Ma'rikat Al-Masir Al-Wahid (The Battle for a Common Future) by Michel Aflaq
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munism because of the antipathy supposed to exist between Islam and Communist ideology, but also those who today tend to equate Arab nationalism and Communism because of their common antagonism to the West. While middle-class nationalist leaders and Communists may operate as allies at certain junctures, their ultimate purposes are opposed. The West, Baulin maintains, has failed to take advantage of this fact, while the Soviet Union has played its cards well. The West itself, says Baulin, is today “one of the best agents of international Communism in the Arab East.”

What then is Baulin’s prescription for the West? It is to come to terms with the middle-class nationalism of the new and emerging states of Asia and Africa in order to cut the ground from under the Russians. The West should abandon its attitude of superiority in dealing with peoples of non-European culture. It should give up its policy of supporting “feudal” régimes in the interest of maintaining its economic concessions and should, if necessary, accept their nationalization. It should recognize the effective independence of its colonial dependencies and former dependencies and their right to pursue a policy of neutralism between Russia and the West. In view of the fact that the Soviet Union is already “in” the Middle East, the West should give serious consideration to Russian suggestions that the area be “neutralized” by joint agreement. Above all, the West should take the lead in organizing and supporting a massive, international program of economic aid to vitalize and industrialize the underdeveloped countries. With regard to the conflict between localism and unity in the Arab world, Baulin thinks that the West should adopt a cautious policy. He feels that local nationalisms have become too fully established to permit an organic union of the Arab peoples. He suggests, however, that the West should not oppose some form of confederation which might reconcile the aspirations of the Arabs for political union and the divergent interests of their local leaders.

Baulin’s analysis of twentieth-century nationalism in the underdeveloped areas is marked by both insight and hard-headed realism. His prescription for the West, though not original, might well be pondered in Washington, in London, and (with special reference to Algeria, which he does not specifically mention) in Paris.

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Reviewed by Malcolm H. Kerr

Michel Aflaq is well known in the Arab world, particularly in his native Syria, as the leading ideologue of the Arab Socialist Renaissance (Ba’th) Party, which among Arab nationalist parties is the most determined to provide the nationalist movement with an ideological content of genuine substance and purposeful orientation. The collection of writings by Aflaq here under review is a useful sample of the party’s professed concerns.

Ma’rikat al-Masîr al-Wâhid contains the texts of 34 speeches and newspaper editorials, almost all composed during 1956 and 1957. These cover such ideological topics as “the revolutionary nature of the Arab unity movement,” “the battle between superficial and fundamental existence,” “nationalism is a living truth with a positive humanist content” and “the struggle for unity is the struggle of the masses.” There are several articles on the prospects for Syro-Egyptian unification, on the Algerian question and on the Suez attack of 1956. But these latter articles are also largely devoted to ideological discussions. With the recurrence of key words and phrases throughout, the same essential themes emerge from almost every chapter.

The first of these themes is that the traditional slogans of Arab nationalism, and the modes of thought behind them, are too often “superficial,” “negative” and molded by circumstances. Arab nationalism must rise above simple denunciation of the familiar evils of colonialism, Zionism, sectarianism and feudalism. It must escape from the rigidity and sterility of propaganda psychology by finding its own unique “creativity”; it must profit from changing circumstances rather than be directed by
them; it must be “positive,” “fundamental,” “deep” and “humanist.” There are few pages in the entire book in which one of these terms does not appear. What precisely they mean to Aflaq is none too clear, however, and despite his evident sincerity, one wonders whether the author himself is not running unwittingly on a treadmill of slogans.

The second of Aflaq’s major themes is the need for a “popular” and “revolutionary” orientation of Arab nationalism. Here his position is clearer. The Ba’th calls for the harnessing of mass enthusiasms to the drive for Arab uni-

fuzziness of these words should not be attributed to the translation.

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Reviewed by Philip K. Hitti

Brigadier Longrigg, official for some years in the mandated territory of Iraq and author of two meritorious works—Iraq, 1900-1950 and Oil in the Middle East—under the same auspices, has treated us to this new contribution. The book opens with two brief, background chapters dealing with the Ottoman and the First World War periods, proceeds to a record of the administration of the mandate, the happenings of the Second World War and the decline and fall of the mandate during and after that time, and closes with appendices comprising, among other material, the Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon and bibliographical notes. The book is provided also with three maps and an adequate index. The treatment on the whole is fair and judicious; the tone is sober and the conclusions reached are sound. The reviewer has only a few reservations. That the administration of the mandate was a failure (though not as bad a failure as the British mandate over Palestine) and did not redound to the glory of France cannot be gainsaid by any objective student of the area. That the French conferred considerable advantages on the territory and rendered services which on the whole were unduly de-
preciated by the recipients also can be readily admitted, but the analysis of the reasons (pp. 145-7) misses an important factor—the psychological one: the resentment on the part of the “natives” of their being treated as inferiors by Europeans to whom they were not prepared to concede superiority except in one field—material civilization. This factor is habitually underestimated, especially by Western writers whose first-hand contacts are sporadic and