peasants. The salient example of these outcomes is Egypt's Kamshish Affair (Ansari 1986: 19–49).

The Fiqqis were local notables in the village of Kamshish north of Cairo who had become large landowners in the nineteenth century. In the 1950s, Salah Husayn Maqlad, a member of the Muslim Brothers who had a property dispute with the Fiqqis, led the peasants in confronting the Fiqqis' local power. The breakup of the UAR in 1961 led the Nasir regime to adopt a new ideological orientation – Arab socialism – and a new single party – the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). The new course included more radical measures against landed property; the limit on land ownership was reduced to 100 *faddans*. The Fiqqis' lands were sequestered and redistributed to 200 of the 576 poor peasant families in Kamshish, each receiving an average of 2 *faddans*. Most of the Fiqqis were exiled from the village. Salah Husayn Maqlad was politically rehabilitated in late 1965. He became an ASU activist and resumed his campaign against the Fiqqis. This aroused the ire of the State Security Services, who accused Maqlad of spreading Marxism and advocating collectivized agriculture. On April 30, 1966, as he was returning from Cairo, where he had urged the ASU Secretariat for Peasant Affairs to expropriate the Fiqqi mansions and turn them into educational and health facilities, Salah Husayn Maqlad was assassinated.

In response to the assassination, the Higher Committee to Liquidate Feudalism was formed and charged with investigating the extent to which “feudalists,” such as the Fiqqis, had undermined land reform and Arab socialism. Members of the two recently dissolved communist parties and other leftists hoped that this signaled a firmer commitment to socialism by the regime. In fact, it was the high-water mark of Arab socialism, both locally in Kamshish and nationally.

Authorities in Kamshish opposed efforts to hold memorial meetings for Salah Husayn Maqlad, led by his wife Shahinda. In January 1967 local authorities clashed with peasants protesting against the governor's dismissal of the local ASU secretary and arrested thirty-seven peasant leaders. None of those convicted of Maqlad's murder in May 1968 were closely related to the most influential members of the Fiqqi family. In 1969, a court upheld Muhammad al-Fiqqi's right to evict former tenants who occupied his land. The first desequestrations of land were announced in July 1967. The policy statement of March 30, 1968 was the first official sign of retreat from Arab socialism and the program of authoritarian-populism (Cooper 1982). It allowed so-called "feudalists" who had been investigated by the Higher Committee to Liquidate Feudalism to be elected to the ASU Executive Bureau.

Before its demise, the Higher Committee to Liquidate Feudalism reported 330 cases in Egypt's roughly 5,000 villages where rural notables had abused their power. One such account from the Delta village of Ghazalat 'Abdun relates that Ahmad Hasan 'Abdun – a Wafdist parliamentary deputy before 1952 and village headman until 1955 – had violated the land-reform law by failing to report 37 *faddans* over the limit. The extended 'Abdun family owned a total of 290 *faddans*. Ahmad Hasan had no written contracts with his tenants. He had committed eleven discrete acts of beating and torture of specific individuals and general terrorizing of the community, including burning down the warehouse of the agricultural cooperative when the clerk refused to allot him more than his quota of fertilizer. Although these incidents were known in the village, "no one dared accuse him out of fear" (Ansari 1986: 259).

The existence of only 330 reports does not demonstrate that such cases were exceptional. Rather, as Timothy Mitchell argues, the language of the report on Ghazalat 'Abdun suggests that the peasants were dominated by a culture of fear that is obscured by the centralized conception of power, the focus on individuals to the exclusion of social classes, and the positioning of researchers as objective outsiders in most studies of peasant life (Mitchell 1991a). It is impossible to know how typical the case of Ghazalat 'Abdun may be because a culture of fear cannot be discerned by studying the behavior and attitudes of individuals and public politics. That the full measure of coercion practiced against peasants cannot be ascertained is precisely an expression of their subaltern status.

The Higher Committee for the Liquidation of Feudalism did not mobilize and empower peasants and thus could not transform their status. Its effect was ultimately to control peasant radicalism by subjecting grievances to a bureaucratic routine whose results were subject to political bargaining. Nonetheless, its documentary record, if critically and

sympathetically interrogated, can teach us something about the role of violence in peasant life that is commonly overlooked.

The limits of import-substitution industrialization

Industrial, clerical, and service workers in the greatly expanded public sector typically benefited from state-led development more than peasants because of the urban bias of import-substitution industrialization. They were encouraged to join trade unions and national labor federations linked to ruling parties and states. Union members received job security, higher wages, shorter hours, health care, unemployment insurance, pensions, and access to consumer cooperatives. In exchange, they gave up internal union democracy and the right to make economic and political demands unauthorized by the regimes. The state and labor federation leaders struck a corporatist bargain which might be renegotiated if necessary, but excluded initiatives by rank-and-file workers. As in the agricultural sector, urban middle strata and the privileged sectors of the working-class benefited disproportionately from the expansion of the public sector and increased social spending (Abdel-Fadil 1980; Beinín 1989; Longuenesse 1980: 354–57; Longuenesse 1985; Bianchi 1984: 212–13, 233–37; Batatu 1978: 1095–96, 1127–29; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1987: 139–40; Alexander 1996a).

Import-substitution industrialization relies on importing machinery and sometimes also raw materials, while its manufactured products are locally marketed. The local market is protected by high tariffs and restrictions on trading in foreign currency. Hence, there is a tendency towards foreign currency shortages. The income-redistribution objectives of authoritarian populism may conflict with the need to increase investment to expand industry. These contradictions led to crises of import-substitution industrialization and state-led development in Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey in the late 1960s. The regimes responded to these crises by imposing austerity measures and reducing social expenditures. Workers and trade unions then began to challenge the old corporatist bargains and play a more salient political role than they had done since independence. The defeat of these resistance movements was one of the markers of the end of authoritarian-populism and the emergence of anti-popular, bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.

Tunisia: a brief “socialist experiment”

The Tunisian trade union federation established in 1946, the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), was the strongest labor federa-

tion in the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s. It collaborated closely with the Neo-Destour Party, which successfully negotiated independence in 1956 and renamed itself the Destourian Socialist Party (PSD) during Tunisia's socialist phase (Alexander 1996a: 76–93).

The leading proponent of socialism, former UGTT secretary general Ahmad Ben Salah, became minister of national economy in 1961. He advocated imposing austerity measures to build socialism. Ben Salah's principal supporters in the UGTT were the unions of white-collar civil servants. They were more willing and able to make such sacrifices than the blue-collar workers who were led by Habib Achour and loyal to President Bourguiba. The white-collar workers' connection to Ben Salah enabled them to win pay raises for teachers and other civil servants in 1968, while the more militant and populist blue-collar unions did not receive wage increases. During the late summer and early fall of 1969 phosphate miners, railway workers, and dockers loyal to Achour launched wildcat strikes protesting against the regime's socialist austerity program (Alexander 1996a: 109–24).

Ben Salah and his policies were dislodged by an alliance of capitalists, especially the large landowners of the Sahel, who feared he would include their lands in an expanded agricultural cooperative program, and lower-paid blue-collar workers who were unwilling to tolerate the erosion of their wages and working conditions to build a form of socialism from which there seemed to be little prospect that they would benefit. After dismissing Ben Salah, Bourguiba engineered the installation of his ally Habib Achour as secretary general of the UGTT in January 1970. The UGTT and the PSD were purged of oppositional elements. A new corporatist agreement between the UGTT and the employers' association including a minimum wage, a small salary increase, and collective contracts was imposed in 1972. To complement these measures, in 1974 Bourguiba had himself declared "president for life" (Alexander 1996a: 151–58).

Egypt: military defeat and labor resurgence

In Egypt, unionized workers at first expressed national solidarity by supporting the austerity measures imposed after the devastating defeat by Israel in the 1967 war. The first protests against wage reductions were a response to exposures of corruption and mismanagement in the public sector in late 1968 (Posusney 1997: 142). The death of Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir in September 1970 and Anwar al-Sadat's consolidation of power by the arrest of leading Nasirists on May 15, 1971 created an opening to articulate economic demands that first emerged during the economic

crisis of 1965–66 but were postponed by the 1967 war and the 1969–70 war of attrition over the Suez Canal.

During 1971 and 1972, workers struck at several large public-sector enterprises: the Misr Helwan Spinning and Weaving Company, the Iron and Steel Company, and the port of Alexandria. Cairo taxi drivers, mostly owner-operators, also struck, and thousands of private-sector textile workers in Shubra al-Khayma demonstrated for higher wages. These workers' collective actions, by far the largest since the early 1950s, were not authorized by trade union leaders. They were simultaneously a protest against the limits of the corporatist bargain struck with Nasirist authoritarian populism and a warning to Anwar al-Sadat not to roll back gains achieved under Nasirism. The government responded with a combination of conciliation and repression. The General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (GFETU – al-Ittihad al-‘Amm li-Niqabat ‘Ummal Misr) denounced the August 1971 strike of the Iron and Steel Company workers. Several strike leaders were fired, and many were transferred to other workplaces. The ASU unit in the plant was dissolved, and the local union leaders were isolated. Prime Minister ‘Aziz Sidqi personally went to Shubra al-Khayma after the demonstrations there and promised to raise the minimum wage and improve sick-leave policy for private-sector workers (‘Adli 1993: 267–68; Baklanoff 1988: 215–24).

The strikes and demonstrations of the early 1970s were accompanied by a resurgence of former communists who won leadership positions in several local unions and national federations in the July 1971 elections. One of them, Ahmad al-Rifa’i, was positioned to become the GFETU president. Instead, he and other like-minded leftists supported President al-Sadat’s candidate, Salah Gharib, hoping that avoiding a clash with the regime would encourage al-Sadat to expand trade union freedoms and their room for political action. After briefly collaborating with the leftists who supported his election, in March 1973 Gharib purged them from the GFETU executive committee and canceled both the annual convention and the executive committee elections. The political miscalculation of these leftist labor leaders strengthened Gharib’s hand and deprived the rank-and-file upsurge of potential organizational and political support. The GFETU became a reliable element of al-Sadat’s ruling coalition. It nominally opposed but did not mobilize resistance to the rollback of Nasirism (Posusney 1997: 95–100).

Turkey: radicalization of the labor movement

The Justice Party (JP), which opposed the orientation of the 1961 constitution, came to power in Turkey in 1965 and tried to reimpose tighter

control over labor. Turkish Labor Party supporters and other radicals in the Türk İş federation were isolated. In 1967 they broke away and formed the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DİSK – Devrimi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu). The JP then amended the electoral law to reduce the parliamentary representation of the TLP and enacted a trade union law granting Türk İş a virtually exclusive right of representation and participation in policy making in return for moderation in collective bargaining and exercising the right to strike. In response to these threats to pluralism and democracy in the labor movement, DİSK led the most substantial popular challenge to a corporatist bargain between labor and a regime anywhere in the Middle East.

On June 15–16, 1970, over 100,000 workers blocked the Istanbul–Ankara highway and immobilized the entire Istanbul–Marmara region. They battled the police and army with clubs in what the regime described as “the dress rehearsal for revolution.” Student-based new left groups, imagining that this was the case, began to rob banks, attack American institutions, and kidnap American soldiers. These adventurist actions undermined and discredited the workers’ social movement, which continued to grow nonetheless. From January 1 to March 12, 1971, more days were lost to strikes than in any full year since 1963 except 1966 (Margulies & Yıldızoğlu 1984; Bianchi 1984: 212; Ahmad 1993: 145–47).

The military coup of March 12, 1971 attempted to control social conflict and political violence by declaring martial law and banning the TLP. The coup broke the student new left. But the workers’ movement, after a decline in the mid-1970s, resumed with greater strength at the end of the decade.

The demise of the left–nationalist/Marxist historical paradigm

Popular struggles from the mid-1930s to the 1950s compelled authoritarian-populist Arab regimes, and in somewhat different terms the post-1960 coup Turkish government as well, to acknowledge workers and peasants as central components of the nation. Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir spoke often of an alliance of the army, workers, peasants, and national capitalists. Variations on this formula were common from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s (Waterbury 1989). These regimes proclaimed that the goal of national economic construction was improving the standard of living of working people, especially peasants, who still comprised as much as 75 percent of the population of Middle Eastern countries in the 1960s. The legitimacy of the regimes and the extent of popular tolerance for authoritarian rule depended on making substantial progress towards this goal.

Even when the limits of import-substitution industrialization were manifested in stagnation or decline in the standard of living of workers and peasants in the late 1960s, the prevailing political discourse required that their existence and interests be acknowledged.

Marxists and other leftists were politically marginalized by authoritarian-populist regimes. Despite their own persecution, all the Egyptian communist groups began to support the Nasirist regime based on its neutralist, anti-imperialist, and Arab nationalist policies: 'Abd al-Nasir's prominent role at the April 1955 Bandung Conference; the purchase of arms from Czechoslovakia in September 1955; the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956; and the establishment of the UAR in 1958. The independent political role of Egyptian communism was virtually ended when nearly all the communists were arrested in 1959 because they supported Iraq's refusal to join the UAR, a move that would have weakened or liquidated the CPI. The two communist parties dissolved themselves in 1964. Many former communist intellectuals assumed leading positions in the cultural and educational apparatus of the Arab Socialist Union; working-class former party members were generally not embraced by the regime.

'Abd al-Karim Qasim allied with the Communist Party based on their joint opposition to Iraq's joining the UAR. Ultimately, he was unwilling to share power and turned against the CPI in mid-1959. The Ba'thist regime of February–November 1963 that overthrew Qasim slaughtered hundreds of communists and jailed over 7,000, eliminating the CPI as a viable political force. The collaboration of remnants of the party with the second, post-1968 Ba'th regime had little impact on its character or policies.

The Communist Party of Algeria was crippled by its ties to its French sister party, which supported continued French rule as late as 1956. In July 1956 the CPA dissolved itself. Its members joined the FLN as individuals. The radical impulse of the Algerian revolution was blocked by the overthrow of the first president of independent Algeria, Ahmed Ben Bella, in 1965.

The only role open to communists and other leftists in the Arab authoritarian-populist regimes was to try to push them further to the left without arousing the ire of the ruling circles. Marxist and Marxisant intellectuals were authorized to write about the history and sociology of workers and peasants and their contributions to the nationalist movement (al-Shafī'i 1957; al-Nukhayli 1967; al-Ghazzali 1968; 'Izz al-Din 1967; 'Izz al-Din 1970; 'Izz al-Din 1972; Hanna 1973; Hanna 1975–78; Hanna 1990; Ahmad 1981; Bennoune 1988). Novels and films representing workers and peasants as the most worthy citizens of the nation

in a social realist style won official approval and popular acclaim (al-Sharqawi 1954; Idris 1959; Chahine 1958; Chahine 1979; Pontecorvo 1965). In many cases such projects were encouraged by the regimes as a way to domesticate radical intellectuals.

Most Arab Marxists embraced a strategy of stages: first the nationalist, anti-imperialist struggle, then the struggle for social progress and socialism. When it turned out that army officers were more effective than workers and peasants in overthrowing British and French imperialism and their local allies and that the Soviet Union accepted the military regimes as allies despite their refusal to adopt "scientific socialism," the Marxists reluctantly embraced them. The regimes accepted this embrace only if the Marxists abandoned their independent outlook or submerged it far beneath the surface. The strategy of stages provided a rationale for the deferral of class struggle and allowed the Marxists to continue to imagine that they spoke in the name of workers and peasants. In this way they unwittingly collaborated with the authoritarian-populist regimes in simultaneously empowering and disempowering workers and peasants.

6 Post-populist reformation of the working class and peasantry

Since the early 1970s, the working class and the peasantry of the Middle East have been socially reorganized. Simultaneously, their political salience has been discursively reconfigured. These processes are associated with the abandonment of state-led, import-substitution industrialization and other forms of economic nationalism and populist social policies of the previous period. Middle Eastern states fitfully adopted a new orientation towards reintegration into the world economy, encouragement of private enterprise, rollback of agrarian reform, and upward redistribution of national income. The timing, motivation, extent, and consequences of these transitions varied. But the trend across the region, and throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America, is indisputable.

Tunisia was the first country to turn away from statist development, symbolized by the ouster of Ahmad Ben Salah as minister of national economy in 1969. Egypt began to retreat from Arab socialism in March 1968, even before Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir's death, although the ideological elaboration of the new orientation did not occur until 1974. The 1980 military coup in Turkey brought to power a regime committed to neo-liberal economic policies. Oil wealth enabled Algeria to avoid facing the contradictions of import-substitution industrialization in the 1970s and to attempt to address them on its own terms at the end of the decade. The specificities of these cases suggest that monocausal or globalist explanations for the demise of state-led development policies – the theory linking these economic changes to the transition from authoritarian-populism to bureaucratic-authoritarianism (O'Donnell 1978), interpretations stressing pressures from the United States and Great Britain during the Reagan-Thatcher era as part of an effort to roll back economic nationalism (Bello 1994), or the all-pervasive power of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Abdel-Khalek 1981a; Amin 1995; Niblock 1993) – must be modified by the particularities of each case.

The impact of global economic changes, the consolidation of power by new elites of the authoritarian-populist states, and the rise of new local

collaborators with international capital were mediated by regional political developments: rivalries within ruling parties, the balance of social forces, and the collective actions of workers and urban crowds, but increasingly rarely, peasants. The political appeal of state-led development and import-substitution industrialization was dramatically undermined by Israel's massive defeat of the Arabs in June 1967. That debacle demonstrated that Arab socialism and pan-Arab nationalism had failed to effect a revolutionary transformation of Arab societies. They were even weaker relative to Israel than they had been in 1948. The 1967 defeat affected Egypt most immediately and strengthened the hand of those advocating a reconsideration of economic and social policy. The defeat of Nasirism and Ba'athism, suppression of the communists and the new left, and official encouragement of political Islam redrew the political, cultural, and economic contours of the Middle East.

The demise of state-led development was reinforced by the effects of the brief and very permeable Arab oil boycott following the 1973 war. The consequent oil-price spike intersected temporally with the end of the long wave of post-World War II capitalist expansion regulated by the institutions established in the wake of the 1944 Bretton Woods conference: the IMF, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, precursor of the World Trade Organization. In the industrialized capitalist countries, the Bretton Woods regime consolidated a Fordist regime of capital accumulation: industrial mass production, high fixed-capital investment, labor control through the time-motion discipline of assembly lines, wages high enough to sustain mass consumption, and universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy. After the depression of the 1930s this was modified by various Keynesian adjustments. The Bretton Woods system attempted to regulate the global expansion of Fordism–Keynesianism. Its success was predicated on the preeminence of the US economy, the US dollar and US military power.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Bretton Woods system began to break down. Japan and Europe reemerged as economic powers, while the US economy was overburdened by the simultaneous effort to fund "Great Society" social programs and the Vietnam War. The decline in the relative strength of the US economy was symbolized by the delinking of the dollar from gold in August 1971. The recessions in 1974–75 and 1980–82 were caused primarily by domestic factors in the centers of industrial capitalism: insufficient capital investment exacerbated by Reagan–Thatcher monetarist policies designed to eliminate inflation and break the bargaining power of organized labor. A decade of stagflation (stagflation and inflation) – the longest and deepest recessionary period since the end of World War II – ended the era of Fordism–Keynesianism.