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Labor and Conflict in pre-War Lebanon (1970-1975)

A retrival of the political experience of Factory Commitees in the industrial district of Beirut

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Notes on transliteration

In the course of the following work, both the references and the Arabic words and nouns not envisaging of a common italicized entrance (es.: *qaimaqamiyyah*), have been transliterated according to the DIN 31635/1982 system. So to facilitate reading and accessibility, have been exempted from transliteration also all the personal nouns (es: Nasser), for whom the most common spelling has been retained. With specific regards to the Lebanese personal nouns, preference has been reserved to the frenchified spelling over the anglicized one (es: Khouri instead of Khuri). With regards to translations, instead, in the case of those texts already possessing an English version, preference has been given to the latter's use. In the remaining cases, whereas not differently indicated, all the translations has to be considered by the author.

Introduction

> «At a certain point in their historical lives, social groups become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. [...] In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses, or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petty-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or crisis of the state as a whole».
>
> (Antonio Gramsci, 'Observations on Certain Aspects of the Structure of Political Parties in Periods of Organic Crisis', Prison Notebooks, Q13§23,)[1]

From the late 1960s until the outbreak of the Civil War, Lebanon witnessed the broadest and most longstanding wave of social conflict of its post-colonial history. In the background of the crisis that Lebanese capitalism entered with the crack of Intra bank, and the coeval failure of Chihabism to deliver its promises of reform of Lebanese political and economic order finally on egalitarian bases, all segments of Lebanese population progressively rose and set in motion «to contest the established order, resist the crisis and confront the policies of the commercial/financial oligarchy[2]» controlling the State and the key sectors of the national economy, along an upwards parabola of strives whose contentious discourses and practices, radically called into question the very premises on which the affirmation and the reproduction of Lebanese post-colonial order relied. In

1 Translation in English has been drawn from Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935* (NYU Press, 2000), 217–18.

2 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (Pluto Press, 2012), 165.

rural areas, under the hit of the new economic imperatives that the late marketization of the agricultural relations and modes of productions was imposing, from the northern ʿAkkar plans to the edges of the Southern and the Eastern borders, peasant movements arose and set in motion to resist agro-capitalists, ask for land, oppose the still persisting titular modes of production[3]. Similarly, in urban areas, and particularly in Beirut, as the post-Intra social stagnation crashed the reveries of endless possibilities in which the generation raised in the Merchant Republic had been grown, an increasingly radicalized mass student movement emerged, turning the universities and the schools in the great arraigning tribunal of Lebanese "merchant society"[4]. This ran in parallel with the activation and radicalization of the army of young rural migrants that the rapid, but crude industrialization that the country started witnessing from the late 1960s was aggressively absorbing and proletarizing, and whose struggles for better wages and labor conditions soon came to intertwine with the ones of white-collar employees on the common battlefields of the right to social security and the defense of union freedoms. In any of this cases, while in different forms and degrees, strives transcended the boundaries of the sheer economic dispute, to tackle, contest or unveil the organic relation between political and economic power – and, more broadly, between political and economic elites – whose competition for the social surplus within and outside the State, as much as represented the great root of their socio-economic deprivation and political subordination, represented also the great linchpin of Lebanese post-colonial power system. In this process of direct transposition of the socio-economic demands to the political sphere, as strifes became one of the great battlefields where most of the domestic social, political, economic tensions ultimately heading up to the Civil War simultaneously sedimented and found expression[5], peasants, students, workers as consciously active collective subjects vehemently emerged on the national political scene, becoming, through their agency,

3 Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon* (Monthly Review Press, 1987), 133–39. and Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 165–67.

4 Samih Farsoun, "Student Protests and the Coming Crisis in Lebanon," *MERIP Reports*, no. 19 (August 1973): 3, https://doi.org/10.2307/3011841.-14 and Halim Isber Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife: Student Preludes to the Civil War* (University of Texas Press, 1977).

5 See, for example: Aziz el-Azmeh, 'The Progressive Forces' in Roger Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (Ithaca Press, 1976), 59–72.

practices and solidarities, one of the most important historical agents of the decade.

Still, paradoxically enough, weather in the light of the urgency to understand the complex dynamics heading up to the outbreak of the conflict, late 1960s and early 1970s have come to represent one of the main time frames on which historical and interdisciplinary research on pre-war modern Lebanon has been comparatively produced, knowledge production recognizing class conflicts over the Lebanese political economy of the period, the way how the latter influenced and informed class mobilization and subjectifications, or the actors which simultaneously participated and made-of the mobilizations themselves, a place as subjects of history on their own right has remained circumscribed, along with few paragraphs in the accounts of more general works[6], to nothing more than a bunch of articles and monographs hardly countable on two hands. Looking at rural mobilizations, for instance, no organic works assuming peasants as subjects of history on their own right have until present day been produced. If, with regards to the student movement, Samih Farsoun and Halim Barakat have both offered an insightful analysis of the raging student movement, no other monographs extensively – while still partially – covering the vicissitudes and the struggles of Lebanese labor movement between the 1960s and 1970s are offered than the second volume of Ilyas al-Buwary's majestic history of Lebanese labor movement[7]. Similarly, if Malek Abisaab's monograph on Lebanese working-woman in the tobacco industry remains an essential milestone in the understanding the

6 Among the most complete and accurate here we signal: Claude Dubar and Sālim Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban* (Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1976), 324–28., Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 119–66. and Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 157–89.

7 Ilyas al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah fī Lubnān*, vol. II, (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1986). Labor responsible of the Lebanese Communist Party, whose perspective on Lebanese labor movement represents the main filter for the analysis and the selection of the mobilizations offered, al-Buwari, does not give account of the informal rank-and-file workers' organizations which equally developed in the examined decade. Among the other few further works dealing with the Lebanese labor movement in the 1960s and 1970s we remark Couland Jacques, 'Movimento sindacale e movimento nazionale e progressista in Libano' in Lotte sociali e movimenti di sinistra nel mondo arabo contemporaneo (Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1981) [Quaderni, 15]: 71-94.

multiple ways how industrialization informed and shaped over time class and gender consciousness, the same has remained a rare breed[8].

The root of this lopsidedness has to be primarily searched in the general, reiterated agreement among scholars dealing for various purposes with modern Lebanon, in identifying sect as dominant – if not sole – framework for identity and action, and hence inter-sectarian relations and (preferably) conflicts as main motor for political and social change[9]. Few historical, political, and even economic works on Lebanon can be found where authors have felt immune from the urgency to include in their introductions a historical outline of the major sectarian communities making of the country's demographic fabric. The second reason, to a greater extent corollary to the first, has to be searched in the equally reiterated failure in recognizing class a symbolic function able to generate, especially for subaltern groups, a coherent social consciousness, and hence a political action autonomous from the boundaries of community and kinship. Whereas not simpler discarded tout-court as category of analysis[10], in facts, class and class relations have at best remained circumscribed to the realm of economics, keeping on maintaining sect as the great framework where political consciousness and relations needs to be located[11]. This has also widely contributed

8 Malek Hassan Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse University Press, 2010).

9 See, for example: William Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* (Oxford University Press, 2012). Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2013).

10 This tendency has been particularly marked in the modernist literature on Lebanese politics and political system, society and socializaiton produced throughout the 1960s, as, for example, the notorious and anyway precious: Michael Craig Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (Random House, 1968). and Michael C. Hudson, "Democracy and Social Mobilization in Lebanese Politics," *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 2 (January 1969): 245, https://doi.org/10.2307/421387. and the collective work edited by Leonard Binder Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon* (Wiley, 1966). with particular regards to Albert Hourani, 'Lebanon: the Developement of a Political Society' (Ibid., 1-12), Labib Zuwiyya-Yamak 'Party Politics in the Lebanese Political System' (Ibid., 143-166), Kamal Salibi, 'The Personality of Lebanon in Relation to the Modern World' (Ibid., 263-270) and the same Leonard Binder, Political Change in Lebanon (Ibid., 283-328).

11 A case in point in this sense is represented by the seminal Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*. and the related Claude Dubar, "Structure Confessionnelle et Classes Sociales Au Liban," *Revue Française de Sociologie* 15, no. 3 (July 1974): 301,

to produce, especially in the works following the outbreak of the Civil War, a short-circuit whereby sectarian analysis has come to embody the socio-economic one[12], reducing – and hence re-signifying – Lebanese class relations, mobilizations and stresses, as nothing but a subsidiary account in the career of sectarianism or sectarian communities. The dominant modes of historiography wherein the mobilizations of the rank-and-file workers and, even more, tobacco growers in the early 1970s have fallen, are, in this sense, a case in point. By virtue of the dominantly Shia communitarian belonging of its protagonists, they have in facts generally fallen and quickly diluted or in the great steam of studies and analysis making of the epics of the rise of Lebanese Shia community and its protagonists[13], either in the tragedy of the sectarian strifes heading up to the Civil War[14]. The third reason has to be searched in the subordination of the studies produced after the 1975, and which constitute, in turn, the main bulk of literature on Lebanese 1960s and 1970s, to the understanding of the Civil War. Approaching the pre-war

https://doi.org/10.2307/3320159. - .While having contributed to mark a fundamental linchpin in the recognition of the simultaneous co-existence within Lebanese social structure of a two-fold sectarian and class and articulation, Dubar and Nasr keep consensus over locating class relations in the sole realm of economic realties. See in this regards: Fawwaz Traboulsi, Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon (Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2014): 13-15, [https://lb.boell.org/sites/default/files/fawaz_english_draft.pdf]

12 Farid El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Harvard University Press, 2000). and Theodor Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (I. B. Tauris, 1993).

13 See, for example: Rula Jurdi Abisaab, Malek Hassan Abisaab, and Project Muse, *The Shi`ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists* (Syracuse University Press, 2014)., Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Cornell University Press, 2012)., Élizabeth Picard, "De La «communauté-Classe» à La Résistance «nationale». Pour Une Analyse Du Rôle Des Chi'ites Dans Le Système Politique Libanais (1970-1985)," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 35, no. 6 (1985): 999–1028, https://doi.org/10.3406/rfsp.1985.394222., and Salim Nasr, 'La transition des chiites vers Beyrouth: mutations sociales et mobilisation communautaire à la veille de 1975' in Bachchar Chbarou and Mona Zakaria (ed.) et al., *Mouvements Communautaires et Espaces Urbanins au Machreq* (CERMOC, 1985): 87-116.

14 Along with the works already mentioned in infra, Note 11, see also: Kamal Suleiman Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (Ithaca Press, 1976). and Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon, a Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (Holmes & Meier, 2002).

period as nothing but a prehistory of the war, the latter have generally tended to constrain the narration and the significaiton of the events prior to the conflict according the patterns of analysis chosen vis-a-vis their understanding of war and its major causes, and which, in the majority of cases, have equally suffered – as already partially suggested before – in recognizing socio-economic tensions and upheavals among the major roots of the conflict, in favor of the already mentioned communitarian relations and conflicts, and the impact of regional political stresses[15]. The last aspect has to deal with the scarcity of sources that the war has left behind. As much as for the State and institutional archives, war has unluckily swept away most of the traces that social movements produced about their political activity, their claims, their aims. War has played a major role also in removing that ferments, movements, and events from Lebanese public memory[16]. It is extremely rare, today, in evoking the facts object of our work with the post-War generation, not to be welcomed by an expression of disoriented surprise. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to have a look at newspapers of the time, at a frame of the movies of the so-called Lebanese Nouvelle Vague, to have a clue of the magnitude that, on the eve of the war, those ferments, its actors, their claims occupied in Lebanese public life and debate.

In the light of this premises, the following work aims at offering a contribution for the reframing of the historical understanding of Lebanese early 1970s, through the retrieval of the short, but nevertheless extremely impacting, political experience of Lebanese Factory Committees. In particular, by relating the broader process of Lebanese market and State-building, with the multiple channels (material, experential, ideological) through which Lebanese political economy shaped out and informed the committees' emergency, practices, discourses and solidarities, the following work aims at moving a step forward in the understanding of the still widely underestimated role of class conflicts, relations and solidarities in the challenge to and the reproduction of Lebanese post-colonial order, whose changing factional and interacting patterns, from the late 1960s

15 See the in this regards the already mentioned Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon.*, El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, 2000., Picard, *Lebanon, a Shattered Country., and* Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War*. as well as Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar-Mills, *Lebanon: A History of Conflict* (I.B.Tauris, 1988).Represents an exception in this sense Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*.

16 Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

onwards, acted as major inner motor for the production of the organic crisis ultimately heading up to the Civil War. At the same time, it aims at offering a small, but hopefully meaningful, contribution to fulfill the numerous lacunas still characterizing Lebanese labor and social history.

Paradigmatic example of the process of mass dislocation from the «lineage-based structure of civil society» and «the political structures based on civic leadership[17]» through which the coeval 'crisis of hegemony' of Lebanese ruling classes simultaneously manifested and substantiated, Factory Committees started mushrooming, under the input of the Organization for Communist Action, in the bigger industrial establishments of the industrial district of Beirut in early 1970, as a reaction from below to the extreme exploitation to which rank-and-file industrial workers were exposed, and the inadequacy of labor unions in offering an effective solution and sustain. Initially confined within the boundaries of the respective industrial plants, then, they soon became not only the radical avant-garde of Lebanese labor movement as a whole, but also, and more importantly, one of the most critical junctures where the political-ideological confrontation over the legitimacy of the foundations of Lebanese post-colonial order consumed. This makes, in our opinion, Factory Committees a particularly useful observation point first for the understanding of the complex network of organic (rural crisis, mass urbanization, social and economic stagnation) and conjunctural (occurrence and repression of specific mobilizations, addressing or rejection of specific economic or social demands, etc.) phenomena which superseded the processes of political dislocation at the base of Lebanese organic crisis. To a second extent, by virtue of the multiple connections with the other social and political movements and struggles that the committees and their mobilizations crossed and produced, we consider that it can act also as particularly precious observation point for both the equally widely understudied non-sectarian ideological and social ferments that were crossing Lebanese society, and for the specific trajectories along which articulated. Finally, by offering a taste of the rest of the many other movements, actors and mobilizations which were also concurring in the quest for a radical change, and that in this work will unluckily occupy only a marginal position, it can offer new inputs for the development of further researches.

17 Aziz el-Azmeh, 'The Progressive Forces', 62-63.

• Theoretical frame-working

The basic theoretical positions that the following work is adopting, have progressively sedimented along the incessant effort deployed in the past years in searching and make dialogue the fragmented and discontinuous emergencies of Lebanese workers on the surface of history with the broader context within the same operated and stemmed from, and their modes of representation with the historical narratives through which the succession of events making of the substance of post-colonial Lebanon have been in turn signified. In the light of the findings in this way reached, the first position that we are here adopting, is a position of dislocation from the dominant sectarian-centric approach which has until now permeated Lebanese studies. In fostering this choice, falls far from our intentions to underestimate the crucial role played by sectarianism in Lebanese historical development, and even farer to deny sects recognition as concrete social entities. What we want to dislocate and move forward from, are rather the two major fundamental assumptions that the adoption of sectarian-centrism has dominantly subsumed. The first one is the culturalistic drive tending to consider sects as ahistorical immutable essences. The second one is the modernist drive tending to equally ahistorically consider sectarianism as a sheer remnant of pre-capitalism. What we are here assuming is that, on the contrary, as much as sectarianism as both subjectifying theoretical category and political practice, is – as brilliantly pointed out, among the others, by Usama Makdissi[18] – by any effect a direct by-product of the specific way how Lebanese process of transition to capitalism articulated, sects are, in their quality of subjectified societal entities, continuously constructed and deconstructed, defined and re-defined by historicized processes and forces which as endogenous as exogenous to the sects themselves, and which entangle power and society, before blood and faith.

In the same spirit, in the class analysis of Lebanese society that we are here going to offer, falls far from our intentions to take any economicistic stance attributing to economic relations and the positioning in the division of the productive process, any intrinsic, teleological power determining a priori or at fortiori the

18 Ussama S. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000); Ussama Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," *Middle East Report*, no. 200 (July 1996): 23, https://doi.org/10.2307/3013264.

articulation of social and political identity. On the contrary, what we are here assuming is that, misquoting Fawwaz Traboulsi, in Lebanese society class and sects are two distinct forces «competing over the share of social surplus[19]». In both cases, their field of action simultaneously entangles the political, social and economic sphere. Their mutual relation is not of mirroring, neither of mutual exclusion, but rather of reciprocal influencing and overlapping. Within this relationship, as much as sect can encompass class stances in the construction of social identity, class consciousness – i.e., following Edward Thompson, the modes how the articulation of class identity is handled in cultural terms[20]– can entangle sectarian ones. The eventual primacy of the one over another is anyway historically determined, and its understanding cannot be separated by a constant consideration of their simultaneous co-existence.

We conclude here clarifying the parameters assumed for our frame-working and identification of Lebanese social classes. In particular, in the identification of the differential parameters to define Lebanese class composition, we have assumed as basic blueprint Vladimir Lenin's relation to the means of production, role in the social organization of labour and dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it[21]. Given – as we will see along the work – the specific characteristics of Lebanese socio-economic structure we have included in the last parameter also the proximity to political power. Finally, agreeing with Pierre Bourdieu[22] that the articulation and the reproduction of social identity cannot be separated from social behaviors, it has also taken into account leisure, cultural and consumer habits.[23]

• Selection and collection of sources

19 Fawwaz Traboulsi, Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon, 18, 11-19.

20 Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin Books, 1968), 9–10.

21 See: Vladimir Ilich Lenin, 'A Great Beginning: Heroism of the Workers in the Rear' in Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works: Volume 29: March - August 1919*, 1965, 409–34.

22 See: Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On The Theoretical and Practical Existence Of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 1–17.

23 Pierre Bourdieu and John B. Thompson, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

The collection and the selection of the sources giving substance to the research here presented, has been deeply influenced and largely determined by the devastating impact that fifteen years of civil war has had on the preservation of the archival sources of both Lebanese State institutions and political organizations, as well as on the accessibility of the ex workers . In the light of the large unavailability of statistics and surveys produced by the Lebanese State institutions, most of the macro-economic data reported along the work have been mostly drawn from reports and assessments produced in the period object of our analysis by international institutions, and particularly from recently de-secreted reports of the World Bank, coadiuvated, whenever necessary by secondary sources. Datas on Lebanese active population have instead could benefit of the precious Lebanese Ministry of Planning's sponsored assessments Enquete par Sondage sur la Population Active au Liban, and Besoins et Possibilités de developpement au Liban. With regards to the datas pertaining Lebanese industrial population, the research has been able to count on a comparatively discrete corpus of knowledge produced in the early 1970s, under the input of the rapid industrialization that the country was undergoing, by young Lebanese sociologists such as Lucien Beirouti, Selim and Marlene Nasr, and today still luckily stored in the libraries of Beirut's French IFPO and Saint Joseph and American University. With regards to the reconstruction and the historical understanding of the coeval labor mobilizations, instead, a precious directory in the earliest stages of the research has been represented by the immense collection of newspapers and magazines in the preserve of American University of Beirut's Jafet Library. Even more precious have been the multiple interviews held along the long two years of permanence in Lebanon with some of the ex-members of the Organization fro the Communist Action and the Factory Committees whose memories and private archives have represented an essential resource for the finalization of this work. They include first Fawwaz Traboulsi, whose courtesy of his private collection of primary sources on labor movement in the 1970s, and triple role of testimony-observer, militant and historian, have represented a crucial directory for the connection with the network of further ex-militants constituting the bulk of the oral sources here consulted, and for the understanding of the complex dynamics superseding the emergence and the developments of Factory Committees' political experience.

They include, among the others, first and foremost Ahmad Dirani, ex-OCAL member, production worker and responsible for the Factory Committees of Beirut's Southern periphery, whose intense talks periodically held throughout my two years in Lebanon, have represented one of the most important sources for the reconstruction of the internal organization of Factory Committes, their diffusion and evolution, and labor conditions of rank-and-file workers, as well as the main linchpin to access the precious Factory Committees' bulletin *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*. Second, the ex-militants Nahla Chahal and Mohsein Zaineddine, whose interviews and disposability have revealed indispensable to have respectively a greater outlook over the relation between student, peasant and working-class movement and access to OCAL's periodical *al-Ḥurriyyah*, and a greater outlook over Factory Committes' activities in the eastern suburbs. Particularly precious has revealed also the private archive of Michel Mascheck, whose collection of diplomatic dispatches of the US Embassy in Beirut, has represented an indispensable compensation to the loss of the archival material of Lebanese labor unions.

• Organization of the work

In the first three chapters of the thesis, attention will be devoted to offer an overview of the economic history of Lebanon, and the ways how its economic policies and processes of market and State-building, shaped the national class structure. In particular, Chapter 1 will offer an overview of the economic history of Lebanon and its political economy, with particular attention to its dependent integration in the global capitalist market and the characteristics of the so-called "Merchant Republic". With Chapter 2, it will proceed to offer first a re-framing of the economic performances of the "Merchant Republic", to then relate it with the process of Lebanese State-formation, and its impact on the making of Lebanese post-colonial economic, political, and, more broadly, civic order. Finally, Chapter 3, will investigate the impact of both phenomena on the making-of Lebanese employment and social structure, with particular regards to the structural changes developing on the eve of the Civil War.

In Chapter 4 and 5, attention will be instead addressed towards Lebanese workers and their terms of membership in the post-colonial civic order. In particular,

whereas Chapter 4 will offer an analysis of Lebanese labor legislation, its genealogy and political aims and outcomes, Chapter 5 will investigate the evolution and the characteristics of Lebanese labor unionism, with particular regards to the impact that the reiterated efforts of co-optation and containment from above of their political influence by Lebanese ruling class, had on the structuring, the political agenda and the effectiveness of labor unions on the eve of the war.

With Chapters 6 and 7, instead, attention will be drown on the changing industrial milieu in first half of the 1970s. In particular, whereas Chapeter 6 will investigate the characteristics of the new developing industry and industrial working-class, Chapter 7 will focus instead on the life and labor conditions within the factories, with particular regards to the forms of exploitation and disciplining of the workforce.

Finally, with Chapter 8 and 9, attention will move specifically on the Factory Committees, investigating respectively their origin and characteristics, and the impact of their agency on the making of the turbulences crossing Lebanese society.

Prologue

Twenty years after its independence, the postcolonial progression of Lebanon indisputably appeared as a history of success. Epitomized in the hotels, cinemas and cafes that from the vibrant Hamra Street stretched down to the seafront of the capital, everything in the country seemed to talk about prosperity, about the realization of a miracle making of this tiny portion of land set in the Eastern Mediterranean, a shiny diamond in the midst of the Middle Eastern chaos. Democracy among authoritarianisms, paradise of the free trade among planned economies: looking at the country from the sea, nothing seemed to conflict with the previsional imaginary of Lebanon and its people fostered by Michel Chiha, journalist, economist, and main theoretician of the Merchant Republic, i.e. of a revived Phoenicia, intrinsically outward-oriented and, above all, commercial, made great by the innate entrepreneurial vocation of its people, and reified into a flourishing, multi-sectarian 'Switzerland of the Middle East', with its mountains (and shores) as charming seat for a mosaic of touristic resorts, and the banks of the city as its 'jewel in the crown'.

This imaginary seemed not to conflict neither with what the datas were authoritatively fixing black on white. Between 1957 and 1972, for instance, the number of hotels alone rose from 221 to 356, with a number of beds increasing from 12.909 to 27.523, and an estimated yearly influx of foreign tourists from about 800.000 to 1.495.000[24], out of a local estimated population of about 2.126.000 people. The recorded performances of the banking sector were even more stunning. Between 1945 and 1974, the number of commercial banks rose 7 from to 74, with a peak of 86 in 1966[25], while between 1964 and 1972, the volume of the net foreign assets of the Central Bank and the commercial banks altogether, increased from

24 Josette Kfoury, "Liban, pays de tourisme," *Revue de géographie de Lyon* 34, no. 3 (1959): 271–84, https://doi.org/10.3406/geoca.1959.2353; Jean-Marc Prost-Tournier, "Le Liban, premier pays touristique du Moyen-Orient arabe," *Revue de géographie de Lyon* 49, no. 4 (1974): 369–76, https://doi.org/10.3406/geoca.1974.1661.Both estimations include daily transit tourists.

25 Toufic K. Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (BRILL, 2004), 193.

1.187 millions LBP to 4.016 millions LBP[26]. The cultural front was no less vivid. Landing point for literates and artists from the whole region, and homeland for equally regionally and internationally influent local ones, Lebanon was, with its publishing houses, internationally distributed newspapers and magazines, and cinematographic and theatrical productions, the beating heart of Arab intellectual life and popular culture[27].

However, it was sufficient to dock at the Port of the capital to realize that under the shadows of the dazzling neons of Ras Beirut and their promises of endless possibilities, another Lebanon was invisibly gasping side by side. Turning leftwards from the entrance of the Port, the brand new commercial and entertainment district of Hamra and the French-style squares and boulevards of the city center, left the room to the bidonville of Karantina, North-Eastern outpost, together with Burj Hammoud and Jisr el-Basha, of the "misery belt" that came to crown the city with a rapidity directly proportional to the growth of the national GDP. The glamorous cosmopolitanism of travelers, intellectuals, actors and artists of the city center, here, in the tanakeh[28], had another declination: it was a "cosmopolitism of poverty", uniting together the Kurdish and Armenian historical minorities with the growing local urban proletariat, the brand new rural migrants from the South and the Beqaʿa Valley with poor Syrian immigrants and the Palestinian refugees, whose camps pointed the belt from East to West, arriving, with the Mar Elias camp and the neighboring mixed tanakeh of Wata al-Mussaitbeh, until the backdoor of the central districts[29].

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26 Samir A. Makdisi, "Lebanon: Monetary Developments, Management and Performance in the Postwar Period up to 1972. Part I," *Middle East Journal* 29, no. 1 (1975): 84.

27 Samir Kassir, *Beirut* (University of California Press, 2010), 378–84; 459–67; 496–99.

28 Lebanese word to indicate the bidonville

29 André Bourgey and Joseph Pharès, "Les bidonvilles de l'agglomération de Beyrouth," *Revue de géographie de Lyon* 48, no. 2 (1973): 107–39, https://doi.org/10.3406/geoca.1973.1623. In 1971, the number of inhabitants of the twelve recognized bidonvilles of the Grand Beirut (Karantina, Karameh el-Zaitoun, Syriac Camp, Housh Rahal, Wata al-Mussaitbeh, Mar Elias, Burj Hammoud, Jisr el-Basha, Tell ez-Zaatar, Ghobeiri, Shatila, Burj el-Barajneh) whereof five represented Palestinian refugee camps, was estimated at 59.748 people, out of a total population estimated at 1.127.000 inhabitants. Among them, 63,5% was constituted by Palestinians, 6,8% by Kurds, 2,7% by Armenians, 13,2% by Syrians, and 12,7% by Lebanese. Excluding from the calculation the Palestinian camps (Mar Elias, Tell ez-Zaatar, Jisr el-Basha, Shatila, Burj el-Barajneh), populated almost exclusively by Palestinians (37.969 in total),

The sharp contrast between the center of Beirut and its hypertrophic periphery, then, was meant to become even sharper going forward into rural areas. Here again, numbers left little room to the imagination. In 1970, despite the development plans lunched under the presidency of Fuad Chihab during the Sixties, about 35% of the houses were still without current water, and about 15% without electricity[30]. In the muhafazat of South and North Lebanon[31], then, those two percentages reached the peak of 58% and 23% respectively[32]. The educational records were equally eloquent. Whereas the private universities of Beirut attracted – and significantly invested to attract – a growing number of students from all over the Middle East[33], and the country boasted one of the highest percentage of graduated citizens in the region, in rural areas almost 67% of the citizens, and 83% of the citizens in their school-age[34], were totally unschooled, and only 0,67% – despite the institution of the Lebanese University in 1951 and its noticeable empowerment in the Chihabist years – had been able to reach university education[35]. Similarly, whereas the faculties of medicine became in those years one of the main pivot for the Beiruti private universities to affirm themselves as leading regional educational centers, and the hospitals and clinics of the capital attracted an ever growing portion of the regional bourgeoisie in search for vanguard treatments[36], the South, wherein 18% of the population lived, could

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however, the proportions resulted adjusted as follows: 18,7% by Kurds, 7,5% by Armenians, 36,3% by Syrians, and 35% by Lebanese.

For a detailed survey on the living conditions in the bidonvilles of Beirut, their social, geographical and national composition, see also: Mouvement Social, Recensement des Habitations et des Résidents dans les bidonvilles de Beyrouth et de sa Banlieue (Ministère des Travaux Publics - Direction générale de l'Urbanisme, 1971).

30 République Libanaise, *L'enquête par sondage sur la population active au Liban, novembre 1970: Méthodes, analyse et présentation des résultats* (Ministère du plan, Direction centrale de la statistique, 1972), 17. From here on, the following work will be quoted under the acronym PAL.

31 PAL, vol. II, 341. In the North of Lebanon the exact amount of houses without electricity was of 21%.

32 Ibid., 419.

33 Kassir, *Beirut*, 366–69.

34 PAL, vol.II, 83.

35 Ibid., 81.

36 Kassir, *Beirut*, 369–70.

count only on the presence of 5.5% of the national doctors, and the Beqaʿa, hosting from its part 13% of the national population, on an even more meagre 3%[37]. This was matched with a directly proportional deficit in the number and quality of sanitary structures per inhabitant, a deficit totally mirrored on the point of view of the educational ones. Approached from this perspective, thus, the annual growth rates of the national GDP by 6,2% (and of the per-capita revenue by 3,6%[38]) brandished by the supporters of the Lebanese miracle as indisputable evidence of the successful and universalizing benefits of laissez-faire, acquired an opposite sign. They were the evidence of a "growth without development"[39], of a 'miracle' blessing only a privileged socio-geographical minority of the country leaving the rest behind, and achieved, as we will see, precisely at the cost of their structural marginalization.

37 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 161.

38 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 72. In the opening paragraphs of the chapter, Gaspard revisits in detail the records of Lebanese growth, showing how, in effects, it has been much less impressive then what is commonly believed. See Ibid., 67-73.

39 Gaspard, 67.

Chapter 1

Inside the Merchant Republic: numbers and trajectories of a mythology

I

Before the Merchant Republic: the integration of Mount Lebanon in the global capitalist market and its impact on the development of Lebanese economy

I.I

The silk road: dependent integration in the age of imperialisms

To understand the roots of Lebanese uneven development, a diversion to its process of integration in the periphery of the global capitalist market is necessary. As for the rest of the Middle Eastern region, the integration of Lebanon in the periphery of the global capitalist market occurred throughout the XIX century, within a broader process of massive penetration of European capitals in the Ottoman levantine provinces[40]. In the case of Lebanon, were in particular French capitals to massively penetrate, along two main trajectories. The first one was the silk trajectory. Particularly from the 1840s, as a result of the growing demand of raw silk from the textile factories and spinning mills of Lyon and Marseille, the sericulture of Mount Lebanon (whose development had already started since the previous century) received an unprecedented input[41]. Between 1861 and 1911 alone,

40 About the process of integretion of Middle East and North Africa in the global capitalist market See: Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (I.B.Tauris, 1993). and Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* (Routledge, 2013).

41 On the importance of sericulture on Mount Lebanon in the XIX and early XX century, and its impact on the development of Lebanese economy exists a wide literature. Among the most relevant work here we signal: Gaston Ducousso, *L'industrie de la soie en Syrie et au Liban* (impr. catholique, 1913).; Dominique Chevallier and Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, *La société du Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe*

for instance, the production of cocoons rose from 961 tons to 6.100 tons[42], out of a mulberry cultivated area arriving to touch, on the eve of World War First, 20.000 hectares. By the same period, the totality of the production came to be absorbed by the French market, including the raw silk, for a yearly turnover payed by Lyon estimated between 15 and 20 gold Francs[43] which, together with contributing to the total value-added of industry and agriculture of Mount Lebanon by 73%[44], arrived to cover, according to Jaques Thobie, 30% of the total value of the Ottoman exports to France[45]. The growing demand of raw silk, gave a noticeable input also for the multiplication of spinning factories, that on the eve of the War arrived to reach about 200 units, whereof the most modern and productive ones were directly owned by French companies[46].

The centrality of the French-Levantine silk trade, gave the input for the development of the second trajectory of penetration, i.e. the infrastructural one. So to facilitate and rationalize the export trading activities, starting from the mid-1850s private French (or mixed-capital with a French majority) companies started asking and obtain from the Empire a number of concessions to build and menage key infrastructural and telecommunication arteries. In 1858, the first telegraphic

(Librairie orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1982); Boutros Labaki, *Introduction à l'histoire économique du Liban* (Publications de l'université Libanaise, 1984); M. Zimmermann, "La soie et le coton en Syrie," *Annales de Géographie* 30, no. 168 (1921): 469–70; Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, 1–22; Maurice Février, "La sériciculture au Liban. Première partie: sa fortune passée," *Revue de géographie jointe au Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon et de la région lyonnaise* 24, no. 3 (1949): 247–60; Février.Maurice Février, "La sériciculture au Liban. Deuxième partie: son déclin actuel," *Revue de géographie jointe au Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Lyon et de la région lyonnaise* 24, no. 4 (1949): 341–62; Kais Firro, "Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 2 (1990): 151–69.

42 Ducousso, *L'industrie de la soie en Syrie et au Liban*, 100–101.

43 Février, "La sériciculture au Liban. Première partie," 249.

44 Labaki, *Introduction à l'histoire économique du Liban*, 155–56.

45 Jacques Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l'Empire ottoman: 1895-1914* (Publications de la Sorbonne, 1977), 495.

46 Février, "La sériciculture au Liban. Première partie," 256. For the productive characteristics of Lebanese spinning factories see instead: Roger Owen, "The Study of Middle Eastern Industrial History: Notes on the Interrelationship between Factories and Small-Scale Manufacturing with Special References to Lebanese Silk and Egyptian Sugar, 1900-1930," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 4 (November 1, 1984): 475–87.

link with Europe was established. In 1863, under the guild of the French-Ottoman Compagnie Ottomane de la Route Beyrouth-Damas, the homonym private carriage road was inaugurated[47], becoming in a few years one of the most profitable companies of the region. In 1890 the Compagnie Impériale des Ports, des Quais et Entrepôts de Beyrouth obtained a 100-years concession for the construction and the running of a new harbor in the Port of Beirut, concession that included the monopoly over the management of the customs sheds and the loading and unloading of all goods[48]. Finally, in 1895, in concomitance with the inauguration of the Port, the Franco-Belgian Societé Ottomane du Chemin de Fer Damas-Hama et Prolongements (DHP) obtained the concession for the building and the management of a railway linking Beirut, Hama and the Hawran, that by 1911 became the most important of the region for tons of goods transported[49].

The first great consequence of this process of integration, was the inexorable death of the muqaṭa'ji order. Such an end was firstly economical. Since the first half of the XVI century, the Ottoman province of Mount Lebanon had been run, as many other Levantine territories under the Porte rule, according to the iqta'a or iltizam system, which allotted tax-farming rights in the mountainous or desert areas to ethnic or tribal chiefs (the muqata'aji) under the control of Ottoman-appointed walis. In particular, iqta'a rights were allocated to prominent Druze and Maronite families of the mountain, which, together with collecting taxes, controlled also the allocation of land among the mass of mostly Christian landless peasants and commoners (mudabbirs) that they came to rule, and from whom extorted economic surpluses in the form of part of the harvests, free services and artisanal labor. As the dependent capitalist development dragged by the sericulture started to shift the locus of economic power from landownership to money and trade, economic hegemony started to inexorably transfer from their hands to the emerging modern, mostly Christian, middle-class of traders, brokers, bankers, entrepreneurs and mudabbirs directly involved in the raw-silk production and trading, and which, together with the Maronite church, had soon became the main beneficiary of Mount Lebanon's transition to peripheral capitalism[50]. The tensions that this shift produced came soon to be mirrored at the political level. Between 1841 and 1861, a succession of commoners' uprisings

47 Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*, 165.

48 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 54.

49 Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*, 246.

against the muqaṭaǰi families as a result of the socio-economic stresses engendered by the transition, and supported by the new emerging elites excluded from political power, started to intertwine with intra-muqaṭaǰi fightings to maintain the dominant political position that the uprisings and the changing economic relations were inexorably compromising[51]. This led first to the institution over Mount Lebanon of the regime of the qaimaqamiyyah (1843)[52], and later, after the latter's collapse with the uprisings of 1861, of the mutasarrifiyyah which, together with the institutionalization of a Maronite-led system of sectarian political representation, definitely brought the new elites to the political power. This leads us to the second great consequence of the transition, i.e. the inauguration of the interference of France on the political life of Mount Lebanon. Direct consequence of its economic penetration and imperialist project over the region, indeed, the institution of the Mutasarrifiyyah owed much of its imposition and institutional and fiscal characteristics to the military intervention of the French troops to sedate the commoners' rebellion of Kesrawan in 1861, whose explosion had severely compromised the raw silk production and, at the same time, had opened a political space to further isolate Mount Lebanon from a direct Ottoman control that the Porte had tried to restore with the institution of the qaimaqamiyyah. This opened the path for the consolidation of the French influence on the political life of the Mutasarrifate, which will ultimately turn into

50 The modes through which this process of economic transition articulated are well exposed in Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, 21–22.For further insights on the social actors emerged from the economic transition, see instead Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 16–23.

51 For a detailed analysis of the genealogy, the developments and the outcomes of the 1840-1861 disorders, particularly worth of mention are the following monographs: Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*; Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (University of California Press, 1994).In particular, whereas Makdisi centers his focus on the multiple set of tensions shaking Mount Lebanon throughout the two decades, Leila Tarazi Fawaz concenters on the contrary on the communal dimension of the 1860 civil war, and the repercussions that it had also on the neighboring Syria.

52 The regime of qaimaqamiyyah envisaged the partition of Mount Lebanon into two distinct administrative regions, under the leadership of a Druze (Lower Mount Lebanon) and a Christian (Upper Mount Lebanon) quaimaqam, to be both seconded by a Druze and Christian *wakīl*, endowed with judicial and fiscal authority over the members of their respective communities.

direct rule with the imposition of the Mandate in the aftermath of World War First.

I.II
From silk to banks, from the mountains to Beirut: the political economy of the French Mandate and the seeds of the Merchant Republic

As stressed by Paul Saba, the Mandate period witnessed the consolidation of two economic phenomena already emerged in the XIX century and meant to permanently mark the future of Lebanese economy: on the one hand, the transformation of Beirut into a commercial and financial entrepôt between Europe and the Levant; on the other, the development of an extroverted economic system, characterized by «a weak and limited manufacturing sphere [...] and a pattern of investment in which capital resources were directed largely to non-productive areas[53]». In both cases, such a consolidation was highly debtor to the trajectories along which the Mandatory French economic policies articulated.
Within the framework of a broader colonial subordination of the administrated territories, during its two decades of Mandate over Syria and Lebanon, French economic policy moved along two major binaries. The first one, finalized to heighten the competitiveness of French economy in the region and recuperate the comparatively disadvantaged position with the Sterling area, was that of the institution and the consolidation of a neo-mercantilist commercial relation with the Mandate territories similar to that it had already adopted in its colonies, and which encompassed the «exchange of French manufactures for colonial commodities and semi-finished goods, 'in a closed economic circuit designed to exclude foreign traders and shipping'[54]». In particular, this strategy was implemented through two main channels. The first one was that of the monetary policies which, thanks to the adoption of the Syro-Lebanese monetary union and

53 Saba, *The Creation of Lebanese Economy,* 23.

54 Carolyn Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy* (I.B.Tauris, 1998), 18. The quote is taken by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *French Economic Policy in tropical Africa* in L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960:* (CUP Archive, 1975), 128.

the pegging of the Syro-Lebanese pound to the French Franc, sorted the double effect of wakening the local economies while incorporating them to the French financial system, and to simultaneously compromise trade and other economic activities with neighboring countries such as Turkey and Egypt[55]. The second one was represented by the combination of low custom duties for the imports and the monopolization of the control and the management of the key national economic activities (Central Bank, infrastructure and service utilities, customs, among the others) by the Concessionary and Common Interest societies, which with the institution of the Mandate came to be controlled directly and exclusively by the French High Commission[56], and whose patterns of investment further contributed to reinforce the subordinating and excluding policies already fostered through neo-mercantilism.

The second great trajectory along which French economic policy moved, was precisely that of transforming Lebanon into a Beirut-centric, outward-oriented, commercial and financial entrepôt. In fostering their neo-mercantilist project of economic subordination of the Levantine territories, French authorities had in facts in mind a very precise vision of what the economic function of Lebanon and the Syrian hinterland should have been. As appropriately stressed by Roger Owen, such a vision manifested since the very decision to separate the two territorial units[57]. Whereas the hinterland was mainly thought as the landing point of French goods and the source for raw materials, Lebanon, and particularly Beirut, were thought instead as the bridging node for this triangular trade, as well as the main financial headquarter for the penetration of French capitals in the Levant. The strategic centrality of this new economic function of Beirut, emerges clearly looking at the turnover and the direction that French investments took. Throughout the whole Mandate period, for instance, out of a total investment of barely one billion FF of French capitals in the Lebanese Common Interest societies, 84% was devoted to development of the banking sector (Banque de Syrie et du Liban, Crédit Foncier de Syrie, Crédit Foncier d'Algérie et Tunisie, Compagnie Algérienne), while the remaining 16% was almost equally distributed among utility services (Electricité de Beyrouth, Societé d'électricité la Kadicha),

55 Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 20.

56 Gates, 23.

57 Roger Owen, *The Political Economy of Grand Liban, 1920-1970* in Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, 24.

infrastructures (DHP, Compagnie du port, des quais et des etrepôts de Beyrouth, Compagnie générale du Lévant) and touristic and telecommunication services (Radio Orient, Grand Hotels du Levant)[58]. This was mirrored by the massive re-investment of their budgets in the further development of the national infrastructural and telecommunication networks, all converging to Beirut, and by the allocation of credits by the French-dragged Banque de Syrie et du Liban – turned since 1919, into the national Central Bank – primarily in the tertiary sector. This gave in turn a noticeable input to the development of a local commercial and financial sector which, while remaining anyway subordinate to the French-dragged one, witnessed an incredible flourishing of banks, trading houses and further satellite tertiary activities (insurances, service agencies, etc.).

The Mandate economic project revealed undoubtedly successful. By the eve of World War II, Beirut had become, together (and in concurrence) with Haifa, the beating heart of the Euro-Levantine commercial and financial traffics[59]. Its neo-mercantilist subordination had also completed: between 1924 and 1935, the average deficit in the commercial balance was estimated at 7 billions 600 million FF; whereas, in 1924, out of a total of 800 million FF of imported products transited by the Port of Beirut, 276 millions was represented by finished textile products and 65% by French colonial products, via-a-vis 340 million FF of exports, whereof 206 million FF constituted by raw textiles[60]. Nevertheless, such a new economic turn had a price to be payed. The first one was the beginning of the inexorable decline of the agriculture.

With the creation of Grand Liban, the annexation of the ʿAkkar, the Beqaʿa, and the South to the territories of the Mutasarrifate had guaranteed the country an increase of its agricultural surface of 140.000 hectares, mostly constituted by fertile land. Furthermore, at the beginning of the Mandate, two-thirds of the Lebanese population was still dependent on the sector. Nevertheless, the investments reserved by the Mandate authorities to its development revealed scarce and ineffective. After the crisis of sericulture derived by WWI, for instance, the attempts of the French authorities to bring the production back to the pre-War standards ended in a fiasco. The same happened at the end of the 1930s when, as a

58 Mohamed Amine El-Hafez, *La structure et la politique économiques en Syrie et au Liban* (Impr. Khalifé, 1953), 48.

59 Kassir, *Beirut*, 272–78.

60 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 54.

result of the definitive decline of the sericultural market under the blows of the Great Depression and the advent of the cheaper artificial silk, the substitution of mulberry trees with different types of cultures (fruits, olives) also thought for the agro-exports, lacked in reaching the same levels of profitability. Furthermore, the comparatively higher riskiness and lower remunerativeness of agriculture vis-a-vis the tertiary sector, made agriculture scarcely attractive also in the eyes of private investors. This put a further mortgage on its modernization and development, becoming soon the weakest sector of the Lebanese economy. The second great consequence of the Mandate economic policies, was the missed development of the industrial sector. Mostly drained by private capitals, Lebanese industry certainly witnessed a certain development during the Mandate years. Between 1923 and 1940, for instance, 540 new industries were established[61], arriving to employ by 1937 at least 47.000 workers[62]. The sector witnessed also a certain productive diversification. Whereas before WWI was the production of raw silk to barely monopolize Lebanese industry, in the Mandate years new petroleum, concrete, finished textiles, alimentary products, shoes, cigarettes industries appeared. From the early 1930s, then, they were enough productive to start exporting[63]. Such a development, however, remained weak and fragile. Whereas custom policies were not enough protectionist to preserve the newborn national production from the foreign concurrence, most of the industries were still not modernized[64], and the ones with a highest mechanization had to count on the dependance on imported capital goods and technology[65].

The outbreak of World War Second gave a new input to the development of the Lebanese industry. The necessity to fulfill the productive needs of the war and

61 République Libanaise, *Besoins et possibilités de développement du Liban: étude préliminaire. Supplement* (Minister du Plan - Irfed, 1960), 198. From now on, the following work will be quoted under the acronym IRFED.

62 Cfr. Kurt Grunwald, "The Industrialization of the Lebanon and Syria," *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* 76 (1956): 141 – 178, Tab. 1.. Such an estimation does not include the manufacturer workers in silk weaving (65.800) and the concessionary companies (7.128).

63 Ibid., 141-178

64 To have a measure of the proportion between traditional and modern industries, here we signal that, according to an estimation of 1937, the employees in traditional industries were 76.600, while the ones employed in the modern industries only 4.851. See Ibid., 149.

65 Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 25–29; Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 51–54.

supply the lack of imported goods, stimulated the birth of new establishments, as well as the implementation of an industrial planning oriented to satisfy the internal consumption. This process of rationalization was further implemented during the Allied occupation, which also established a solid bureaucratic structure to study and satisfy the national economic needs, together with a number of agricultural measures meant to achieve the agricultural self-sufficiency[66]. Those achievements, however, were meant to be short-lived. The seeds of the Merchant Republic had already been planted.

I.III
The road to laissez-faire: the political economy of Lebanese Independence

As stated by Fawwaz Traboulsi, «as World War I created the conditions for the emergence of Greater Lebanon under French mandate, it was during World War II that the conditions for Lebanon's independence from France matured[67]». We will not enter here in the merit of the international conjuncture allowing the independence process to succeed, neither of the political-ideological debates involving the different currents of Lebanese nationalism. We will neither tackle, for now, the nature and the patterns of the popular anti-French mobilizations[68]. We will limit here to sketch out the political economy of the independence process, and an outline of the major economic groups involved.

In effects, the economic turn impressed to Lebanon by the French authorities, had not found as sole beneficiaries the representatives of the Qais d'Orsay. Under the thrust of the expansion of the commercial and financial sectors, a powerful local commercial/financial elite soon emerged. The most influent group, was the one united around the cultural circle of the Nouveaux Phéniciens and their economic

66 Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 35–60.

67 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 104.

68 On the process of Lebanese nation-building exists an extended literature. Among the most significant monographs we signal Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (I.B.Tauris, 2003); Eyal Ziser, *Lebanon: The Challenge of Independence* (I.B.Tauris, 2000); Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (I.B.Tauris, 2004); Raghid Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism, 1936-1945* (I.B.Tauris, 2004).

think thank Societé Libanaise d'Économie Politique. Their economic – and lobbying – strength derived from two man sources. The first one was that of their solid familial ties. Henri Phiraon and Michel Chiha, for instance, co-owners of the homonymous Banque Phiraʿoun and Chiha and the two most prominent business representatives of the group, were cousins and brothers-in-law. Chiha, was also uncle-in-law of two other prominent businessmen linked to the group, i.e. Francis Kettaneh, businessman who made his fortune through the transport sector and the car trading, and Jean Fattal, representative of a prominent family of traders which during the Mandate secured to his company the exclusive on the import-export of numerous consumer goods for Syria and Lebanon[69]. The second and most important one, was represented by their close ties with the French economic institutions. Henri Phiraʿoun, for instance, participated in the administration of the Societé du Port de Beyrouth. Michel Chiha, from his side, was a member of the administrative board of the Banque de Syrie et du Liban, as well as president of the Beirut Stock Market and vice president of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce[70]. The second archetype of entrepreneur, was the one represented by Emile Bustani and Hussein 'Uweyni. Both self-made men, they accumulated their immense capitals by venturing in Palestine and Saudi Arabia respectively, to then re-invest them in Lebanon since the end of the 1930s in the constructions and the banking and financial sector. The Mandate period witnessed the emergence also of a class of local prominent industrialists. The ʿArida family is, in this sense, a case in point. Whereas George, after have emigrated in Mexico where he made his fortune, came back to Lebanon to establish the homonymous cotton mill in Tripoli (ʿArida Brothers, 1935), which soon became one of the most profitable modern industry of the country, Monsigneur Antoine founded with the family capitals and Palestinian ones the Kadicha Electricity Company in 1922, and in 1929, in association with French interests and the Maronite church, the Chekka Cements Company[71]. Another family which made its fortune thanks to the textile sector was that of the Esseily. Establishing their cotton spinning plant in Jdeideh in the

69 Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-58* (Columbia University Press, 1996), 84.

70 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 94–95.

71 Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 26.

mid-thirties in association with the Doumit family, in few years were able to reach the same levels of productivity as their northern counterpart[72].

The first signs of impatience towards the French presence, started to manifest since the early 1930s, when, after years of exhortations to improve the capacity of Beirut Port and update the national infrastructures to compete with the neighboring Palestine, the Port of Haifa finally overtook the Lebanese harbor for volume of commercial traffics. A certain dissatisfaction started mounting also on the management of the custom duties on the imports, whose upward difference with the Palestinian ones, came soon to represent a significant obstacle to sustain the competition for the trading of the national products in the region and in Lebanon itself. The most important pole around which their dissatisfaction coalesced, however, were the economic privileges with whom the Mandate authorities self-endowed. Coherently with the colonial nature of their ruling, France retained in facts the monopoly over the Common Interest and Concessionary Societies, readdressed their profits to the home country, benefited of fiscal exemptions, guaranteed a fast-track for the French or French-related companies in key sectors of the economy.

The definitive break between the two poles consumed during World War II. WWII represented for the Lebanese business class a phase of immense capital accumulation[73]. Stimulated by the war needs and economic planning as for the case of the ʻArida and the Esseily, or by the ability of Beirut traders to further extend their monopolistic control over the import-export trading activities (as for the case of the Kettaneh), the war provided the economic elites emerged during the Mandate with the favorable conditions to further expand their already immense fortunes. Great profits arrived also from the war-induced temporary break of the monetary and commercial isolationism that the Mandate had imposed on Lebanese economy, which had also represented one of the major sources of discontent in the late 1930s, so finally re-approaching Lebanon to the British sterling and, more broadly, to the Anglo-American commercial and financial axis. This offered the last push for Lebanese new bourgeoisie to definitely and compactly engage in the cause of the independence. Such an engagement took the form of both direct activism in the nationalist movement (as for the case of Partiarch ʻArida and Henri Phiraʿoun), and the support to the anti-

72 Gates, 61.

73 Gates, 34–60.

French fraction of Lebanese political class that in the meantime had started to rise. The great referee in this sense, was represented by Beshara al-Khouri. Key political figure since the earliest years of the Mandate, and closest associate, thanks to strong marriage and business bounds with all the major representatives of the national economic elite (and particularly the commercial/financial oligarchy), Beshara al-Khouri became, thanks to a favorable geopolitical context and a great personal political skillfulness, the deus ex machina, together with Riad al-Solh, of the political agreement – the notorious National Pact – which will pave the way for Lebanese independence, as well as for his election to the presidency.

II
From the Merchant Republic to the Chehabist reforms and beyond: the political economy of independent Lebanon

II.I
Laissez faire, laissez passer: Rise and consolidation of the Merchant Republic (1943-1958)

When Independence stepped at the doors of Lebanon, the newly elected post-colonial ruling class found itself in front of an economic crossroad: on the one side, continue on the road of the industrialization and planning that the exceptionality of World War II had opened; on the other, come back to the pursuing of that open, extroverted, commercial-financial dragged model of development that the Mandate had set up, and that the war had temporarily frozen. Not without conflicts and bargainings, the choice fell on the second alternative. As stressed by Carolyn Gates, the decision was supported by three decisive factors. The first one, was the general optimism about the viability of an open system. The national and regional economic developments were offering besides little signals to think otherwise. First, thanks to the Mandate and the War accumulation, Lebanon could count on an unprecedented availability of private capital, ready to be most likely reinvested in the comparatively less risky and

more profitable activities of triangular trade or financial intermediation. Those activities, from their side, in the light of a post-War physiological growth of the regional demand of imported goods, the emergence of oil economies, and the probable destruction of the concurrent Arab Palestine, seemed barer of a further significant expansion, given also the comparatively low level of development of the sector in the neighboring countries. The latter, then, and particularly Syria and Egypt, seemed to be clearly orienting on the way of industrialization, so locating regional economic competition on a terrain on which Lebanon, given the comparatively restricted dimensions of its internal market and the scarcity of resources, could in perspective hardly concur as a dominant player. The second factor lied on the stronger political power of the commercial-financial bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the industrial one. Finding in President Beshara al-Khouri and his Hizb al-Dustour their main political referee, they could count, as we will better see in Chapter 2, on a connection to the core of political decision-making that their industrial counterparts had fallen short to build. The last factor was the general propensity – while for different reasons and purposes – of Lebanese post-colonial ruling class for a light, non interventionist State, whereby the adoption of a tertiary-oriented, open economic model was much more compatible[74].

In the light of this choice, Lebanese post-independence economic policy thus moved along three main binaries. The first and preliminary one consisted in the full autonomization of Lebanon from the monetary and customary Mandate legacies. In early 1948, a Franco-Lebanese monetary and financial agreement was ratified, redeeming to the Lebanese Government the control of all its monetary instruments. This was followed two years later by the rupture of the customary and monetary union with Syria, and the separation on a national base of a number of formerly shared Common Interests. Autonomization passed also though the dismantling of the heavily regulated and inward oriented economic environment that France and the Allies had set up during the war. The second great trajectory along which post-independence economic policy moved, was in facts that of the adoption of an open economy strategy, which found in laissez-faire policies and a non-interventionist State its necessary corollary, and whose major aim was to create «an enabling environment for its commercially-oriented private sector[75]». Under the slogan «lassaiz-faire, laissez passer», any project of State-led economic

74 Gates, 80–85.

75 Gates, 85.

planning was progressively abandoned, leaving the national economic development totally in the hands of private initiative. Alongside, a fiscal policy based on a very law direct taxation on goods, patrimonies and commercial and financial transitions was implemented, accompanied by an equally law State investment on the development of public services[76]. Finally, whereas promoted, those investments were mostly canalized in the reinforcement of Lebanon's intermediary role, and particularly through the improvement of its service-oriented infrastructural apparatus such as Beirut port and airport, whose management was anyway delegated to private or semi-private actors. The third trajectory moved towards the creation of an economic environment favorable to the inflow of foreign capitals. On November 1948, the black exchange market was legalized, allowing Lebanese capital to move freely around the world. The following year, so to stabilize and reinforce the local currency, a Monetary Law initiating an official gold-buying policy was approved. Finally, in 1956, under the new presidency of Camille Chamʿoun, the law allowing the Bank Secrecy was implemented.

The fruits of these economic initiatives, did not take much time to arrive. By the beginning of the 1950s, Beirut became the main financial center of the Middle East, and one of the most important of the world. By 1951, for instance, it was estimated that 30% of world gold traffic passed through the country. In the same period, whereas the country's own financial transitions touched an esteemed amount of one billion LBP, an equivalent amount of transitions was financed by the country's financial institutions on the behalf of foreign subjects[77]. The weight of its new financial intermediary role was further attested by the growth and the orientation of its banking sector. Whereas between 1945 and 1954, the number of banks rose from 7 to circa 50, whereof only six among the 20 largest ones were under the ownership of local bankers[78], the amount of deposits rose from 227 to 444 millions LBP, whereof 56 millions LBP in foreign currency[79]. Foreign banks, then, mostly played a passive role. As synthesized by Toufic Gaspard, they «mainly

76 Gates, 86–102.

77 Charles Issawi, "Economic Development and Liberalism in Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* 18, no. 3 (1964): 284–85.

78 IBRD, Department of Operations Asia and Middle East, *The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon*, August 15, 1955, 28.

79 Ibid. Tab. 6. The volume of deposits is relative to the twenty-nine greatest credit institutes.

focused on the collection and recycling of deposits», and their assets «mostly were in the form of deposits with correspondents overseas»[80], along a triangular pattern Middle East–Lebanon–Western markets widely shared also by the local banks. This triangular, passive, extroverted pattern became dominant also in the trading sector. Between 1938 and 1952, the value of the re-export trade increased over 25 times, and the value of transit trade increased about 34 times[81]. In 1954, whereas domestic trade came to contribute to the national GDP for 101,2 millions LBP, foreign trade contributed for 241,8 millions LBP, whereof 105 millions coming from transit and entrepôt activities[82].

Such an impressive inflow of foreign capitals, would have not been possible without a particularly favorable regional context. Confirming the post-independence previsions, in 1948, the birth of the State of Israel, the Palestinian Nakbah, and the Arab boycott of Israeli economy which followed, secured Lebanon both the elimination of its main regional competitor, and an inflow of Palestinian capitals estimated at 150 millions of Palestinian Pounds, entering the country together with a consistent portion of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. Palestinian bourgeoisie was soon followed by the Syrian, Iraqi and Egyptian ones, concerned about securing their capitals after the rise to power of socialist regimes in their respective countries. Finally – and most importantly – Lebanon became the main beneficiary of the oil boom in the Gulf countries. Privileged center for the re-investment of the petrodollars in the Western markets, indeed, Lebanon was debtor to Gulf countries of the overwhelming majority of the foreign capitals which entered its banks to be re-invested, as well as the overwhelming majority of its golden traffics. The integration of Lebanon in the oil economy was not limited the sole activities of intermediation. In 1946, a contract with TAPLINE, part of the ARAMCO group, to build a refinery of Saudi oil in Sidon was signed, soon followed by another contract with Standard Oil to build a refinery in Tripoli, which was already hosting an oil terminal of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC)[83]. Finally, Beirut airport became the privileged rely for the air connections

80 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 194.

81 Carolyn Gates, *The Historical Role of Political Economy in the Development of Modern Lebanon* (Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1989), 20.

82 IBRD, *The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon,* August 15, 1955, 4.

83 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 118.The IPC oil terminal, starting from Kirkuk, was built in 1934 per initiative of the French Mandate authorities.

between the West and Levantine states with Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf countries, a connection which severely contributed to the growth of the two national air companies.

The growing circulation and inflow of foreign capitals, coincided also with a growing circulation of foreign people. The resumption and the finalization of the Mandate economic project on Lebanon, implied also the resumption and the finalization of the project of transformation of Mount Lebanon and the adjacent coastal front into a territorial unity mostly devoted to tourism. In late 1948, the ad hoc State-led Commissariat Général au Tourisme, à l'Estivage et à l'Hivernage – quite eloquently one of the few State agencies dedicated to the planning of a specific economic activity – was created, with the task of coordinating, promoting and monitoring the development of the touristic sector. Under its sponsorship, key touristic roads and subsidiary infrastructures and services (restoration of archeological sites, cableways in the main sky resorts, creation of a touristic police, equipment of the national Ecole Hôteliere, construction of the Wadi el-Harir resthouse, electrification of Jeita Grotto, etc.) were built and provided, as well as the fundings for the development of cultural, leisure and sportive activities. It was also debtor for the regulation of gambling and the creation of the Casino du Liban, as well as the institution of the world-wide famous Baalbak Festival. Last but not least, it fostered a massive promotion of Lebanon abroad, especially with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, with whom coordinated common touristic programs[84]. Here again, the fruits did not took much time to arrive. Between 1950 and 1956, in the light of an increase in the capacity of hotel accommodation from 13.925 to 18.681 beds[85], the number of foreign tourists increased from 67.705 to 854.577[86], for an estimated yearly turnover of 82.273.934 LBP, and an estimated contribution to the national revenues by 53-57%[87].

The result, were two decades of impressive economic growth. The Lebanese miracle seemed to have been achieved.

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84 Kfoury, "Liban, pays de tourisme," 279–80.

85 Kfoury, 280.

86 Kfoury, 278.

87 Kfoury, 282–83.

II.II
Changing turns and broken dreams: Chihabism and the Intra Bank crack

At the moment when Merchant Republic seemed to have maintained its promises of wealth and prosperity, the tenure of Lebanese system faced its first great challenge. In the late spring of 1958, after months of deep political crisis and in the context of a particularly tense regional and international context, the murdering of the leftist journalist Najib el-Metny sparked the violence in the country, opening the doors to a civil war sedated only in the month of July, after a US military intervention[88]. As appropriately stressed by Roger Owen, although the immediate circumstances at the base of the crisis were related to the decision of president Chamʿoun to seek for a second, unconstitutional term of office, «much of the force behind the opposition to this move came from lower class urban Muslims who felt that their own community, now constituting a majority of the Lebanese population, was being discriminated against and impoverished by the country's wealthy, predominantly Christian, rulers[89]». In effects, as we will better see in the next chapter, if it was certainly true that particularly during Chamʿoun's presidency the country had experienced an unprecedented elevation of the general living standards, the deep regional and socio-sectarian gaps subsisting since the creation of Grand Liban had not only remained, but had possibly even sharpened. The wide-spreading corruption and the failure of the State to promote a rudimentary system of social security or effective developmental programs for rural areas, only contributed to make the things worse.

When General Fuad Chihab was appointed to the presidency to drag the country out of the crisis, the alarm bells that the war had made loudly and bloodily sound, had already been caught[90]. Army Commander-in-chief whose personality and deep

88 The genealogy, the development and the outcomes of the civil war of 1958, with a special focus on US intervention and the US-Lebanon political relations, are magistrally exposed an analyzed in the already quoted Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*.For the tensions and changes crossing the Middle East in the late 1950s, particularly insightful is instead William Roger Louis and Roger Owen, *A Revolutionary Year: The Middle East in 1958* (I.B.Tauris, 2002).

89 Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, 23–23; 28.

90 On the figure of Fouad Chihab and his political philosophy a wide litterature has been produced. Among the most noticeable works here we signal Stéphane Malsagne, *Fouad*

sense of the institutions had already made him the "man of the providence" in the aftermaths of the failed coup d'Ètat of 1949, and of the institutional paralysis following the Suez crisis in 1956, Fuad Chihab arrived in facts to the Serrail well aware of the set of tensions which had brought the country on the edge of the collapse. More importantly, he arrived to the Serrail with a vision of the State and a political philosophy meant to reshape the political life of Lebanon for an entire decade, spanning also through the mandate of his successor Charles Helou. According to Chihab, the independence achieved in 1943 was meant to remain lopsided until the construction of a State «where the citizens feel to be integral part of a single fatherland[91]» was not reached. The latter, in turn, required from the State's side first and foremost the capacity to guarantee for all the regions, social classes and groups an equal share of wealth and socio-economic rights, insofar as no sense of loyalty towards the State could be hoped if such a distribution remained asymmetrical and discriminating, and within the boundaries of the sect and the clientele. What was therefore necessary, was to engage into a massive process of reform where, through the means "of science and planning", and within the framework of the independence – written and unwritten – founding texts, an efficient and egalitarian State-directed organization of the national social and economic development could be achieved. Within this spirit, on September 1959, a mission to study the needs and the possibilities of development for Lebanon was lunched, under the direction of Pére Henry Labret, a French Dominican priest director of the I.R.F.E.D., and main economic advisor of the President. The results served as a base to elaborate and implement an unprecedented five-years developmental plan, meant primarily to re-balance the economic and infrastructural gap between Beirut and rural Lebanon. This included the extension of the national road network, the improvement of irrigation and the provision of domestic electricity and water in the peripheral regions, the establishment of health and educational structures. Rural Lebanon benefited also of two ad hoc programs for agricultural development, the Green Plan, envisaging an organic package of measures meant to clear land for

Chéhab, 1902-1973: une figure oubliée de l'histoire libanaise (KARTHALA Editions, 2011). and Georges Naccache, *Le chehabisme: un nouveau style* (Cenacle Libanais, 1961).

91 Fouad Chehab, Discours du 23 Novembre 1962 in *Les Discours du Président Chéhab – 1958-64* (Official presidential booklet, 1964) [http://www.fouadchehab.com/doc/bk/discours1.pdf; Translation from French by the author]

cultivation, and the empowerment of the dam on the Litani River, with the scope to provide water for irrigation to the Western Beqaʿa and the South. The dimensions of the program are testified by the stunning increase that public expenditure registered. Arriving to absorb by the end of the General's mandate a share of the national GDP assimilable to that of Western countries (23,6%, against 11% registered during Chamʿoun's presidency), in facts, the latter witnessed since 1957 an increase by almost 250%, dragged in particular by public works expenditure, whose budget in the same period increased by an outstanding 480%. This was paralleled by an increase in the budget of public specialized agencies by a further 220%, canalized in particular in the Office for Electricity and Water[92]. This process of economic reforms passed also through the reform of the banking sector. In 1964, when the concession to the private Banque de Syrie et du Liban to act as a central bank expired, an ad hoc, State one was established, the Bank of Lebanon. The Bank had been endowed the year before, through the Law on Credit and Currency, with the right to issue currency, stabilize the exchange rates of the Lebanese pound and, more importantly, to act as supervisor of the sector, by imposing on the banks a compulsory deposit in its safes, in order to regulate the interest rate and sustain the institutes in difficulties[93].

It must be noted that, as stressed among the others by Fawwaz Traboulsi and Toufic Gaspard, notwithstanding its planned and developmental outlook, Chiabist economic policies fell short from representing an overcoming of laissez-faire. They represented rather an attempt of «rationalization and regaining of control over the development of Lebanese capitalism[94]» without questioning laissez-faire as such, as a reaction to the changes stemmed from the structural transition to the Merchant Republic, and the anarchy through which it articulated. In so doing, «Chihab's brief action consolidated the laissez-faire system and made it more productive by upgrading its human and physical infrastructure, at very little cost to the private sector or to businesses in particular[95]». The changes in the national output structure registered between 1950 and 1966 are, in this sense, particularly eloquent. Whereas the shares of agriculture kept on decreasing, passing from 20,2% to 11,8%, the shares of the activities of intermediation registered an increase

92 Cfr.: Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, Tab. 26, 27 and 28.

93 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 140.

94 Traboulsi, 140.

95 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 183.

from 36,1% to 42,8%, while the shares of the industry and the remaining economic activities remained substantially unvaried[96]. The trend was mirrored also by the composition of the national GDP. Whereas the contribution of agriculture decreased from 20% to 12%, the service sector passed to contribute from 66% to 73%, with the industrial share almost unvaried (from 14% to 15%). Alongside, finance and trade continued to prosper undisturbed. Always drained by a constant influx of petrodollars, between 1954 and 1966, the volume of bank deposits registered an increase by 810%, for a total amount of 3600 million LBP (whereof almost the half in foreign currency), and the number of banks reached the record quota of 86, whereof 30 foreign, controlling alone 80% of the total deposits[97]. A similar stunning growth was registered for the transit trade, whose yearly turnover registered in the same period an increase by 949%, touching quota 997 millions LBP[98], and for the turnover generated by tourism (+ 337,6% between 1956 and 1966, for an amount of 277.8 millions LBP[99]), which became, together with transportation and insurances, the major source of earnings for the State from the service sector[100].

The reverie of endless possibilities of growth offered by the Merchant Republic, however, was meant to clash with reality soon. On October 14, 1966, Intra Bank, the largest credit institute drained by Lebanese and Arab capital[101], was declared insolvent, as a result of the incapability to meet a sudden wave of withdrawals. The economic behavior of Intra Bank was quite archetypical of the speculative adventurism characterizing Lebanese banking sector in those years. Marked by short term deposits and long-term investments, and by a significant downward disproportion between bank reserves and inter-bank and time deposits, Lebanese banks could count on a very limited liquidity in relation to the impressive

96 Gaspard, 151–52.

97 IBRD, Department of Operations Asia and Middle East, *The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon,* December 28, 1967, 16 and Tab. 14.

98 Ibid., Tab. 17. from Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

99 IBRD, Department of Operations Asia and Middle East, Report n° EMA-6a "*The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon",* April 18, 1969, Tab. 10

100 Ibid., 16 and Tab. 25.

101 In the period of the crack, Intra Bank accounted for about 40% of the deposits with Lebanese owned banks. IBRD, Department of Operations Asia and Middle East, *The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon,* December 28, 1967, 17

dimension of their total deposits[102]. Furthermore, the amount of their foreign assets, made them particularly exposed to the fluctuations of the international markets, and particularly, given the trajectory of their triangular activities, to the ones of the Arab oil and the Eurodollar block. Between 1965 and 1966, following an increase in the US and sterling interest rates which made them particularly attractive in the eyes of the foreign investors, the depositors in the Lebanese banks started massively withdrawing their money in that direction, engendering first a massive liquidation of the inter-bank deposit, to finally touch the bank reserves[103]. In the case of Intra Bank, the amount of withdrawals went beyond its absorption capabilities. In this respect, the fact of being – contrary to its foreign concurrents – an individual bank, and the missed help of the Bank of Lebanon to face the crisis, played a major role.

The impact of the Intra crack on its business circle was devastating. Whereas its 19.000 small depositors lost all their savings, a number of Intra-controlled smaller local banks cracked with it. The panic engendered among the investors, then, provoked yet another a massive wave of withdrawals and reinvestments of capitals abroad, for a turnover estimated at 18.6 million LBP for the first half of the month of October 1966 alone. Furthermore, it affected all the major national companies which the bank controlled, from the Beirut Port and Radio Orient, to the Middle East Airlines and the Société Immobilière Libanaise. Nevertheless, the overall impact on the performances of Lebanese economy and the banking sector as a whole, was much less limited than the expectations. After a general phase of recession in the immediate aftermath of the crack, by the second quarter of 1967 the economic performances of all the major sectors of Lebanese economy came back to the pre-crack levels[104].

The limited impact of the Intra crack was debtor also to the extraordinary measures adopted by the Government and the Central Bank to face the crisis. In the aftermaths of the bankruptcy, a special committee to investigate the causes of

102 On September 1966, out of a total of 5.902 millions LBP constituting Lebanese commercial banks' liabilities, the reserves amounted to just 73 millions LBP. See: American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State Airgram n° A-1010, *Lebanon – Summary of Economic Developments – First Quarter 1967*, May 12, 1967, 8-9, Tab.10.

103 Emile Ghattas, "Lebanon's Financial Crisis in 1966: A Systemic Approach," *Middle East Journal* 25, no. 1 (1971): 31–44.

104 American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A-1010, 4-19.

the crack, take charge of the bank (which was saved from the liquidation through a special law) and arrange a final settlement with its investors was established[105]. In the meantime, the Government reimbursed depositors with accounts up to 15.000 LBP (taking over their claims of about 40 million LBP), while the Central Bank provided help to other major banks which were experiencing the same massive withdrawals-originated difficulties up to 200 millions LBP[106]. Finally, with a succession of three laws enacted throughout 1967, the banking sector was made more stable, establishing a set of special measures to prevent the bank failures, as well as a number of new organisms to monitor the banks performances and an insurance scheme for the small deposits[107]. The main alarm bells launched by the crack, however, were hardly caught.

II.III
Exasperating laissez-faire: the end of Chihabism and the domination of foreign capital

The Intra Bank crack offered Lebanese political class a striking example of the fragilities to which two decades of unregulated, dependent and tertiarized capitalist development had exposed the country. A second example arrived few months later, when, as a result of the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, three of the major economic activities guaranteeing Lebanon the most significant entrances in the State budget and the readjustment of its commercial balance, i.e. tourism, petroleum, and construction, practically stopped their activities[108], so

105 The final agreement decided the establishment of a small commercial bank, with a capital of at least 3 millions LBP, destined to manage the foreign banking operations of Intra Bank, and the establishment of a new investment company, with nominal capital of some LL 300 million, to manage most of Intra previous assets. The shares of the new company were given to Lebanese and foreign citizens to compensate their claims on Intra Bank.

106 See: IBRD, Department of Operations Asia and Middle East, *The Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon,* December 28, 1967, 17-19; American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A-1010, 2-4 and 12.

107 Ghattas, "Lebanon's Financial Crisis in 1966," 42–44.

108 American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State Airgram n° A-12A, *Résumé of Economic/Commercial developments following the outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostilities*, June 23, 1967 and American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State Airgram n° A3, *Lebanese*

severely contributing to the important phase of recession that the country, for the first time since the Independence, underwent. Not even recession, however, provided enough pressure on the decision makers to undergo serious structural changes to diversify Lebanese economic system, and emancipate it from the absolute dependance on the tertiary sector and the foreign capitals. In the package of measures to reform the banking system, for instance, no measures were undertaken to contrast the outflow of founds to the foreign markets, neither to implement the cash reserves of the Central Bank. At the same time, measures to favor the expansion of the sector were implemented, so further confirming the political will to maintain the same economic orientation. The same happened with the crisis engendered by the Six Days War, for which the Government did not go beyond the provision of extraordinary aids to the service activities in difficulty (tourism in primis) as a temporary palliative measure waiting for the market to recover. As for the banking sector before it, the recovery arrived rapidly.

The rise of Suleiman Franjiyeh (1970-1976) to the Presidency of the Republic, seemed wishful to inaugurate a new turn for Lebanese economic development. Under the guide of Sa'ib Salam, a government of young professionals and technocrats was appointed, with the ambitious aim to carry out "a revolution from above". Per initiative of the new Minister of the Economy Elias Saba, a broader a set of fiscal reforms and protective measures for the national industry was promoted. In 1972, then, a six-year developmental plan was launched, including among its goals the achievement of a greater balance among the various sectors of the economy, by stimulating the growth of agriculture and industry. Finally, in 1973, for the first time in the history of the Republic, a Ministry of Industry was instituted. All those initiatives, however, remained nothing but a declaration of intent. Whereas Saba project wrecked – as well as the "youth government" – for the obstructionism of Lebanese bourgeoisie, the Six Years Plan consisted in nothing but the projection of «the past environment, conditions and performances into the future, with no serious attempt made to direct the economy, except for the slight gain in industrial production, towards a more secure position[109]».

In effects, as we will better see in Chapter 6, in the first half of the 1970s Lebanese industrial sector witnessed a certain development. While the annual growth rate

Economic Situation During the Week June 25 – July 1, 1967, July 3, 1967.

109 Hamdi F. Aly and Nabil Abdun-Nur, "An Appraisal of the Six Year Plan of Lebanon (1972-1977)," *Middle East Journal* 29, no. 2 (1975): 164.

reached the average of 11-12% (against the 5% of 1950s), arriving to contribute to the national GDP up to 18% in 1974[110], and to the national exports by 32%[111] (+ 10 % since 1965), for a turnover of 826 millions LBP (+ 85% on 1973)[112], the productivity rate in the sole period 1969-1974 registered a growth by circa 66%[113]. Such a development, however, owed little of its gains to the governmental economic policies. Whereas the export boom was a direct consequence of the Six Days and the October wars, and to the closing of the Suez Canal, the investments were debtors to the Western capitals, which found in the industrial sector yet another mean of penetration of the Lebanese economy. Canalized so to «specialize and limit Lebanese industry in well determined branches [...], orienting its production within the limits and the directions most favorable to the interests of the great multinational firms[114]», indeed, those massive investments represented the manifestation of an economic trend inaugurated with the Intra crack and meant to become dominant alongside the 1970s, i.e. the consolidation of the domination of Western capital on Lebanese economy.

When Intra bank cracked, the space left empty by the Lebanese capitals and the small credit institutes which cracked with it, was soon occupied by the Western credit institutes, to the extent that, thanks to a succession of fusions and acquisitions, if before the crack the number of foreign credit institutes was of 31 out of 86, controlling 60% of the total deposits, by 1974 the number reached quota 55 over 80 and the control on the deposits the stunning proportion of 80%, out of a total amount of the deposits passed from 3.041 to 8.220 millions LBP[115]. The missed adoption of protective measures by the State, allowed international capital investors – so endowed de facto, as noted by Salim Nasr, with the «direct and nearly absolute control of finance in Beirut[116]» – to orient the impressive flux of money circulating in their institutes in the senses most favorable to further reinforce their dominant economic position over the subordinated Lebanese

110 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 69, Tab. 3.1.

111 The percentage refers to the year 1972.

112 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 86.

113 Dubar and Nasr, 76.

114 Dubar and Nasr, 81. Translation from French by the author.

115 Dubar and Nasr, 70–71.

116 Salim Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism," *MERIP Reports*, no. 73 (December 1978): 4, https://doi.org/10.2307/3012262.

market. In particular, the re-orientation was conducted according to two main strategies. The first one was the further reinforcement of the already consistent reinvestments of Lebanese and Arab capitals in the Western markets, which implied the double benefit of "repatriating" a consistent portion of the capitals at their disposal, while subtracting them to a possible investment in local economic activities which could contribute to the growth of the national economy. To have an idea of the dimensions of the phenomenon and its impact, it is sufficient to say that between 1970-1974 Lebanese foreign banks invested between 40% and 50% of their resources outside the country, for a turnover of 2.1 and 4 billions LBP respectively, i.e. the equivalent of between 60% and 70% of the national GDP[117].
The second strategy was the selective provision of capitals to the local economy so to better serve the interests of Western financial capital. By 1970, 58,6% of the bank credit invested in Lebanon was destined to trade (53,6%) and finance (5%), against a 4,3% and 16% reserved to agriculture and industry respectively. In the same year, out of 772 anonymous societies operating in the tertiary sector established in Beirut, 248 were branches of foreign companies, and 152 had a mixed capital. The remaining 370, then, given their intermediary role, were also reattached (and dependent) to the Western markets.
The impact of such an aggressive penetration and the missed adoption of protective countermeasures can hardly be underestimated. Whereas the selective provision of credits – as we will see in detail the following section – will actively contribute to further reinforce the subordination of the productive sectors to the financial ones, reinforcing, furthermore, the dependent position of Lebanese economy towards the Western one, the excess of bank deposits and the trajectory of its flows will play a major role, as underlined again by Nasr, to the lack of financial resources for the development of key infrastructural works, and the hyperinflation that the country will witness in the first half of the 1970s[118].
Between 1970 and 1974, inflation rate grew with an annual average by 7.2%, for a cost of living which, from the Intra crack to the outbreak of the Civil War, came to double. This was mostly debtor to the combination of two factors directly stemmed from the exasperation of the dependent extrovertion and hyper-tertiarization of Lebanese economic structure which the massive penetration of

117 Nasr, 4.

118 Nasr, 4. With this regards, see also: IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE "*Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon*", July 25, 1973.

western capitals engendered. On the one side, the reinforcement of the speculative monopolistic control over the trading activities by a restricted number of firms, closely linked to the Western capitals which led, despite the appreciation of the Lebanese Pound, to a rapid increase in the price of imported goods – all coming from the advanced capitalist countries, and consisting in finished goods by more than 60% (whereof 35% represented by finished consumer goods and 25% by processed food stuffs), i.e. barely one third of Lebanese resources[119]– estimated by 10-15% in the year 1972-1973 alone, and impacting on the consumer prices by +25% in the sole triennium 1971-1974[120]. On the other, the highly speculative property and real estate market. Main investment sector for both foreign and local investors in the Lebanese economy, in the early 1970s the construction sector witnessed a veritable boom, dragged by the over-construction of luxury buildings in Beirut. This induced a massive speculative increase in land prices, whose parallel lack of adequate measures for public housing and control on rent prices, pushed up the price of the apartments by 26%, and the expenditure on housing for the households over their total monthly income by minimum 40%. Despite in 1965 a Law on Public Houses was amended, and in 1973 a Ministry of Housing was instituted, the implementation of public housing remained nothing but a reiterated promise. As a result, between 1970 and 1975, whereas almost 37000 dwellers over a total of 484.000 was empty (often deliberately so to increase the market rent prices), 42% of the households (i.e. 56% of the total population), because of the scarcity of dwellers compatible with their economic condition, were forced to live in overcrowded and critical conditions[121].

III
Beyond banking and trade:
agriculture and industry in the Merchant republic and the role of émigrés capital

119 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 7-8. The data refers to 1972.

120 IBRD and IDA, Report n°670a-LE *"Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon"*, May 20, 1975, 20.

121 The datas are drawn from: Ahmed Bassam Naja and Elie Shehadeh, "Achievements plans and proposed recommendations relating to population and housing census in the Lebanese Republic", in Expert group meeting on census techniques, Beirut, 12- 16 December 1977 (ECWA, 1977)

III.I
A double subordination:
marginalization and marketization of the agricultural sector

The transition to the Merchant Republic, and the consequent hegemonization of Lebanese economy by the commercial and financial sector, impacted on agriculture in two major ways. The first and most evident one, was its rapid, inexorable marginalization. We have already mentioned how, thanks to the massive hemorrhage of capitals in favor of the service sector, agriculture passed from contributing to the national GDP up to 20% in 1948, to a mere 12% in 1966. In the post-Intra years, despite an increase in productivity by about 7%, the share further decreased, arriving to touch, by 1973, a meagre 9%[122].

The responsibilities of such a drastic downfall, has to be searched first and foremost in the marginal position which the Lebanese State reserved to the development of the sector since the early independence. Despite the agricultural potential of its territory, and the growing food needs engendered by the rapid growth of its population, the lassaiz-faire and service-focused orientation adopted and reiterated by independent Lebanon, created the conditions for which no systemic agricultural policies were ever implemented. Simultaneously, the sustain allocated to agriculture resulted substantially inconsistent. This was true both in terms of investments and outcomes. By 1971, for instance, the public investments directly allocated by the Central Government to the sector, came to account for a miserable 4% of the overall budget, against a circa 75% reserved to services[123]. Similarly, in the Franjiyeh's Six Year Plan, the founds allocated to agriculture represented only the 15% of the overall budget, against the remaining 85% allocated to the tertiary[124]. The global outcomes of the developmental projects, besides, were also quite unsatisfactory. On the eve of the war, out of the 89.000 ha of land that were planned to be irrigated through the Litani, Green and Six Year plans altogether, only 54.000 ha were effectively reached by water, and the unirrigated land still counted for 75% of the national cultivable area[125]. Despite the

122 IBRD and IDA, Report n°670a-LE, i.

123 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 12-13.

124 Ibid., 5.

125 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, 2 Annex.

relatively positive outcomes of the Green Plan, then, – which, among the various achievements, made available for cultivation about 12.000 ha of abandoned land in the period 1965-1971[126] – only 56% was cultivated, and the abandon rate never stopped increasing[127].

The lack of investments involved also the provision of credits. Despite the Green Plan and the institution of the BCAIF (whose main task was precisely to provide credit for the development of industry, tourism and agriculture), by 1973, 90% of the agricultural credit came from the private sector[128]. This played a major role for both the further inhibition of the productivity of the sector, and the increasing abandon of the lands, insofar as, while 90% of land holdings was equal or smaller than 5 ha, private credit was mostly allocated to big landowners and land holdings alone, and in the form of short-term loans with very high interest rates[129]. The total abandon of agriculture to private capitals had crucial consequences also on the structural characteristics of Lebanese agricultural production.

Second major impact of the hegemonization of Lebanese economy by commerce and finance, since the early 1950s, Lebanese agriculture, thanks to massive investments by traders in search of new businesses, started specializing in intensive high-yield crops meant to the exports or the industry, at the expenses of both that set of crops meant to satisfy the domestic food needs, and any form of subsistence agriculture. By the first half of the 1970s, sharecropping had practically disappeared, in favor of the emergence of big specialized capitalist firms, especially in the fertile Beqaʿa (sugarbeets), the ʿAkkar (potatoes) and the southern coastal plans (citrus). In the same time range, whereas the domestic cereal consumption doubled, cereal production halved, decreasing from circa 92.000[130] to 48.524 tons per year, out of a yearly domestic consumption of 332.000 tons[131]. This led to an impressive food deficit. On the eve of the war, circa 80% of the basic food stuffs was imported. By contrast, 95% of Lebanese agricultural production was destined to the exports.

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126 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 2 Annex.

127 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, 2 Annex.

128 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 17.

129 IBRD, Report n° EMA-6a, 4.5.

130 IBRD, Report n° E-45, 14

131 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 7.2 and 5 Annex.

The trajectory of the agricultural trade, totally reflected the dependence patterns to which the whole Lebanese economy was exposed. Whereas the agricultural exports were meant to satisfy – and so totally dependent from – the needs of the neighboring Arab markets, imports, on which the national food prices and provisions and the availability of the productive facilities totally depended, mostly came from the US-European block.

In particular, Lebanese agro-exports specialized in two main fields. The first one was that of fruits. Arriving to contribute to the overall Lebanese exports by 7%, for a turnover of 85 million LBP[132], Lebanese fruit export market was dragged by two main crops. The first one was that of apples. Mostly grown in the area of upper Mount Lebanon by small and medium holdings, Lebanese apple production passed from 28.000 tons in 1953[133], to 220.417 tons in 1972[134], i.e. circa + 700% in barely twenty years, for a yearly turnover of 34,299 million LBP[135], i.e. circa 3% of the overall value of Lebanese exports. The second one was that of citrus. Mostly grown in the coastal plans between Beirut and Tyre by big capitalist firms, citrus witnessed in the same year range a production increase by 270%, passing from 100.000 to 269.511 tons[136], with a yearly turnover of 30.277 million LBP[137] which came to contribute to the overall value of the national exports by another 2,6%. More recent was the development of the second specialization field, i.e. poultry. The development of poultry was particularly rapid. Started developing in the early 1960, poultry sector witnessed a growth in value between and by 17%, passing in a few years from arriving to satisfy the internal consumption, to produce a surplus able to turn it into the third national main agricultural export production[138]. Another product which passed from deficiency to the production of an exportable surplus was that of potatoes. Mostly concentered in the ʿAkkar,

132 Ibid. Tab. 3.2. The overall turnover of Lebanese agroexports in 1972 was of 278 million LBP, i.e. 23% of the overall exports. Despite an increase in their turnover of 120 million LBP from 1966, their relative share in the overall exports decreased from 37,9% to 23%, as a result of the parallel boom in the manufacturies exports. See Chap.1, III.II.

133 IBRD, Report n° A.S. 35-a, Tab.8.

134 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 7.2.

135 Ibid. Tab. 7.3.

136 IBRD, Report n° A.S. 35-a, Tab.8 and IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 7.2.

137 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 7.3.

138 Ibid., 5 Annex and Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War", 6.

potato production passed from 35.000 tons on the early independence (which covered only 80% of the national consumption)[139], to 116.507 on the eve of the war, whereof 30% destined to the exports, for a turnover of 9,159 million LBP[140].

Completely different was the impact that the marketization of Lebanese agricultural trade and production had on the two main national industrial crops, i.e. tobacco and sugar beets. Cultivated in South Lebanon and the central Beqaʿa respectively, the production of both crops mostly depended from the demand of a single industrial processor (the semi-State Régie for tobacco, and the private ʿAnjar sugar refinery for sugar beets), endowed also with the monopoly (de iure for the Régie, and de facto for the ʿAnjar factory owners) on the imports of cigarettes and refined sugar. When for both processors the speculation on the imports became more profitable than processing the local crops, the processing was significantly reduced together with the purchase prices, so pushing the two productions, after a phase of significant growth, to stagnation and recession respectively. With regards to tobacco, the volume of processing between 1966 and 1971 passed from 33,5% (2.007 out of 6.000 tons) to 16% (1.365 out of 8.397 tons) of the overall production[141], for a decrease in the overall tobacco tax incomes by almost 50%, and a stagnation of the production around the 9.500 tons per year, after that between 1960 and 1966 the latter had tripled. Conversely, in the same period the taxes on imported cigarettes (mostly coming from the US) reached a turnover of 39 million LBP, two times and a half higher than the income from the national ones, arriving to cover 80% of the national cigarettes consumption[142]. Something similar happened with the sugar beets. Whereas, thanks to a particularly favorable terrain, between 1966 and 1973, the production passed from 3.000 to 190.000 tons per year, the processing capacity of the refining plant remained slow and irregular, speculatively regulated according to the flows in the price of sugar on the world markets. When, in 1973-74, in reaction to an impressive rise in the world prices, the production was sudden increased, the purchase prices of sugar beet fell drastically. This pushed growers to massively abandon the crops,

139 IBRD, Report n° E 45, 16.

140 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 7.3

141 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, Tab. 5.3 and 8.1.

142 Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 9; Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation*, xx, Tab.1. Between 1971 and 1973 alone, the consumption of imported cigarettes rose from 65% to 80%.

to the extent that within the space of one year, whereas the cultivated terrains halved, coming back to the 1965 levels, and the production fell to 55.000 tons, Lebanon came to import 85.000 tons of refined sugar, for an overall turnover of 175 million LBP, i.e. twice of the price of what would have been the local production if adequately processed.

III.II
By credit, by inputs, by imports: patterns of subordination of the industrial sector

If the transition to the Merchant Republic drastically marginalized the weight of agriculture in the national economic system, the share of industry in the national GDP remained substantially unvaried throughout the whole post-independence period, 'frozen' on a constant, but equally marginal, 14%.
Lacking of mineral resources, and characterized by a narrow domestic market, Lebanon certainly presented relatively unfavorable starting preconditions for a wide industrialization. However, also in this case, its roots has to be searched first and foremost in the missed adoption of measures in that sense by the State. As for agriculture, no organic planning neither adequate long-term developmental policies were ever implemented. The volume of public investments directly allocated to the sector, then, was even lower than the one destined to agriculture. Whereas in the Four and Six-Year plans altogether, the funds directly destined to the primary sector (including irrigation) amounted to 472 million LBP, the ones allocated to industry reached only quota 31 million[143]. The same deficit characterized the provision of credits by BCAIF which, by 1971 war, came to contribute to the overall claims of the sector by just 2% (11 million LBP out of 489)[144]. The latter, then, was here again particularly restricted and hard to achieve. Provided, as for agriculture, mostly in the form of short-term loans and in favor of the sole big companies, between 1966 and 1972 it counted only up to 12-15% of the overall loans, against a circa 55% allowed to trade[145]. Among the other inhibiting factors strictly related to the State economic policies, it must be added the lack of

143 IBRD and IDA, Report n° EMA 6-a, Tab 24 and IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, Tab. 10.1.
144 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, Tab. 6.6 and Makdisi, "Lebanon," Tab. 3.
145 Makdisi, Tab. 2.

adequate infrastructural facilities and protectionist policies. On the one side, indeed, if it was certainly true that independent Lebanon witnessed a significant infrastructural development, the latter had been thought to serve the interests of tertiary sector and Beirut alone, leaving weakly served the rest of the country, so actively contributing, as underlined by Gaspard, in further segmenting the domestic market and curtailing its potential expansion[146]. On the other, in the name of the free market, despite from the early 1970s some protectionist and expansive incentives were implemented, taxes on imported goods remained particularly low, also with regards to the neighboring countries, leaving domestic market heavily exposed to the penetration and the concurrence of foreign manufactured goods. Whereas between 1966 and 1972, the value of the national industrial production passed from 535,2 to 884 million LBP, the net value of the non-agricultural imported goods passed from 1.588 to 2.276 million[147]. If the latter consisted in (mostly Western) machinery and transport equipments, and in consumer chemical, textile and metal finished goods, then, national production was able to expand only in the light industries meant to supply the internal market with essential goods[148]. The result was the reproduction of a two-fold and «double speed» secondary sector, scarcely skilled and innovative, and trapped in the productive structure typical of the dependent peripheral economies.

In effect, since the independence, Lebanese secondary sector had been marked by a net division in two distinct sections, each one endowed with its own specific market and productive characteristics. On the one side, a large craft industry, composed of small workshops and enterprises with less than 25 workers, scarcely mechanized and modernized, and specialized in artisanal productions, mostly destined to satisfy the demand of the popular classes and the provincial centers. On the other, a much narrower number of large industries, highly productive and technologically advanced, specialized in the production of mass consumer goods meant to satisfy the demand of the urban middle classes or the exports. The combination between uneven distribution of credits and heavy reliance on self-financing by the entrepreneurs, and the continuous turnover between failed businesses and new ones in the first category of enterprises, played a major role in maintaining this double split constant. Simultaneously, it played a major role in

146 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 108–9.

147 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 2.2 and 2.3.

148 Ibid., Tab. 3.2.

deepening their productive divide, and transforming also their mutual relations. Whereas in 1954 the enterprises employing between five and twenty-four workers constituted 86.6%[149] of the national industries, contributing to the overall production by %, in 1971, whereas the proportion remained the substantially the same, the share decreased to about , against 67,1% of the enterprises with more than 25 workers (300 over 11.000!). If, until the second half of the 1960s, the two sectors were substantially independent from each other both in terms of division of labor and of market of reference, by the early 1970s the survival of the small manufacturing came to be guaranteed mostly thanks to the massive recourse to subcontracting by the big industry, whose delegation of part of the productive process allowed them «to extract maximum profit from the low wages of the craft sector and the same time to let this sector assume in large part the risks and penalties of the business cycle[150]».

In particular, until the early 1970, Lebanese industrial production remained stably dragged by food processing, textile and clothing and building-related goods, whose cumulative contribution to the overall production and value added between 1964 and 1970 remained stable around circa 65% and 60% respectively[151]. The size of the industries involved in those productive activities was quite diversified. Whereas for all the three macro-sectors the average number of workers per enterprise, in 1959, was below the twenty-five workers[152], all of them could count on the presence of at least one major enterprise with more than 100 workers, such as the Aritex factory of Tripoli (1000 workers c.ca) for the textile sector, the Gandour (1500 c.ca, whereof 250 c.ca in the Chiah plant, and the remaining in the Chouaifat one), the Seven Up and the ʿAnjar sugar factories for the food one, or the national cement factory of Chekka for the constructions.

This productive mosaic started to rapidly change from the early 1970. Dragged mostly by Western capitals – which already controlled about 35% of Lebanese industrial production –, the investments in the sector multiplied by 30% in the sole triennium 1971-1973, going to drain in particular the growth of the metal, mechanical, electrical, chemical and pharmaceutical sectors. This granted first to the whole sector a noticeable growth, with an increase in the value of production

149 IRFED, Vol. 1, 207-208

150 Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978.

151 IBRD and IDA, Report n° EMA-6a, Tab. 8 and Ibid.

152 IRFED, Vol. 1, Tab. 58.

by circa 57% in the years 1970-1973, and an average yearly growth which touched quota 30% in 1974. More importantly, it significantly affected both the structure of the industrial production and trade, and the articulation of the dependence relations with the advanced capitalist countries. Answering to what may be defined as a strategy of sectoral diversification of the dependent intermediary role thought for Lebanese economy by the Western capitals, indeed, the investments in the industrial sector were selectively allocated with the double aim of fostering a further penetration of the western capitals in the Arab markets, and, at the same time, maintain the shares of Lebanese market already hegemonized[153]. The strategy was successful. Whereas almost half of the domestic market kept on being served by the imported goods, whereof almost 78% coming from the Western economies for a turnover of 1977 million LBP[154], thanks to the exponential growth of the newly developed sectors – which became the main drag of Lebanese industrial growth – the value of Lebanese industrial exports increased from 377 million LBP in 1969, to 890 million in 1972 (+137%)[155], whereof almost 60% destined to the Arab markets, for a turnover of 679 million LBP[156].

III.III
The invisible side of extrovertion: turnover and function of the émigré capital

Among the various invoices contributing to the overall inflow of foreign capitals in the Merchant Republic, an increasingly important position came to be occupied, from the early 1960s onwards, by the one alimented by Lebanese émigrés. Emigration has historically represented a particularly rooted phenomenon within Lebanese society. Witnessing its first massive waves in the second half of the XIXth century and in the Mandate period, indeed, it continued to constantly re-absorb Lebanese human surplus also in the post-Independence years, to the extent that, on the eve of the Civil War, of the Lebanese citizens was estimated to reside abroad.

153 Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War", 10.

154 IBRD and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, Tab. 3.3.

155 Ibid., Tab. 3.2.

156 Ibid., Tab. 3.4.

The importance of émigré capitals in the overall Lebanese economic system, resided in both the impressive dimensions that their turnover came to reach, and in the economic role that it actively and passively played. Between 1953 and 1974, émigrés remittances grew from 76 to 2.143 million LBP[157], with a decuplication in value in the sole triennium 1972-1974, so passing from representing 5.35% of the GDP in 1953, to 16% in the triennium 1971-1973, to a final stunning 26,1% in 1974[158]. This massive inflow of money played a crucial role first in keeping Lebanese balance of payments constantly positive. In 1970 and 1971, for instance, in the face of a deficit in the trade balance of 1.109 and 1.296 million LBP respectively, BOP registered a surplus of 484 and 771 million LBP, wherein the overall contribution of émigré capital consisted in circa 870 and 878 million LBP[159]. Second, it played a crucial role in the growth of the per capita consumption. According to the estimates of Toufic Gaspard, about one third of the household incomes was originated outside the domain of market, whereof émigrés transfers and remittances constituted a major share[160]. According to World Bank estimates, then, the latter growing inflow, together with the parallel growth of production, allowed the yearly real per capita consumption to grow since 1970 at an average of about 6%, against the circa 1% registered for the period 1966-1970[161]. Last but not least, its importance resided in the trajectories along which it was directed. A study conducted in 1966, showed that out of the overall inflowing émigré capitals, the share of remittances sent in support of the families amounted to circa 18%, while the remaining 82% consisted in capital investments[162]. Reflecting the general foreign capitals investment behavior, those capitals were mostly canalized

157 IRFED, Vol.I, Tab. 96 and Boutros Labaki and Khalil Abou Rjeily, *Bilan des guerres du Liban 1975-1990* (Editions L'Harmattan, 1993), 44. The import in LBP for 1974 has been calculated applying the average exchange rate with the US dollar for the considered year.

158 Cfr. Ibid., Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 96.and Butrous Labaki, *L'Economie politique du Liban indépendant, 1943-1975* in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar-Mills, *Lebanon: A History of Conflict* (I.B.Tauris, 1988), 166–80, 171.

159 Cfr. IRBID and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 18 and Tab. 3.1, and Labaki and Rjeily, *Bilan des guerres du Liban 1975-1990*, Tab. 44.The import in LBP of the turnover of émigré capital has been calculated applying the average exchange rate with the US dollar for the considered years.

160 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 95–99.

161 IRBID and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, 4.

162 IRBID and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE, 16.

in non-productive activities. Whereas, the short-term investments mainly consisted in bank deposits, for a turnover estimated in 1975 at 58% of the domestic deposits[163], the long-term ones were addressed primarily in real estate, becoming one of the main components of its demand, and, to a lesser extent, in participation in enterprises of various nature. More productive-oriented was instead the behavior of the returned émigrés, which, while mostly addressed to the establishment of small and medium-size trading firms, came to touch, in general, all the sectors of Lebanese economies and for all scales, including the establishment of large-size firms in agriculture and manufacturing, and other key sectors of the economy such as construction and engineering[164].

The growing importance of émigrés capital was strictly related to the changes in volume, nature and direction that Lebanese emigration underwent from the late 1960s onwards. During the 1950, Lebanese emigration rate had remained stable and relatively low, with a yearly average of 2.850. From the 1960, the rate started exponentially growing, passing from an average of 8.566 in the period 1960-1969, to an average of 10.000 from 1970 onwards[165]. Differently from the previous waves, which had been mostly directed to the Americas, Australia, and West Africa, as a result of the former changing migration policies, and the parallel oil boom, the wave of the 1960 and 1970s was mostly directed to the Gulf countries. This created the conditions for which most of the capital earned was re-invested in the home country, as well as for a continuous turnover between new and returned émigrés, insofar as the geographical proximity and the Gulf restrictive naturalization policies represented an important inhibiting factor for a permanent resettlement. As pointed out by a study of the World Bank, then, and a number of village-focused studies, barely two thirds of the new émigrés consisted in skilled workers, and so endowed with high wages. This provides a further explanation for the impressive turnover which émigrés remittances and capital investments reached.

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163 IRBID and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, 5.

164 Boutros Labaki, The Role of Transnational Communities in Fostering Development in Countries of Origin: the Case of Lebanon, contribution presented at ESCWA/DESA, Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities, Beirut, 15-17 May 2006, 7 (http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/11/Paper13_Labaki.pdf)

165 IRFED, Vol.1 Tab. 6 and Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, Tab. 3.2.

Finally, with regards to the returned capital, another crucial push factor was represented by the which occurred in the African continent throughout the 1960s, inducing a growing number of Lebanese to come back to the home country.

It is worth of mention that if throughout the 1960s and 1970s Lebanon became an exporter of skilled workforce, in the same period it became a massive importer of unskilled one. In 1966, the number of Syrian workers in Lebanon, whereof the overwhelming majority was employed in agriculture as seasonal workers or in the construction, was estimated at 93.3380, i.e. the equivalent of 12% of the estimated Lebanese active population[166]. In 1970, then, its number was estimated between 300.000 and 75.000, to which it must be added an estimated number of 42.000 Palestinians employed in the same activities, accounting together for the equivalent of at least 17% of the national active population[167].

The combination between high emigration rates and wide reliance on foreign manpower in the productive activities, further reinforced the dependence of Lebanese economy on the political relations and stability in the Arab region. A case in point is represented by the shortages of Syrian workers in construction that Lebanon had to face in the aftermaths of the October War of 1973. Totally paralyzing the national building industry, indeed, the shortage was ultimately overcame only after that the two Governments devised workable arrangements between army and guerrillas, and bargained the permanent inclusion of Syrian workers in the Social Security system[168].

166 IRBID and IDA, Report n° EMA 6-a, Tab. 3 and Tab.9.

167 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 241–46.

168 IRBID and IDA, Report n° 670a-LE, 1.

Chapter 2

The Merchant Republic revisited: realities beyond the myth

I
The Republic of Inequalities: insights from a "growth without development"

I.I
A boom for a few: the Lebanese miracle revisited

Drawing down the conclusions of the overall economic performances of the Merchant Republic, Toufic Gaspard bluntly talked about a «growth without development». Looking at the few available surveys breaking down the major development indicators along socio-geographical lines, as well as the national distribution of income and wealth, his evaluation can hardly be refuted.
In effects, if the economic growth that the global wealth ratings registered black on white was certainly indisputable, it was equally true that its fruits remained in the preserve of a restricted section of Lebanese population. In 1959 the already mentioned IRFED mission brutally showed how, after fifteen years of laissez-faire, while 4% of Lebanese households held alone 33% of the entire national wealth, 49% lived in condition of poverty or extreme poverty (i.e. with a yearly income equal or lower than 2.500 LBP)[169]. It must be noted that this estimation was realistically revised downward. As pointed out by Samih Farsoun, despite IRFED classified 32% of the households as middling, the income range established to measure the group (between 2500 and 5000 LBP per year), corresponded to the average earnings of a low clerk or skilled worker which, in the context of a seizable (as average Lebanese households were) urban-resident family, could hardly guarantee a decent living[170]. Despite a decade of Chihabism, fifteen years later the situation slightly changed. According to an estimation elaborated by

169 IRFED, vol. I, 93.

Mgr. Geroire Haddad in 1975, 79% of the Lebanese received per month less than the amount of 10.480 LBP he established as the necessary minimum to conduct a decent living[171]. Similarly, the year before, a survey conducted by the UN ECWA on a sample of 200.000 waged workers registered at the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), revealed that 70% of them earned less than the social subsistence estimated for that year[172]. In this sense, it is remarkable that until 1974, Lebanese average wages constantly remained below the estimated subsistence level. The legal minimum wage, furthermore, never surpassed its half[173]. Looking at the development indicators, the situation was by no less mean brighter. In 1970, while circa 8% of Lebanese were estimated to live in luxury buildings, 56% lived in overcrowded conditions, 17% of the dwellings were still without current water, 31% and 23% without an internal toilet and a bathroom respectively, and 25,5% without any heating system[174]. Always in 1970, 45% of the adult citizens (58% among women) was still totally illiterate, while only 3% (1.1% for women) had received a university education. If among the under twenty-five the schooling rate arrived to cover more than 90% of children and kids in their school-age, Lebanese youth receiving a university education was still limited to a meagre 4% (2% for the female)[175]. Almost totally delegated to private institutions, in facts, higher education remained a privilege for the highest strata of Lebanese society, despite the empowerment of the public Lebanese University had guaranteed to low income youth at least a possibility more to complete their formation up to the highest level. The structural delegation to private institutions played also a major role in keep on forbidding to the lower social strata the access to quality primary and intermediate education. Make three children complete the primary school cycle, meant for a low-income family spend at least 50% of their yearly revenues[176]. Pretty classist remained also the access to healthcare, insofar as more

170 See Samih Farsoun, "Family Structure and Society in Modern Lebanon" in Lousie E. Ed Sweet, *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East Volume 2 - Life in the Cities,* (Natural History Press, 1970), 257–307.

171 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 15 July 1975.

172 Toufic K. Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire* (BRILL, 2004), 164.

173 Gaspard, Tab. 5.8.

174 PAL, vol. I, Tab. 4 and 10.

175 Ibid., Tab. and 47.

176 Farsoun, "Student Protests and the Coming Crisis in Lebanon," 7.

than 70% of the hospitals and dispensaries were managed by private institutions, and only a third of the available hospital beds were provided or payed by the national healthcare system[177].

The roots of the flagrant contradiction between the image of Lebanon given back by this set of datas and that offered by the general economic indicators, has to be searched first in the financial origin of Lebanese economic growth. As in facts the latter guaranteed to the country an impressive inflow of capitals, their movement remained circumscribed to the terrain of bank deposits and stocks, of insurances and triangular trade, being only marginally reinvested in productive and labor-intensive activities. To a second extent, it has to be searched in the failure of Lebanese laissez-faire to produce an integration on a large scale of skilled labor in capitalist economic activity, and particularly in the dominant ones. Looking at financial sector, for instance, if the latter by 1970 arrived alone to contribute to about a third of the GDP, on the other side it employed only 3% of Lebanese active population[178]. As we will better see in the next chapter, the rest of labor that laissez-faire drew to the economic process remained unskilled and poor, while the more skilled group sought instead emigration. Such a failure was further reinforced by the inhibiting impact that its consolidation had on the industrial development. The last factor, but certainly not in order of importance, was the reiterated non-interventionism of the State in the regulation of the national economic activities, as well as of the capital fluxes that from it derived. Corollary of the laissez-faire , in facts, on the one side it acted as major pull factor for the inflow of capitals, on the other – as seen in filigree from the datas on access to health and education – it deprived Lebanese economic system of the great correctors of extended public welfare and progressive fiscal policies, as well as of a readdressing of the resources in the least developed economic areas and sectors.

III.II
A 'two speed' country:
Beirut-centrism and the underdevelopment of peripheral Lebanon

177 IRFED, vol. II, 56.

178 PAL, vol.I, Tab. 63.

The failure of laissez-faire to produce a sustained development, emerges with even greater clarity looking at the deep developmental gap between Mount Lebanon and the remaining regions, which accompanied the country since the institution of Greater Lebanon.

Originally annexed to the territories of the ex-Mutasarrifiyah to provide Mount Lebanon with an agricultural hinterland after the slapping lesson of the famine of the World War I, the muhafazat of North Lebanon, the South and the Beqaʿa, had entered Grand Liban with an already significant initial developmental gap. Furthermore, their forced annexation had implied the cut tout court of the economic traffics with the neighboring Syria and Palestine, which had historically represented the two great poles towards which their economic relations had articulated. The concentration of both private and public investments in the tertiary sector and in the sole Beirut and hinterland which followed, as well as the constant failure of Lebanese State to implement effective large scale developmental projects, created the conditions whereby this gap was not only never overcame, but also possibly even sharpened.

In 1960, the IRFED mission showed that 71% (99 over 139) of the national hospitals and 77% of the dispensaries (88 over 113) were located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. By contrast, South Lebanon could count on only 8 hospitals and 4 dispensaries, and the Beqaʿa on 4 and 10 respectively[179]. Similarly, whereas almost the totality of the universities and secondary education institutions was concentred in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, numerous villages, especially in the North of Lebanon (with a special concentration in the ʿAkkar and Hermel) lacked even of a rudimentary primary school[180]. Such a huge gaps, were mirrored in the availability of the rest of the most basic services, like drinkable water, electricity supplies, and infrastructural arteries. Looking at the North, the study stressed that the provision of water and electricity was deeply insufficient, as well as the communication network (roads and telecommunications). This was the case also of the Beqaʿa, with the exception of «one or two zones where the installations of water and electricity installations were partially realized or in progress». A similar scenario occurred also in the South, which, furthermore, could count on a generalized particularly precarious residential situation, as well as on the highest – and equally generalized – deficiencies in the water supplies for both «quality,

179 IRFED, vol. II, 56.

180 Ibid., 59-62.

quantity and distribution»[181]. Here again, in the next fifteen years the situation remained substantially unvaried. In the early 1970s, despite the South and the Beqaʿa still accounted 18% and 13% of the national population, they could count only of the presence of 5% and 3% of the physicians respectively. By contrast, while the municipal area of Beirut accounted circa 27% of the national population, 65% of the physicians lived and worked there[182]. If in Beirut the dwellings lacking of electricity and current water were only 1,5% and 5,5% of the total, in the South they consisted in the 17% and 40% respectively[183]. The differences in the literacy rates were equally eloquent[184]. While the global illiteracy rate in Beirut was of 35%, involving mostly the over thirty-five, in the North, the South and the Beqaʿa it was of 67,3%, 64,2% and 67% respectively, with a rate of under twenty-five secondary educated of about the half of their Beiruti counterparts. Needless to say that this deep inequalities were reflected also in the average income. Whereas at the beginning of the seventies the average wage in Beirut was of 803 USD, in the South of Lebanon it was only 151 USD[185].

It is worth of mention that both Beirut and Mount Lebanon and the peripheral districts were not monolithic, homogeneous areas. Living conditions in Beirut suburbs were almost homologous than in peripheral Lebanon. In the three muhafazat, together with a deep rural/urban divide, significant differences among sub-regions subsisted. Notwithstanding their economic function of mainly subsidiary centers supplying the consumer needs of the surrounding countryside, their mutual differences, and the overall wealth and development rates anyway lower than Beirut, in facts, all the regional capitals witnessed living conditions markedly higher then their respective rural hinterlands. Tripoli, in particular, could count on a significant industrial development, discrete port activities, and a discrete presence of high tertiary activities and economic institutions such as an important Chamber of Commerce and Industrialist Association. Always in the North, the Kura, Zgharta and Batroun districts could count on development and income rates higher than the regional average, as well as the Zahleh district in the

181 Ibid., 57-59.

182 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 162.

183 PAL, vol. II, Tab. 21.03 and 25.02.

184 Ibid., Tab. 21.03, 24.17, 25.17 and 26.17.

185 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 162.

Beqaʿa – rates, anyway, widely far from what a Switzerland of the Middle East was supposed to have.

III.III
Sectarian inequalities

The deep inequalities which the ascension of the Merchant Republic produced and reproduced, walked also along marked sectarian lines. A study conducted by Boutros Labaki in the early 1980s on the evolution of the sectarian composition of a number occupations mostly belonging to the economic elites (high rank functionaries, liberal professions, commercial companies owners, etc.), showed that from the independence until the date of the study, with the only exception of the non-commercial activities requiring high education as main precondition to be achieved, the Christian quota remained stably anchored around a 70-75%. In particular, whereas thanks to the empowerment of Lebanese University and, to a second extent, to the effects of emigrations and the role of communitarian institutions, the educational gap between Christians and Muslims reduced, so partially rebalancing the sectarian composition in the liberal professions and the public administration, the sectarian divide in those sectors requiring significant amounts of capital to be acceded such as commerce, finance and industry, while with some rapprochement, remained deeply sharp[186]. Whereas, for instance, Muslim representativeness among State functionaries, lawyers and engineers rose from 41%, 13,5% and 12%, to 48%, 29% and 42%respectively, Christian representativeness among SAL and SARL owners, bankers and insurance agents passed from 78%, 100% and 91% to 75,5%, 76% and 76%, while their representativeness among the industrialists remained stable at 67%[187]. Conversely, on the eve of the war, 75% of the industrial working-class was Muslim and mainly Shia, as well as peasantry and urban sub-proletariat.

The roots of this divide has to be searched, here again, in the specific modalities trough which Lebanese dependent transition to capitalism articulated. In effect, Lebanese silk-dragged transition to capitalism represented an eminently Maronite

186 Boutros Labaki, 'L'Economie Politique du Liban Indépendant, 1943-1975' inNadim Shehadi e Dana Haffar-Mills, *Lebanon: A History of Conflict* (I.B.Tauris, 1988), 166-180; 176-178.

187 Ibid., Tab. 6.

affair. Major sectarian community of Mount Lebanon in the mid-XIX century, indeed, it soon became the main beneficiary of the dependent integration of the territory in the periphery of the global capitalist market, accumulating the primitive economic and political capital from which its dominant position in the post-Independence years stemmed from. Three major factors contributed to this ascension. First, the specific impact which the process of 'monoculturization' had on the dominant forms of landownership. Contrary to the rest of the Middle East, in Mount Lebanon the disappearance of subsistence agriculture in favor of intensive cash-crop monoculture did not lead to the reinforcement of great landownership, but rather to the progressive dismantling of latifundia in favor of the acquisition of land per small lots by the former cultivators, which became in turn independent landowners, paving the way for individual capital accumulation based on private property on a relatively large scale[188]. Second, the educational advantage which the earliest access to the modern and bilingual missionary schools guaranteed them, allowed the primate for the emergence of a bureaucratic, commercial and financial bourgeoisie of a modern type. Third, the earliest association with the French capital, and the dominant political position which this association guaranteed them during the Mutasarrifiyyah before, and later, during the Mandate (Cfr. Chap 1, I.I). This allowed, in turn, the further consolidation of their economic position, paving the way for both, as we have seen, the leading role of the Maronite elites in the independence process and, consequently, in the post-independence years, as well as – given the reduced social mobility which the Merchant Republic produced – the reproduction of the existing sectarian inequalities.

In this process, the uneven geographic development, also played a major role. As Mount Lebanon, on which economic growth mostly concentered, represented the major enclave of the Maronite community, Muslim population was conversely mostly located in peripheral Lebanon. Still in the early 1960, 90% of Lebanese Shia lived between the Beqaʿa and the South. The miserable ʿAkkar region in the North, represented the largest national Sunna territorial enclave. It is also worth of mention that the prosperous peripheral districts of Batroun, Kura and Zgharta in the North, Zahleh in the Beqaʿa, and Jezzine in the South, represented the major Christian strongholds in the respective muhafazat[189].

188 Firro, "Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860-1914."

A particularly eloquent litmus test for this double deprivation of Lebanese Muslim population, comes from looking at the sectarian-geographical origin of the population of Beirut suburbs on the eve of the Civil War. Arriving to host alone, as a result of the rural crisis which accompanied the rise of the Merchant Republic and the intense rural-urban migratory fluxes stemming from it (See Chap. 3, I.I), about 22% of the whole Lebanese population, Beirut suburbs came to be populated by Shia coming from the rural South and the Beqaʿa by at least a third[190]. Their proportion among the Lebanese living in the bidonvilles which crowned it, then, arrived to reach 68% (63% from the South and 5% from the Beqaʿa), against a 4% only coming from Mount Lebanon[191].

II
The Republic of Monopolies:
capital concentration and market appropriation in the Merchant Republic

II.I
Which laissez-faire?
The Merchant Republic as a consociational oligarchy

Since its very emergence, the rise and consolidation of the Merchant Republic, ran in parallel with a high and ever-growing degree of capital concentration. We have already mentioned how, by 1966, 80% of the national bank deposits came to be controlled by just 30 credit institutes, i.e. barely one third of all the institutes operating in the country (Chap.1, I.I). Even stricter came to be the concentration in the manufacturing sector. According to an industrial census conducted in 1964,

189 For a detailed survey of the geographical distribution of the main sects on the eve of the war see: Yves Schemeil, 'Sociologie du Système Politique Libanais', Doctoral Dissertaion, Université de Grenoble II, 1976, 64Farid El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Harvard University Press, 2000), Tab. 5.1.

190 PAL, vol. II, Tab. 21.15.

191 Mouvement Social, Recensement des Habitations et des Résidents dans les bidonvilles de Beyrouth et de sa Banlieue (Ministère des Travaux Publics - Direction générale de l'Urbanisme, 1971), 18.

6% of the industrial plants were responsible for 58% of the total cash receipts and 57% of the total value added of all the national industrial establishments[192]. Nine years later, almost the same value added (50%) was produced by only the first major 20 plants, while 10% of the plants guaranteed almost 70% of the whole national production[193]. A similar scenario occurred also in agriculture, where in 1970 82% of the land holdings owned just 22% of lands, while less than 10% more than 50%[194]. Such a concentration moved also along familial lines. Such a high degree of concentration, moved also along familial, trans-sectoral trajectories. By 1973, for instance, 41 families were estimated to control one third of the total joint stock companies in trade and services, accounting for 70% of their overall turnover, whereof fine controlling also half of the national import-export trade. More importantly, 57 family 'holdings' – representing 32% of the total – coming from the banking sector, controlled 72% of the capital of the industrial SARLs, 75% of the deposits in Lebanese banks, 52% of the capital of the SARLs in trade, agriculture and services, 64% of the capital of the insurance companies, 71% of the capital of transport companies, 92% of the capital of financial joint stock companies and 37% of the capital of property companies[195].

Within the context of a laissez-faire economic environment as the Merchant Republic proudly claimed to be, the reproduction of capitals wherever they already existed, does not come per se as a surprise. Much more anomalous may sound, instead, insofar as «within this context and phrased in its ideal-typical version, neoclassical theory advocates a "doctrine of laissez-faire" as being "the perfection of the competitive system»[196], the marked monopolistic character that this concentration witnessed. Looking again at the industrial sector, for instance, the most part of the groups dominating the national production of sugar, wood and cement (whose productions, furthermore, were totally or almost totally in the

192 IBID and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE "*Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon*", July 25, 1973, 3 Annex.

193 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 79.

194 Ibid., Tab. 7.2 and IBRD and IDA, Report n°670a-LE "*Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon*", May 20, 1975, 2-3 Annex.

195 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 157.

196 Reinoud Leenders, "Nobody Having Too Much to Answer for: Laissez-Faire, Networks, and Postwar Reconstruction in Lebanon," in *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: The Politics of Economic Reform Revisited* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004), 172.

hands of three enterprises each) controlled also the imports of the same products[197]. The creation of monopolistic cartels was also fostered by law. With the Law n° 34/1967), the impossibility for foreign companies to change their local agents and representatives without the latter agreement was enacted, so de facto endowing the agents with an ad interim exclusive right over import management of a specific product, and so with the possibility to impose any price and distributive policy. Import rights were assigned also for that set of products subject to State-regulated import quotas (sugar, cereals, and all that set of agricultural and industrial products competing with the national productions), whose main beneficiary came soon to be represented by a solid oligarchy of powerful, politically well-connected traders. The degree of control that this monopolistic cartels came to reach was impressive. By 1974, about two thirds of all the imports from the Western countries were estimated to be controlled by sole four big houses (Fattal, Kettaneh, Phiraʿoun & Chiha, Abou Adal)[198]. By the same year, whereas the import of agricultural fertilizers and insecticides came to be controlled by two sole firms (Unifert and Le Comptoire Agricole), two thirds of the apple marketing was concentrated in the hands of twenty-five brokers, with the three main one controlling one quarter, while 80% of the citrus one by about twenty brokers, with the three main ones controlling a third[199]. Despite the widespread rhetorics of a fully free-trade, open economy, thus, the Merchant Republic fell short from being that self-regulating, under-socialized and harmonic system supposed to emerge, according to the laissez-faire classical theorists, once liberated the forces of the demand and the supply from the constrictions of State interventionism. Rather, it substantiated into nothing but a consociational system of closed economic circuits solidly controlled and regulated by a restricted oligarchy of families and monopolistic cartels.

II.II

«Fifteen capitalists and forty of their lackeys[200]»:

197 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 83-84 and Tab. II.9; Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 5–6.

198 Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 5.

199 Nasr, 8.Nasr, 8.

200 Expression with whom the journalist Iskandar Riashi labelled the Parliament emerged from the elections of 1947 reported in Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 124.

The oligarchical seizure of Lebanese economy and the emergence, the consolidation, and the tolerance of specific monopolistic cartels, was primarily debtor to a complex network of personal relations between economic agents and political stakeholders, and economic agents themselves, whose articulations and mutual hierarchies largely determined the articulation, the trajectories and the mutual hierarchies through which such monopolies substantiated. Such a relation expressed first and foremost in the strong intermingling between economic and political power.

In effect, since its very first autonomous steps, Lebanese power system was characterized by a particularly high permeability between political and business class. In the Parliament stemmed from the elections of 1947, for instance, out of fifty-five parliamentary seats, thirteen were occupied by representatives of the most important national business cluster (the so called "Consortium") and thirty-six by owners or shareholders in the country's biggest firms. In the following twenty-five years, the situation slightly changed: despite the doubling of the number of deputies, three new electoral laws, and a civil war, the representatives of the business and financial class remained firmly anchored to a stable 30%[201]. Their political position was far from being marginal: out of a total of 159 ministers expressed from the independence to the outbreak of the Civil War, 31 belonged to the highest commercial-financial – and, to a lesser extent, industrial – ranks of the national business class[202]. To give some examples, the financier Hussein ʿUweyni held four times the ministry of foreign affairs, one time the ministry of defense and of finance, and twice the premiership. Saʾib Salam, major stakeholder, among the various other businesses, of the Middle East Airlines, was prime minister six

201 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 241–45.

202 The representatives of Lebanese business class who held a cabinet position from the independence to 1975 were Najib Abou Haydar, Najib Alam el-Din, ʿAli, ʿArab, Nasib Barbir, Emile Boustani, Ahmad Dawʿouk, Michel Dumit, Henri Phiraʿoun, Boulos Fayyad, Pierre Helou, Michel and Pierre Eddé, Georges Karam, Michel Kouri, Nassim Majdalani, Nasri Maʿalouf, Musa Moubarak, Gabriel Murr, Fouad Najjar, Georges Naqqache, Antoine Sehnawi, Saʾib Salam, Yousef and Nicolas Salim, Najib Salha, Jean Skaff, Basil and Farid Trad, Gibran Tweini, and Hussein ʿʿUweyni. R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership: Egypt, Israel, Lebanon* (SUNY Press, 1975), 23–24.

times, five times minister of the interior, and one minister for petroleum and Arab affairs. Prime minister was also the real-estate giant Ahmad Dawʿouk, while the major businessman Basil Trad held the position of minister of the economy twice. Enlarging the circle to the landed bourgeoisie, then, the parliamentary representation of Lebanese economic elites, reached the stunning average of at least two thirds of the seats per electoral turn. Expressing in the same time range another 19 ministers, indeed, landowners represented the second great economic elite constituting Lebanese political class, accounting to an average of circa 40% of the total elected[203]. Here again, the concentration of high rank cabinet and institutional positions was impressive. Sabri Hamadeh and Kamal al-Asʿad for instance, after have both occupied prominent ministerial positions such as interiors, transports, agriculture and health, they came to alternate each other in the function of Speakers of the Parliament for almost all the post-independence period. Whereas Majid Arslan occupied the position of Minister of Defense for seventeen times and agriculture for three times, his rival Kamal Junblatt was appointed Minister of Education, of Public Works, and finally of the Interior. Similarly, whereas Rashid Karameh served five times as a prime Minister, his rival Suleiman Franjiyeh (who was also a prominent trader), after having occupied the post of minister of education, interior, agriculture, justice and economy, in 1970 was appointed as fifth Lebanese President of the Republic, while his brother Hamid served as minister of finance and foreign affairs.

The influence of the business elites on the political life of the country, was widely exercised in different forms also from 'behind the scenes'. The most common one, was the provision of financial support to specific candidates or political parties and coalitions. The victory of the Consitutional Block in the elections of 1947 and the two elections of Beshara al-Khouri to the presidency were widely debtor to the financial support of Banque Phiraʿoun and Chiha. The election of Camille Chamʿoun to the presidency of the Republic in 1952 owed much of its success to

203Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 241–44. and Dekmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership*, 24.

The most important representatives of the Lebanese landed bourgeoisie include the Franjiyeh, Karameh, Moʿawwad, Karam, and ʿAbboud families from the North of Lebanon, the Asʿad, Salam, Zein, Khalil, Solh and Usayran from the South of Lebanon, the Junblatt, Arslan, Khazen, Abi Lama and Haydar families from Mount Lebanon, and the Skaff and the Hamadeh from the Beqaʿa. Dekmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership*, 17-19.

the change of heart of prominent business families formerly supporting al-Khouri, Phiraʿoun and Chiha and ʿUeyini in primis. Something similar happened with the succession of Charles Helou to Fouad Chihab, whose supporting business circle accounted ex prominent Chihab associates such as the banker Nicolas Salha, and above all, those Consortium members accused of having induced the crack of Intra bank[204]. This 'behind the scene' work was exercised also in stricter political terms. Michel Chiha, for instance, after his single parliamentary experience in the Mandate period during which he played a prominent role in the redaction of Lebanese constitution, kept on maintaining his leading role in the quality of main advisor of President Beshara al-Khouri for both his mandates. Similarly, if Henri Phiraʿoun after his single parliamentary experience did not run anymore for the elections, thanks to its consolidated business and political networks, kept on playing the role of grey eminence behind any election in the Beqaʿa and Beirut districts until his death.

The relation between the economical and the political found a further, important seal in the inter-elite business and familial ties. Looking on the business front, for instance, the Sehnawi family, accounted among its business partners at least fifteen leading national political families and figures, such as Saʾib Salam, the Naqqash, the Phiraʿoun and the Eddé. Linked with Salam and the Naqqash was also Ahmad Dawʿouk, which held tight business relations also with the Khouri, Hussein ʿUweyni and the Zein[205]. The Eddé family, from its side, could count among its business partners the Dumit, the Phiraʿoun, and the Helou. Looking at the familial front, instead, beside the notorious al-Khouri-Phiraʿoun-Chiha cluster, family ties elapsed between the Chihab family and the Abi Lama, between the family of President Camille Chamʿoun and the Trad, as well as between the Asʿad, the Hamadeh and the Solh, and between the Zein and the Salam[206].

It is thus within this complex network of business, political and familial relations that the ascension of the Merchant Republic and its apparently anomalous monopolistic turn needs to be frame-worked: whereas the over-representation of the economic elites and their interests in the parliament, and, above all, in the government, subsumed the adoption and the reiteration of tertiary-oriented and "laissez-faire" economic policies – as well as, per converso, the transformation of

204Fawaz Traboulsi, *Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon,* 76-80.

205Dekmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership*, Fig. 6.

206Dekmejian, Fig.1 and 3.

the executive into the institutional branch wherein the economical was located –, the direct and indirect access to political power allowed economic elites to reinforce or enlarge their personal businesses, and build or reinforce the monopolistic control over the economic activities and sectors they overlooked, so turning the State into the privileged terrain for the reproduction of economic power.

II.III
The «Consortium»…

The main consociational axis which, at independence achieved, came to control all the main strategic assets of Lebanese economy, was the above mentioned so-called "Consortium", a group of thirty families bounded together by straight familial and business ties, in whose hands, by the beginning of the 1950s, 40% of the national wealth came to be concentred.

Owing their primitive accumulation to the silk trade, the War profits, or the second wave of Lebanese diaspora, the Consortium was hierarchically articulated in three concentric circles. The central and most powerful one, was the hard nucleus constituted by the commercial/financial oligarchy emerged during the Mandate (See Chap.1, I.III), and coalesced after the independence around the President Beshara al-Khouri. It included the financier and banker Hassan ʿUweyni, the President brother Fouad and the son Khalil Khouri, the President's brother-in-law Michel Chiha and his business partner and brother-in-law Henri Phiraʿoun, the Kettaneh family, whose scion Francis was nephew-in-law of the President as well as the other member Jean Fattal, and Michel Doumit[207]. Their dominant position had been guaranteed by the combination of three factors. On the one side, an impressive personal wealth. On the other, their close connections with the French capital. Last but not least, their direct access to the President., which allowed them to benefit of a fast-track for the successful finalization of their personal business ventures, and the occupation of the apical positions in the main national economic activities and institutions. In this process, the association with the financier Renè Busson, played a crucial role. Golden boy of the French

207Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 84.

interests in Lebanon, indeed, Busson headed the three – and eminently French-capital drained – institutions in which the bulk of major Lebanese economic activities came to converge, i.e. the Banque de Syrie et du Liban, whereof he was the director, and which acted as national central bank, the insurance company Ittihad al-Watani, whereof Busson was the founder and which came to assure all the national franchise-hold companies, and the SERIAC group, a society also created by Busson providing projects and deals for the French contractors, and endowed with the monopoly over all the economic exchanges and financial transactions of France with Syria and Lebanon. The interconnection of interests and activities within this group was particularly dense. Strictly linked to the Saudi and French capitals in his role of director of the Banque d'Indochine in Jedda, Hassan ʿUweyni accounted, among his main activities, the co-ownership of the Ittihad al-Watani, and of the national and French-capital participated Air Liban, as well as closed links with TAPLINE. Linked to TAPLINE and Banque d'Indichine was also Michel Dumit, mostly active in real estate as well as Phiraʿoun. Dumit and Fu'ad al-Khouri (who was a member of the SERIAC group council of administration), then, were involved as main contractors in all the major (and BSL-financed) infrastructural project launched under the Khouri presidency, such as the Beirut International Airport and the new Beirut Post and Teleghraph building, while Khalil al-Khouri was the French attorney in the Common Interest societies. Co-owners of the Ittihad al-Watani were also Jean Fattal and Alfred Kettaneh. Whereas Fattal controlled the main regional pharmaceutical import firm, Alferd's brother Francis, from his side, was the agent of more than fifty US firms in the whole Middle East[208].

The second circle included businessmen closely associated with the French capitals, but not included in the straight presidential circle. They were Georges Karam, the Sehnawi, Kattar, Salem and Sabbagh brothers, Georges Trad and Joseph Khadije. While the Sabbagh and Trad became closely linked to the French capitals thanks to the acquisition of their family banks by Credit Lyonnais and Banque d'Indochine respectively, the other members owed much of their fortunes from the combination between trading activities and the association with the Busson activities. While Yusuf Salem was co-owner of the Ittihad al-Watani and member of the executive board of various common interests, together with his

208Gendzier, 82–86; Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 115–17.

brother Nicolas he was associated with TAPLINE and owner of the Coca Cola plant in Lebanon. Associated with Ittihad al-Watani was also Michel Kattar, who was the main retailer of silk reelers and finished woolen clothes of the country. Main national importer of wooden products from Europe and the US was Georges Karam, while the steel was in the hands of the Sehnawi and the luxury goods and commodities from France in those of Joseph Khadije. Finally, both the Senhawi and the Kattar, accounted investments in Air Liban and numerous other French firms.

The third circle included major figures in agriculture and manufacturing, and in the real estate. Part of this circle were first the already mentioned textile entrepreneurs Esseily and Georges ʿArida, and the cement entrepreneur-Patriarch Antun ʿʿArida. This included also the future prominent Sunni politician and future multiple-Prime Minister Saʾib Salam, which, among its various enterprises and real estate ventures, was the main stakeholder of the Middle East Airlines, the real-estate giants Bustani (also associated with IPC and TAPLINE) and Sursok, the main national US car retailer H. G. Tufenkdjian, and the entrepreneurs Assad Jabre, Elie Abu Jawdeh and Ahmad Dawʿouk.

The economic expansion, the growing influence of the US and Gulf capital over the French one, and the consuetude maintained by all the Presidents to surround themselves by their own business circle, as well as the institution of a State Central bank and Intra crack, and the continuous reshaping of Lebanese social structure by the emigration which the country will witness after the end of Beshara al-Khouri presidency, will contribute to partially disrupt the absolute hegemony of the Consortium as here presented over the economical life of the country, as well as the predominance of the first circle within it. Nevertheless, the presence of Consortium members in the changing 'consortia' that will succeed at the top of Lebanese economic pyramid, as well as and in the control of the various economic activities, will remain massive[209].

II.IV
...and the "consortia"

209Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 80–89.

If during the Beshara al-Khouri era the occupation of the top of the Lebanese economic pyramid was guaranteed by the proximity with the presidency and the association with the French capital, during the Chamʿoun era, whereas the proximity with the presidency remained crucial, the association with the French capital left the room to the US and the Gulf one. In particular, the apical position came to be occupied by the following group of banker and financiers, associated with the BLOM Bank, Societé Generale, Intra and BBAC credit institutes: Sheikh Boutros el-Khoury, the already mentioned Sehnaoui brothers, Emile Bustani and Hussein ʿUweini, the banker Najib Salha and Toufic Assaf. During Fuad Chihab presidency, thanks to the closure of the presidential circle to the former economic establishment in favor of trusted functionaries and military personalities, to the downsizing of the economic power of BSL after the institution of the State-led central bank, and, of course, to the inexorable rise of Baydas credit institute, the testimony of the national economic leadership passed in the hands of the Intra bank and its associates. This group mostly included figures substantially stranger to the 'old-guard' top business circles, like the Intra bank vice president and the same Baydas, which, despite his debut on the top national business scene in the Mandate period, had constantly been perceived as a foreign body by the national economic elite. Here again, the association with the presidency played an important role. Became the bank through which the infamous Chihabist Deuxiéme Bureau (i.e. the army intelligence to which the President widely relied to maintain the order in the country, especially through the heterodirected control over the "street politics") conduced its economic operations, the bank could rely on many favors and protection to conduce its adventurous operations. The reaction of the economic establishment to this sudden exauthoration did not take too much to come. Reintegrated in the presidential circle with the succession of Charles Helou to Chihab, the played an active role in the sinking of Intra bank excercising pressures on the Central Bank to opt on the guided bankruptcy solution rather than allowing financial help to the insitute, despite its holdings far outweighed its debts. The presidency of Charles Helou marked also the ascension of the bankers associated to Ahli Bank (became the new Deuxiéme Bureau operational institute), and particularly of its director Adrian Geddy, owner of various operating agencies for US companies including the fund controlling

Casino di Liban and shareholder in Credit Libanaise and Societé Nationale de Credit et d'Investissiment, and the already mentioned Najib Salha[210].

III
Back to the roots:
Sect, clientele, and the making-of Lebanese post-colonial order

III.I
Setting up the post-colonial order:
the National Pact and the emergence of Lebanese power system

If the transition to the Merchant Republic and its economic distortions cannot be dissociated from the tight relations between economic and political power, the origin of both phenomena cannot be dissociated from the processes of colonial elite and State building from which the specific articulation and the reproduction of Lebanese post-colonial power system stemmed from.
In the process of separation of Greater Lebanon from the Syrian hinterland, French authorities had justified the unilateral, top-dawn necessity to create an autonomous Lebanese State entity hinging on the idea of an allegedly historical multi-sectarian, "refuge" nature of the Lebanese territory. Following this legitimating myth-making, they endowed such an entity – reiterating the model already experienced with success with the Réglement Organique – with an institutional structure based on the sectarian allocation of the State's high offices and parliamentary seats, above which stood the French colonial ruling apparatus. In accordance with the routinely dependence upon indigenous intermediaries characterizing the exercise of colonial rule, the adoption of this system was mainly thought to provide the French authorities with a suitable institutional and

210 Fawaz Traboulsi, *Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon,* 30-34.

legitimating framework to selectively incorporate in the colonial apparatus two major sets of local elites equally crucial to guarantee the success of their ruling project. This first group consisted in the new modern elites grown under the shadow of French missionary education and economic penetration, which represented the great group of prior, sympathetic French referees in the area. This consisted in the new western-educated francophone (and francophile) upper-middle class of professionals, mostly belonging to Maronite notable families from Mount Lebanon, that came to replace the Sunni and Orthodox bureaucrats and functionaries of the pre-mandate period of the coastal cities, and, on the other side, the already mentioned new Beirut-based – and also, while to a lesser extent – mostly Maronite, commercial/financial bourgeoisie emerged thanks to the pattern of economic activity inaugurated by silk trade and the Mandate economic policy. The second group consisted in that set of local leaders defined by Elizabeth Thompson as "paternalistic mediating agents", whose incorporation in the colonial apparatus was instrumental to guarantee to French High Commission a territorial governance that the sole coercion and bureaucracy could not secure. This consisted in particular in the big landowners and influent *zuʿamāʾ* – sing, *zaʿīm* i.e., following the definition provided by Leonard Hottinger, «a political leader who possesses the support of a locally circumscribed community, and who retains this support by fostering or appearing to foster the interests of as many as possible amongst his clientele[211]» – of the religious minorities of the mountains and, above all, of the peripheral rural areas annexed to the ex-Mutasarrifiyyah with the creation of Greater Lebanon, integrated in the political life of the State-to-be in their quality of only existing dominant class able to maintain the order

211 Leonard Hottinger, '*Zuʿamā* in Historical Perspective' in Binder, *Politics in Lebanon*, 85–105; Samir Khalaf, "Primordial Ties and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies* 4, no. 3 (April 1, 1968): 243–69., 243-244. In further claryfying his definition, Hottinger specifies that «the zaʿim usually belongs to a family outstanding through its fortune. His position of leadership is frequently passed on to some of his descendants. Finally, the zaʿim is not a purely political leader – for he does not promise his followers betterment only by the use of political means – nor is he simply a successful business operator, fostering the economic well-being of his associates and clients by gaining employment for them. Instead he combines the two functions in one person and tends to mix them intimately. He exchanges the betterment of his client group in all ways, economic, social, and political, for their support».

over their own constituencies[212]. The loyalty to the French project was fostered by setting up a division of political labor whereby, if decisional power remained solidly in the hands of the French High Commission, access to the colonial ruling apparatus was made desirable by assigning to the Parliament the main function to distribute the rewards of office among the different communities. This allowed the turning of each elite representative rose to the deputy rank into the apical point of a sectarian-based network of patronages (and privileges) which, as it progressively endowed the notables parachuted in the Parliament by the French authorities with a constituency of their own, on the other it endowed the paternalistic mediating agents integrated in the colonial edifice with new means to further reinforce their position of leadership. Such a consolidation was further helped by the decision of French authorities to maintain, in the name of their economic interests, the number of government officials at a minimum, leaving the bulk of the educational, medical and other services to be provided on a communal basis. French coopting strategy revealed to a greater extent successful. By the mid-1930s, most of the non-Maronite political elites initially hostile to the process of partition of Lebanon from Syria integrated in the colonial apparatus, were persuaded of the benefits of cooperation with a separate Lebanese State[213] However, it revealed much more successful in fostering the emergence «of a powerful pressure group primarily devoted to the reproduction of the existing status quo[214]». Despite, in facts, the division of powers resulted significantly tilted in favor of the Maronites and the commercial/financial urban elites, the power system so developed guaranteed to each deputy a share-out «sufficient to unite the privileged of the major communities in the common cause of defending their privileges»[215]. Accede political power meant in a way or another have the possibility to compete for the control and the direction of the national economic resources, apportion the State contracts. It meant also compete for the distribution of workplaces and public funds, obtain personal benefits and improve the individual social prestige.

212 Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (University of California Press, 1996), 79–84.

213 Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 219.

214 Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*.Owen, The Political Economy of Greater Lebanon, 25.

215 Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 34.

The solidity of this marriage of convenience, gave prove of itself during and after the eminently inter-elite political bargainings which lied the foundations of independent Lebanon. Whereas, in facts, during the bargaining phase the agreement upon the reiteration of the Mandate institutional model was reached without too much discussions, in its aftermaths, despite the latter had been performed by – and hence was primarily the expression of – the two great representatives of the Maronite (Beshara al-Khouri) and Sunna (Riad el-Solh) political elites organically associated with the commercial/financial oligarchy, and were unilaterally imposed on the heads of Lebanese people and the peripheral *zuʿamāʾ* of the religious minorities as a fait accompli, slight opposition came from the latter's side. Bargainings rather pertained the ways how to conform the model to the new political exigencies that the WWII had lifted: on the one side, the integration in the ruling apparatus of the new State of that large section of Sunna elites still excluded from the access to political power, that political and economic circumstances created by World War II had contributed to turn in the second great elite pressure group wishful to get rid of the French presence; on the other, the adoption of an identity framework for the new Republic which could appease also the Arabist and anti-colonial stances lifted especially by the Muslim masses in the struggle for the Independence, while maintaining untouched Maronite hegemony. The result of this bargainings substantiated in the notorious National Pact, the verbal agreement which, along with the Constitution, became the great normative dispositive acting as blueprint for the definition and the reproduction of Lebanese post-colonial power system. Following the proportions registered by the controversial census of 1932, a six-to-five ratio in the division of the parliamentary seats between Christians and Muslims was established, with specific proportional sub-quotas for each sect, giving so substance to the principle of equal representation of the sects within the State and pubic administration enshrined by Articles 9, 10 and 95 of the Constitution. The three highest State offices were also confessionally assigned: the Presidency of the Republic went to the Maronites, the premiership to the Sunni muslims, the role of Speaker of the Parliament to the Shia. Alongside, Lebanese national identity was redefined as “a country with an Arab profile that assimilates all that is beneficial and useful in Western civilization”, so finding a softening compromise between the still burning Muslim popular aspirations for unity with Syria, and the equally burning and popular

Christian ones for Western protection. In so doing, a tacit agreement upon the terms for the construction of an organic ruling partnership between commercial/financial oligarchy and old and new *zuʿamāʾ* through which secure the successful reproduction in the post-colonial State of the political and economic order whereby they had coalesced together for was set up. Cemented by the interdependency upon the formers' economic resources and the latter's political capital to accede political power[216], this envisaged a division of the political and economic labor whereby, as to the commercial/financial oligarchy the directive control over the national economic resources was guaranteed through the taking over of the Presidency and the executive, the commercial/financial oligarchy agreed, from its side, to keep on guaranteeing *zuʿamāʾ* the paternalistic control over the allocation of public founds, workplaces and so forth, by securing them the control over the public administration and, above all, the maintenance of the Parliament function to the sole allocation of the rewards of office among the various sects. This indirectly served also the best interests of free trade, as it simply meant consensus upon minimum legislation and very 'soft' State and budgets[217].

The result was an eminently «elite-dominated sectarian Lebanon»[218], wherein the State was reduced to nothing more than the space for the reproduction of the political and class privileges of Lebanese elites at the expenses of the development of a political system based on citizenship rights, and of an economic system able to balance the deep socio-economic divide among sects, and between center and periphery, through an equal redistribution of wealth.[219]

III.II
The making-of the post-colonial civic order:
Sect, clientele and the reproduction of Lebanese power system

216 The genealogy and the trajectories of the factional patters between commercial/financial oligarchy and rural and urban *zuʿamāʾ* upon which the independence process and Lebanese post-colonial power structure and ruling class developed, are well summarized in Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 127–53.

217 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 117. and Gates, *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 84.

218 Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State," 25.

219 Khalaf, "Primordial Ties and Politics in Lebanon."

Together with shaping out the form and the trajectories Lebanese post-colonial economic order, bargains struck among the agents of the formal apparatus and their mediating agents within the space defined by the sectarian political-administrative system so developed, acted also as great blueprint for the definition and the articulation of Lebanese post-colonial civic order, i.e., following the definition of Elizabeth Thompson, «the broad arena in which State and citizens interact», embodying the «norms and institutions that govern the relations among citizens, and between the citizens and the State[220]». Fostered through the means of coercion and consensus, law and costume, action and inaction, such an order expressed and reified in two major, and intimately related, phenomena. The first one was the affirmation of the so-called "political feudalism" as dominant pattern for political relations, i.e., following the definition of Yousuf Sayegh, a «system of political relationships between share tenants and large landowners in the plains area, between small estate owners and descendants of the ruling elite of the past two or three centuries in the mountain area, and between the city mass and influential politicians, whose power largely derives from origins in the countryside supplemented by urban political affiliations and economic affluence», wherein political loyalty directly stems from the capacity of the leader to provide (or appearing to provide) his constituency with personal benefits and public work funds, and act as their "political guardian"[221]. Rooted in the sophisticated clientelistic network of patronages and privileges that Lebanese paternalist system of power-sharing contributed to produce and lubricate, its affirmation and reproduction was equally debtor to the compulsory binding of Lebanese citizens to the authority of political feudalists that Lebanese electoral systems sealed. Primarily meant to build up and secure to Lebanese political establishment the exclusive access to political power, Lebanese electoral mechanism remained solidly based, despite the numerous changes in the electoral laws which succeeded throughout the years, on a rigidly regulated system of sectarian allocation of the parliamentary seats among the various electoral districts, according to the proportions established, here again, by the 1932 census, coupled

220 Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

221 Yūsuf ʻAbd Allāh Ṣāʼigh, *Entrepreneurs of Lebanon: The Role of the Business Leader in a Developing Economy* (Harvard University Press, 1962), 2.

by the obligation for citizens to vote in the respective villages of origin. This endowed the electoral process with a structural rigidity whereby, as much as it worked to forbid access to political power to those forces articulating their political discourse and socialization outside the binaries of sectarianism and political feudalism[222], it equally contributed to deny Lebanese citizens the enjoyment and the exercise of full political rights outside of the binaries of sect and civil leadership. In so doing, as the logic and the practice of kinship was assimilated to an institution of governance, the deployment and the recourse to kinship became in turn the main channel through which the relations between the State and the citizens, and between political leaderships and their constituencies exercised, along a network of intermediaries acting as main relais between citizens and the res publica, and between leaders and their constituency.

The second phenomena, was the consolidation of an equally sectarian-based and paternalistic system of differential distribution of citizenship rights, along a hierarchy of privileges and denials favoring Christians over the Muslims, men over woman, rich over poor, wealthy urbanities over proletarized ruralities. In the face of a constitutional chart enshrining that all citizens «shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction» (Art. 7), in facts, the National Pact and the socio-economic policies that its institutional translation determined, came to supersede a complex mechanism of institutional (and institutionalized) and customary (and customarized) privileges and deprivations whereby different groups of citizens were endowed, weather by law or by practice, with different political, social and economic rights. This differential distribution finds its most eloquent expression in the different degree of access to the institutional and administrative positions that the National Pact enshrined for the various sects. To a second extent, it expressed – as we will further see in the next section – in the different access to services, wealth distribution, and education that laissez-faire and the remission of the bulk of the provision of services to private and communal institutions consolidated. Last but not least, it reified in the partial abdication of the principle of equality of citizens before the law that the remission of the personal status to the religious judicial authorities enshrined. In this way, by compelling citizens to rely on their sectarian institutions and modes of subjectification for personal status matters, religious affiliation completed to be «inscribed as the citizen's most

222 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, Tab. 12.

important public attribute – stamped prominently on his or her identification and voter registration card[223]», becoming the sole form of individual and public identity institutionally recognized.

The integration between economic and political elites and the institutional system stemmed from the independence process, thus, created a vicious political economic circle whereby, misquoting Bassel Salloukh, sectarian elite control of state institutions and resources produced the kind of socioeconomic policies that served the material interests of an increasingly tightly integrated and overlapping sectarian/political and economic elite which, in turn, provided them with the material and clientelist wherewithal to reproduce sectarian identities and modes of political mobilization[224]. This implies that, contrary to what misleadingly assumed by a certain modernist-culturalist literature, both the persistence of an active role of sect and clientele in the dominant articulation of Lebanese socio-politcal relations, and their distorting function in the political and economic development of Lebanon, are far from representing ahistorical, pre-modern legacies, neither sheer residual of underdevelopment. Rather, they are concrete, historical (and equally modern) by-products of the socio-economic structure and relations emerged from, and constantly re-negotiated within, the dependent development of Lebanese capitalism and that, together with class, found in State and society the great battlefields on which compete for a share of the social surplus.

III.III

Dominant classes' ideology as national legitimating myth-making: the political thought of Michel Chiha and the authorities of delimitation of the Lebanese Nation-State

Dwelling on the relation between the State and the productivity of social classes, Antonio Gramsci underlined how «the conquest of power and the assertion of a new productive world are inseparable: propaganda for one is also propaganda for the other;[225]». No more appropriate words can be found to introduce and framework the intellectual activity of Michel Chiha. Among the fathers of the

223 Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State," 24.

224 Bassel F. Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (Pluto Press, 2015), 2.

1926 Constitution and organic intellectual and ideologue par excellence of that section of the Lebanese commercial-financial bourgeoisie dragging the making of the independence process, it is in fact in his intellectual production that the organic conciliation between sectarianism and laissez-faire found its roots, setting up the symbolic boundaries for the definition of Lebanese national identity and, with it, the legitimating framework of its economic-political structure.

The salient traits of his nationalist myth-making, find their quintessential condensation in the text of 1942 Le Liban d'Aujourd'hui. Typical example of nationalistic literature portraying the political order it fosters as «the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature[226]», the dense essay presents itself as «an effort of [historical] synthesis to acknowledge what we [the Lebanese] are», with the descriptive-prescriptive scope to «reveal, through the vicissitudes of an exceptionally hectic historical career, the conditions for a relative stability of the country[227]». In the legitimation of the political-economic order which follows, the author incorporates and homogenizes the double narrative of a cosmopolitan nation of merchants naturally embedded in and oriented to the Mediterranean, and of a naturally self-containing, self-centered refuge of religious minorities, assuming as ineluctable Ursprung from whom all its differential qualities and hectic historical vicissitudes stem from, the continuous tension between movement and settlement deriving by its unique geographical situation of mountainous 'island' between the desert and the sea, and, simultaneously, intersectional bridgehead between Europe, Africa and Asia.

This "geographic determinism[228]" allowed Chiha first to discipline and incorporate the "covetous" and "unredeemed" Arabism within the Phoenician boundaries of

225 Antonio Gramsci, Notebook I(XVI), §150, "The conception of the state from the standpoint of the productivity [function] of the social classes." Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (Columbia University Press, 1992), 229.

226 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Cornell University Press, 1980), 136–64, 142.

227 Michel Chiha, *Liban d'aujourd'hui: 1942* (Editions du Trident, 1949), 8–9.

228 For an in-depth examination of the political thought of Michel Chiha and its impact on the ideology of Lebanese dominant classes see: Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Ṣilāt bi-lā waṣl: Mīshāl Shīḥā wa-al-īdiyūlūǧiyā al-Lubnānīyah* (Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 1999)

classic Lebanese nationalism[229], by deriving the tropic shifters to refute the respective and mutually conflicting founding assumptions of a fully Semitic and Arabo-Islamic ancestry of Lebanese people against a fully Phoenician ancestry in the exclusive preserve of Lebanese Christians, so to re-semantize the founding legitimating mythology of Greater Lebanon according to the new consociational exigences required by the National Pact. In particular, whereas the geographic argument is assumed as main framework to assess the impossibility to define the Lebanese in any other terms than a rigorously – thanks to the mountain – non-sublimated and non-sublimable «Mediterranean variety» made by the stratification of all the distinct ethnic and religious groups – including the Semitic ones – that have crossed and settled into its boundaries from the Hittites to the Egyptians and the Romans and the Muslims, from the Greek-Byzantines to the Shia and the Druze, the Phoenician myth of the origins is re-written and projected to the present assuming as emergency threshold of Lebanese protonation no longer the nude ethnical element, but the territorial frontiers and, above all, the "political methods" able to forge «a cosmopolitan nation from the various populations it came to contain[230]», thanks to the innate commercial and maritime skillfulness and the ante litteram vocation to consociationalism with whom geography had gifted them. This assimilationist process concludes handing the sectarian twist of the cosmopolitan Phoenician 'national' heritage straight in the hands of Islam, under which «the principal label of individuals which had been national under the domination of Byzantium has become confessional[231]», and during whose domination Lebanon, in the meantime enriched of all the muslim religious minorities integral part of its demographic panorama, found again a form of self-government with the Maʿani and the Chihabi principalities.

229 Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (I.B.Tauris, 2003); Kais M. Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (September 1, 2004): 1–27; Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (I.B.Tauris, 2004); Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (I.B.Tauris, 1988); Ahmad Beydoun, *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains* (Librairie orientale, 1984).)

230 Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism," 21.

231 Chiha, *Liban d'aujourd'hui*, 39.

To a second extent, it allowed Chiha to essentialize and legitimize all the structural conditions and hierarchizations constitutive of the social order that his class superseded. Whereas «the extreme archaism and the extreme civilization» of Lebanese socio-geographical groups has to be searched in the earlier or later installment in the territory (and so to the longer or shorted exposition to the territory's innate qualities), essentializing in this way both the dominance of the mountain over the hinterland and of the Christians over the Muslims, the same heterogeneity is assumed to justify the maintenance of a 'light' and non-interventionist central State, insofar as, since it would be impossible to implement any measure that could be valid for any region or social group, the «excess of law could paradoxically open the path to rebellion». Similarly, whereas structural emigration and economic extroversion are assimilated tout-court and imputed to the reduced territorial dimensions vis a vis the excessive demographic pressure, the "exposition to all dangers" that its crossroad position implies cannot exempt the country from the protection of a foreign power that, in turn, given the even greater geographic vulnerability of the neighboring states[232], cannot be any other than a European one. In this process of legitimation, Chiha does not lack to include also the educational privileges which had allowed the assumption of the French-educated upper bourgeoisie to the ranks of ruling class. In particular, after having attached Lebanese educational primates to the development of missionary education, the latter is portrayed as nothing but the natural outcome of the diversity of the national religious panorama. Similarly, notwithstanding the importance of the Arabic, in the light of the extroversion and constant exposition to a transiting world, it is only in bilingualism that Lebanese national identity finds its most complete linguistic expression.

The performative juncture from the descriptiveness to the prescriptiveness, sealing the ultimate, necessary causal link between sectarianism and laissez faire, is established appealing to the dangers that the double destiny of economic and, consequently, human crossroad of "necessary routes" imposed by geography implies. In particular, whereas the adoption of sectarianism, in its quality of sole form of political organization fully conform to – and so fully able to preserve – the intimate nature of people of «associated sectarian minorities» that Lebanon is, becomes the only antidote not to make the spirit of the nation succumb under the

232Chiha, 55–56.

thrust of the “excess of movement” to which is condemned, laissez-faire becomes the only mean to guarantee its geopolitical survival insofar as, since «on the economic point of view, which is that of the exchanges, say route means necessary absence of obstacles and barriers», fermer la route would necessarily mean expect the «arrive of a conquerer ready to force it[233]».

233Chiha, 53–54.

Chapter 3
Who was going where:
Class positions and Class trajectories in times of transition

I
Migration, Urbanization, Salarization:
social changes in times of transition

I.I
A forced urbanization:
rural exodus and the hypertrophic growth of Beirut

The structural transition of Lebanon from an agriculture to a service-based, Beirut-centric economic system, accounted among its main social effects the transformation of the country from «a rural society where the core of the social life was organized around the village, to a hyper-concentrated urban society[234]», finding in the capital (also) its demographic core.
In effect, if by 1975 Lebanese rural residents passed from about two thirds to 30% of the national population, the population of the metropolitan area of Beirut rose by more than 200%, arriving to host alone about the half of the national population. As already partially suggested in our examination of the national geographic inequalities, the two phenomena were intimately related: out of the total 40% of rural residents estimated to have permanently left their villages by the beginning of the war, 75% found in Beirut its landfall.
It must be underlined that the roots of this transition were to a greater extent compulsory. Two great push factors contributed to its realization. On the one side, the devastating impact which the inexorable rise of monopolistic agribusiness had on the rural world. In the aftermaths of the independence, about one quarter of Lebanese peasantry was composed of landless sharecroppers working and living in the great latifundia of the traditional landed bourgeoisie, while the remaining three quarters was composed of small and medium independent landowners

234Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 277.Whereas otherwise indicated, all the translations present in the dissertation are by the author.

cultivating their own land. The acquisition en bloc of the traditional landownings by urban businessman to install intensive export-oriented high-yeld productions, brutally disrupted the sharecropping system, forcing peasants to totally abandon (often also by the use of the force) 'their' land, either to turn themselves into waged agricultural workers with average salaries – insofar as most of the surplus was extracted by the intensive exploitation of the workforce – widely below the subsistence level. The situation of the small and medium landowners became soon equally dramatic. Rapidly became totally dependent on the monopolistic cartels controlling the entire process of commercialization of the products and the provision of the cultivation and storage facilities, they saw most of their surplus absorbed the by ever-growing costs of production, against purchase prices lower than the consumer ones by up to 70%[235]. The tremendous impact of the speculative mismatches emerges in all its disruptiveness looking at the growth in small landowners' indebtedness rates. According to a FAO survey of 1973, in South Lebanon, the level of indebtedness of the holdings smaller than 2 hectares increased from 30% to 69% percent in a few years, and the debts of holdings smaller than 5 hectares accounted for nearly the half of all agricultural debts. It is also worth of mention that, given the heavy agricultural credit restrictions, this indebtedness was mostly usurer, with interest rates arriving easily to 50%. Another paradigmatic example comes from the poultry sector, where between 1970 and 1975 the above-mentioned speculative mismatches and usurer credit, led to the disappearance of 40% of the farms active in the sector. The speculative compression in the processing of industrial crops also played a major role. We have already seen in Chapter 1 (Chap.1, II.III) its consequences on sugar-beets cultivators; 72% of agricultural holdings in the South of Lebanon (42.000 c.ca) produced tobacco for the Régie[236]. The second great push factor was represented by the Israeli air raids on the South of Lebanon and the south-eastern Beqa'a which started to constantly succeed from 1969 onwards to contrast the operations of the Palestinian resistance. Producing about displaced in the space of five years, the latter also found in the capital their main landfall, going to further fill the ranks of the rural migrants who had already found in the suburbs of the city their new residency.

235Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 8.

236Ibid., 9.Nasr, 9.

This massive wave of rural migrants, mostly installed at the margins of the city[237]. Within the space of barely twenty years, the population of Beirut suburbs passed from about 100.000 to at least 400.000 residents, i.e. a half of the whole metropolitan area, becoming a unique urban overcrowded continuum crowning the municipal area stretching the port and the Karantina on the East, to the airport on the West, incorporating the former, jeopardized urban concentrations and the new factories, shantytowns and refugee camps. The marginality of the suburbs was also social. Soon nicknamed the "misery belt", they became the great homeland of the national urban proletariat and sub-proletariat, with sanitary and service deficits almost equivalent to that of the rural areas that its inhabitants had abandoned. Together with the place of residency of the half of the Lebanese population, thus, Beirut became an in scale replica of the dualisms of the country.

I.II
Tertiarization, diversification, salarization: changing patterns in the employment structure

The transition to the Merchant Republic deeply impacted also on the characteristics of the national employment structure. The most evident change involved the distribution of the workforce among the three major sectors of the economy. Following grosso modo the changes in the composition of GDP, the employed in the agricultural sector passed from 55% in 1950, to about 20% 1974. Conversely, the employed in the tertiary sector increased from 29% to 53%, while the number of employed in the secondary sector sensibly rose from 10% to 17%[238]. Another relevant element was a certain increase in the size of waged workers. Constituting about 50% of the workforce at the beginning of the 1950s, twenty

237 The post-colonial urban development of Grand Beirut has been object of numerous studies. With regards to its hypertrophic growth between the 1960s and 1970s here we send back to, along with the workers already quoted in Note 29, to: Kassir, *Beirut*, 409–38 and Fuad Khuri, *From Village to Suburb: Order and Change in Greater Beirut* (University of Chicago Press, 1975).

238 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, Tab. A.II.3.

years later they accounted to 60%[239]. It is worth of mention that the increase developed mostly throughout the 1950s, i.e. in the phase of transition to the Merchant Republic, to then stabilize from the early sixties onwards.

By roughly breaking down the datas provided by the PAL survey, the concentration of waged workers was particularly high first in the industrial, energy and construction sector, where they accounted for 67,2%, 98,6% and 60,2%[240] of the workforce. With regards to the tertiary, despite if for some sectors such as the commerce, the proportion of patrons and independent workers remained sharply dominant (69%), waged workers arrived also to represent 69% of the overall employed, whereof 14% composed by teachers and professors, another 14% by administrative personnel, and a 5% by waged in the touristic sector (70% of the overall employed)[241]. Only in agriculture the salarization remained significantly below the national average, involving only 30% of workers – whereof, furthermore, 97% seasonal or daily – against a 27% made by independents and patrons and another 24% made by family helpers.

The high discontinuousness was not a prerogative of the agricultural sector. Representing more than the half of the wagers produced, they accounted for almost 83% among the waged in construction and 66% among the waged in industry, plus a seizable 47% among the waged manual workers in the social and personal services, a 45% in transports and communications, and a 40% in the hotel and restaurant industry[242]. The precariousness of their labor conditions finds a further confirmation in the fact that the economic activities accounting the highest rates of workers having a secondary activity, were precisely agriculture (33%), the hotel industry (14,8%) and the social and personal services (26,9%).

The high rate of precarious workers in the tertiary sector, finds its explanation in the fact that, contrary to a certain common perception, the majority of the jobs produced were deeply unqualified. Among the workers in the personal and social services, for instance, if 20% was made by teachers and 9% by professionals, 53% (i.e. one third of the overall employed in the sector) was made of domestic workers, building guardians (the so-called nawatir, sing. natur), mechanics and plumbers, coiffeurs, etc.. The same was the case for the commerce and hotel

239Ibid., Tab. 5.9.Gaspard, Tab. 5.9.

240PAL., vol. I, Tab. 63.

241 Ibid., pp. 122-126 and Tab. 63 and 97.

242Ibid., Tab. 63, 81, 85, 89, 93, 97, 101, 105 and 109.

industry and transport and communication, where the unqualified workers accounted for 20% and 67% respectively[243].

The incapability of the Merchant Republic to produce qualified jobs emerges also looking at the educational rates. With the only exception of the workers in finance and business services (wherein the rate touched anyway a relatively noticeable 15%), the workers with an educational level lower than the primary touched or surpassed 50%, with peaks of 93%, 81% and 69% in agriculture, industry and construction, and a significant 58,8 among the workers in commerce and the hotel industry[244].

The economic activities pertaining the independent workers were also quite diversified. Here again, while not having quantitative datas as detailed as for the waged ones, the portion of precarious, unskilled, and lowly remunerative jobs was seizable. In the agricultural sector, for instance, most of the independent farmers consisted in that small or medium landowners whose dramatic conditions have been explored in the former section. In the industrial sector, they consisted mostly in small handcrafts and artisanal activities widely relying on the subcontracting from the bigger firms, while in the transports a seizable section was made of taxi-drivers and drivers whose incomes were generally low and discontinuous. Similarly, in the commercial sector, a seizable portion of the retailers was made of owners of small shops supplying basic goods for the neighborhood, eloquently characterized by levels of self-exploitation (long working-hours, recourse family help) as high as agriculture[245].

As the transition to the Merchant Republic bluntly failed in producing a dynamic economic system and an economic growth able to generate an equally explosive and homogeneous development, thus, it equally failed in producing a dynamic labor market able to absorb its ever-growing and increasingly educated active population through the production of regular, waged skilled labor, so leaving the subsistence of a seizable portion of its citizenship remitted to the self-employment, the self-exploitation, and the informality.

243Ibid..

244Ibid., Tab, 84, 88, 96

245Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 88–95. and Ibid. Tab. 63 and 72.

I.III
Emigration vs Education
dominant patterns of social mobility

The incapability of the Merchant Republic to produce a labor market able to absorb its ever-growing and increasingly educated active population, finds an eloquent expression in the evolution of the post-independence emigration rates and its socio-generational characteristics. Attested to a yearly average of 2850 departures (the lowest of the whole century) during the 1950s, it rose to 8566 in the 1960s, to then reach the peak of 10.000 in the first half of the 1970s[246]. In 1970, the PAL survey registered that 80% of the emigrants abroad, had left the country for seeking jobs. Toufic Gaspard estimates that between 1965 and 1974, «40% of the newly active population that entered the labor market during that period had emigrated for employment reasons» and that most of them «were heavily drawn from the professional and skilled manpower pool[247]».

High emigration rates in times of economic stagnation do not represent per se a novelty for Lebanese society, insofar as since the late XIX century, emigration has represented the process by which it «hides its high rates of unemployment and rids itself of the human surplus[248]». What was rather new in the emigration in the 1960s and 1970s – notwithstanding its eloquent renewed vigor – was that if the previous waves impacted on the society mostly through the remittances, the third wave it added to its traditional, passive "absorbing" function, the new active function of main producer of new bourgeoisie and main mean for the achievement of vertical social mobility. This change in function was mostly due to the transformation of Lebanese emigration from a permanent to a circular one. Two major factors contributed to this structural change.

246Ibid., Tab. 3.12.Gaspard, Tab. 3.12.

247Gaspard, 97–98.

248Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 159.On Lebanese emigration exists a wide literature. Among the most important ones we signalAlbert Habib Hourani, *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1992). Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (University of California Press, 2001).

During the first and second wave, the major migratory routes were directed or to the Americas, either to West Africa, i.e. to countries geographically far, rarely witnessing a return of the émigré to the homeland. When, during the 1960s, decolonization in Africa started, the political instability and the much restrictive residency policies which followed, had the double effect to both push many Lebanese of the diaspora to come back to the home country, and to change the nature of the route. More importantly, the opening of the Gulf route after the oil boom, thanks to the combination between geographical proximity and, here again, restrictive naturalization policies, turned the Gulf into the temporary working residency of most of the human surplus produced by the Merchant Republic where to achieve the means for social advancement that the Merchant Republic had denied them in patria. Whether the case of an unskilled unemployed or a young professional, either of a temporary or working-life-long migratory experience, indeed, return from West Africa and the Gulf always coincided for the émigré with a social upgrade, may it be through the accumulation of individual capital to be reinvested in a new businesses, or of "family" capital to be destined to the social advancement of their sons.

It must be underlined that this emigration-dragged social mobility realized especially in favor of the Muslim community. Whereas, indeed, migration of the first two waves (and especially migration to the Americas) had been mostly Christian, playing a major role for their primitive accumulation, the West African and the Gulf routes have been, on the contrary, primarily in the preserve of the Shia and the Sunna community respectively, so playing a major role in the reduction of the sectarian gap which a wider access to education and higher education had only partially contributed to achieve[249].

In effect, thanks to the 'educational boom' that the country witnessed in the post-independence years, within the space of two generations, the deep sectarian gap in the literacy and educational rates between Christians and Muslims almost nullified. If, for instance, in 1932 82% of the Shia and 60% of the Sunna was totally illiterate, against a 48% for the Maronites, and a 46% for the Orthodox, in 1974 the difference between Muslim and Christians accounted for less than four

249The relation between education and social mobility in Lebanon has been widely analyzed by Boutros Labaki in Boutros Labaki, *Education et mobilité sociale dans la société multicommunautaire du Liban: approche socio-historique* (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, 1988).

percentage points. For the university education, then, thanks for the empowerment of the Lebanese University, the two rates almost equated[250]. This allowed – as testified, among the various indicators, by the overcoming of the Muslims over the Christians in some ranks of public administration, and a certain reduction of the sectarian gap in the liberal professions[251] – to an increasing number of citizens coming from a humble and mostly muslim background to achieve medium and medium-high working positions. Nevertheless, several discriminations according to the public/private educational background still persisted.

We have already mentioned the deep differences in the average starting salary for an AUB or USJ graduated and a Lebanese University one in the private sector. To this it should be added the elimination grade of 5/20 in French to pass the final exams for the intermediary and high-school cycles, significantly favoring the students of francophone private catholic schools against the public and arabophone ones, and the sons of the Christian bourgeoisie, for whom French was often the main language spoken at home. At the same time, the incapability of the Merchant Republic to produce skilled waged workplaces at the same rhythms than the growth of the active population and the educational rates, severely inhibited to the educated and mostly Muslim citizens not endowed with a pre-existent familial capital to be invested into an independent activity, the possibility to enter the labor market with a profession conform to the intellectual capital acquired – all constraints, those, that will significantly contribute in turning Lebanon also into a great exporter of graduates.

I.IV
The conservativeness of the sect:
the role of sectarianism in the reproduction of Lebanese socio-economic structure

The incapability of laissez-faire to produce a social system dynamic enough to self-produce upward mobility – and so a system able to overcome the existing socio-economic hierarchies – found in sectarianism a particularly precious ally. In

250 Boutros Labaki, 'L'Economie Politique du Liban Indépendant, 1943-1975' in Shehadi and Haffar-Mills, *Lebanon*, 1988, 166–80; 176–78.

251 Ibid., 174-176; Tab. 6.

particular, in this work of preservation, sectarianism intervened in two major and intimately related ways. On the one side, by providing an institutional and legitimating framework guaranteeing to the dominant classes a privileged access to the State power, which, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, played a crucial role for both the consolidation and the reproduction of their already dominant position, and the consolidation and reproduction of laissez-faire itself. On the other, by providing the legitimating and institutional framework guaranteeing the reproduction, despite the socio-demographic changes that the country underwent, of the sectarian hierarchies established in the National Pact within the State, the public administration and education.

In effect, notwithstanding the lack of official and reliable statistical references, following the different fertility rates, the Lebanese Muslim community was estimated to have become majoritarian over the Christian one already by the early 1960s[252]. The six to five Christian-Muslim ratio, and the sectarian sub-quotas establishing the distribution of the parliamentary seats, however, were never updated. This induced an over-representation of the Christian (and particularly of the Maronite) community over the Muslim one, as well as of the Sunna over the Shia which, in the light of the system of division of the spoils of office and allocation of public funds which sectarianism superseded, transformed a purportedly dynamic and temporary institutionalization of the existing demographic and socio-economic power relations in the name of the equal representation of the sects in the State, as the Pact was supposed to be in the moment of its ratification, into a rigid institutionalized system of sectarian privileges and subordinations finding in the Pact its main constrainer. The reproduction of the Pact's sectarian hierarchies in the public administration is, in this sense, a case in point.

Following the (not unambiguous) disposition of the Art. 95 of the Constitution stating that «as a provisional measure and for the sake of justice and amity, the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the Ministry», the six-to-five ratio and – while less rigidly than in the Parliament – the annexed sub-quotas established by the Pact, came to strictly regulate the entry and the articulation of labor relations in the public administration. This articulation became soon further tightened up by the intervention of political

252 Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 197–205. and David C. Gordon, *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation* (Routledge, 2015), 4–9.

clientele, insofar as to all the Ministries was left freedom to regulate their own mechanisms of hiring and promotion. The result of the system of privileges and subordinations so produced, clearly emerges comparing the estimations for the mid-1950s of the representation of the different sect in the civil service and their demographic weight: whereas the Catholics, excluding the Armenian community, were estimated at 46% of the national population, their representation in the public administration was of circa 60%; more importantly, whereas the Maronite and Sunna community were estimated to amount to about 30% and 20% of the population respectively, their representativity in the public administration was of 40% and barely 30%, against a mere 3% reserved to the Shia, which on the contrary were estimated to constitute about 18% of the Lebanese citizens[253]. This situation was partially disrupted by the reform of the public administration implemented by Fuad Chihab in 1958.

Establishing two new organisms (the Public Service Council and the Central Inspection Committee) in charge to reorganize all the ministries and departments, and revisiting the sectarian quotas within the administration according to the formula one Muslim to one Christian, the reform gave an important contribution to both weaken the clientelistic control of the political class over the public administration, and rebalance the sectarian representation. An eloquent example in this sense, is represented by the civil servants of third category. Acceding the position, thanks to the reform, through a homogenized examination under the supervision of the newly established agencies, it came to represent the sole category of civil servants wherein, on the eve of the war, Muslim arrived to overcome Christians. Sectarian privileges, however, still persisted. While with a lower percentage, on the eve of the war, the majority of civil servants was still Christian[254]. The proportion, then, increased climbing the administrative hierarchies, insofar as the reform, by leaving the access to the highest ranks of public administration totally (for the cadres of first category) or almost totally (for the cadres of second category) remitted to mechanisms of internal promotion, left the pre-reform clientelistic mediation almost untouched.

253 Cfr. Ralph Crow, 'Confessionalism, Public Administration and Efficiency' in Binder, *Politics in Lebanon*, 167–86.

254 Boutros Labaki, 'L'Economie Politique du Liban Indépendant, 1943-1975, Tab. 6 and Labaki, *Education et mobilité sociale dans la société multicommunautaire du Liban*, 145.

Something similar happened with education. Always in the name of the sectarian equality, the Article 10 of the Constitution affirmed as inviolable the right of any sect to have their own schools. Given the missed empowerment of a nationwide network of efficient public schools, this delegated de facto the national education to the religious institutions which, thanks to the missionary legacy, was and remained, despite an increase in the number of Muslim-ran schools from the Mandate to the late 1970s by 650%, solidly in the hands of the Christian churches[255]. This played a major role in maintaining the sectarian educational gap, which was significantly narrowed only thanks to the empowerment of public education in the Chihabi years. A good measure of this impact, comes looking at the university education. In 1972, out of a total of twelve universities, nine had been founded and were mostly directly ran by Catholic churches, while only one had been founded by a Muslim communitarian institution (the Beirut Arab University). If, for that year, the overall number of Muslim students had overcome the Christians by almost five percentage points, by subtracting to the statistics the students Lebanese University, the percentage of Christian students jumped again to 55%. Subtracting also the students of the Beirut Arab University, the percentage rose to an even more eloquent 70%[256].

In this way, thus, by operating «in the nooks and crannies that the classes cannot enter[257]», sectarianism further inhibited the overcoming of the deep sectarian socio-economic differences in both wealth and possibilities that laissez-faire had contributed to maintain and even exacerbate, becoming integral part of the system of domination and exploitation that Lebanese transition to capitalism had produced.

II

Who was who, who was where:
Class positions, conditions and trajectories in the Merchant Republic

255 In particular, between 1918/1920 and 1977/1978, the Muslim-ran schools passed from 41 to 300, while the number of Christian-ran school from 451 to 548. See: El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, 2000, Tab. 5.7.

256 Boutros Labaki, 'L'Economie Politique du Liban Indépendant, 1943-1975, Tab. 11.

257 Fawaz Traboulsi, Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon, 9.

II.I
To whom the top belonged:
Sketching a profile of Lebanese dominant classes

Either by assuming as main authority of delimitation the simple revenue distribution and economic behavior, or integrating it also with the degree of control over the appropriation and the exploitation of the socio-economic surplus entailing the notion of dominant class, the barely 6% of privileged which on the eve of the war came to occupy the dominant position in Lebanese social pyramid was composed of two main distinct socio-professional categories: on the one side, a main bulk constituted by that section of the bourgeoisie whose great wealth was combined with the ownership of the economic activities from whom their revenues derived, i.e. great industrialist and landowners, the owners of the major commercial and intermediary activities, the representatives of the financial oligarchy (3,6%); on the other, a seizable minority constituted by that section of the bourgeoisie whose main professional activity was related to the possession of a higher education, i.e. professionals, high functionaries, and senior managers (2,1%), for whom, whenever waged, the income derived by the exercise of the profession was only partially responsible of their great revenues.
Mostly urban or urbanized, according to the sketch provided by Claude Dubar and Salim Nasr in their magistral analysis of Lebanese social classes, from the point of view of the revenues and the economic behavior, they shared as common characteristics the disposal of a personal revenue equal or higher than 3.000 LBP per month (whereof barely or less than one third destined to the food expenses in favor of leisures and other consumer goods); be large savers and the main recipients of the national wealth; adopting consumption habits oriented to the search of the excellence, independently from the origin (foreigner or local) of the good bought/desired[258].
The second crucial common characteristic, was the privileged access – weather direct or not – to political power. In the light of the eminently elitist nature that Lebanese ruling class came soon to acquire, it was in facts from this strata that the

258 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 287–98.

national ruling class almost exclusively come from, and from whom, per reflexo, their directive power came from[259].

The third one, was the mostly hereditary origin of their social position. Given the high rigidity characterizing Lebanese social system, indeed, such an articulation was to a greater extent the result of the 'horizontal' mobility produced and reproduced by the transmission of capitals and their sequential patterns of reinvestment, from a founding nucleus constituted by early independence high bourgeoisie, to the successive generations of descendants. In particular, this process followed three main lineages. The first one, dominant especially among the industrialists and the intermediary, commercial and financial owners, was the transmission of the ownership from one generation to another, prosecuting in turn the process of accumulation started by their fathers. The second, was the reinvestment of land revenues in industry or commercial/financial/intermediary businesses, so shifting the socio-professional belonging from one group to another. The third, was the acquisition of higher education of the descendants of the traditional landed bourgeoisie and, to a much lesser extent, of the patrons group, whose revenues (and prestige) derived by the exercise of the new profession (among whom the legal profession had the lion's share) remained compensated by the landed or family business rentier wealth[260].

Breaking down their composition along sectarian lines, a certain confessional division of labor emerges. Witnessing the most ancient and a predominantly rural origin, the Maronite bourgeoisie was mostly specialized in foreign trade, financial operations and the touristic, construction material and textile industries, i.e. the key sectors of Lebanese economy. The Orthodox bourgeoisie, whose origin was rather mostly urban, played instead a leading role in the import trade and certain industrial sectors. Of urban and ancient origin was also the Sunna bourgeoisie, specialized, from its side, in the inter-arab trade, food industry, agro-exports and real estate, while the Shia bourgeoisie, given its late emergency, remained in this strata widely marginal except than in the great

259 With regards to the analysis of the composition of Lebanese political class in a socio-historical prespective, a particularly detailed and insightful work is represented by Antoine N. Messarra, *La structure sociale du Parlement libanais* 1920-1976 (Librairie Orientale, 1977)

260 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 280–86.

landownership[261]. It is also worth of mention that especially in industry and agribusiness, a seizable minority was of other Arab origin, settled in Lebanon or to escape the waves of nationalizations following the rise of socialist parties to power in their home countries (industry), either as a result of the Palestinian diaspora (agribusiness)[262] – all differences, however, not compromising the great cohesiveness in the preservation of their interests and privileges which will characterize their political behavior.

II.II
Between ascension and pauperization:
The multiple faces of the middle classes

Estimated at 54% of the Lebanese population in 1973 and in constant growth, the middle classes represented a the widest and most heterogeneous national social grouping. Reuniting together high functionaries and small artisans, medium owners and lower administrative cadres, teachers and specialized workingmen[263], indeed, it included, more than any other, a variety of professional and economic situations.

Notwithstanding its internal stratification, what differentiated its members from the occupiers of the two extreme poles of Lebanese social pyramid, was the simultaneous co-sharing of a predominantly proprietary origin of the socio-economic position occupied, proper of the dominant classes, and a subordinated relation with the means of production proper, on the contrary, to the subaltern ones. According to their proximity with the highest or the lowest pole, two main macro-groups could be distinguished.

The first one was that of the upper-middle classes. Identified with the about 20% of the households with a monthly revenue between 3000 LBP and 850 LBP

261 Dubar and Nasr, 118–19.

262 Dubar and Nasr, 85; Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 6. With regards to the Arab presence in the industrial sector see also Marlene Nasr and Salim Nasr, 'Les travailleurs de la grande industrie dans la banlieue Est de Beyrouth', Ecole Supérieure des Lettres, Beirut, 1974, 65-66 and 76-77.

263 Boutros Labaki, 'L'Economie Politique du Liban Indépendant, 1943-1975,

«engaged in a process of enlargement of their levels of consumption[264]», this group included high salary functionaries and employees of the hegemonic intermediary and financial sector, and the medium land, industrial and commercial owners. Their differentiation from the dominant classes resided in three main aspects. First, in the relatively peripheral or subordinated positioning in, or in relation to, the dominant commercial/financial sector. Second, in the extremely limited access to the State power. Third, in the limited capacity of saving despite the economic possibility to accede leisures and cultural activities, and in consumption habits «submitted to a growing pressure deriving from the development of the exchanges with the West, for which they do not hesitate to contract debts and recur to credit to satisfy their new social needs[265]». While, from the late sixties onwards it started witnessing a growing presence of the nouveau riches emerged from the circular emigration, their origin remained in general widely assimilable to that of the dominant social strata. Mostly debtor or to the transmission of property from one generation to another, either to the possibility to achieve higher education thanks to the family capital, indeed, it equally mostly found in the early phases of Lebanese transition to capitalism its possibility of primitive accumulation.

The second and larger group was that of the middle and lower-middle classes. Corresponding to the households with revenues between 850LBP and 250 LBP per month, this category included the waged and independent socio-professional groups occupied «in the economic sectors dampened or in crisis», i.e. small farmers and artisans, some specialized industrial workers, and the overwhelming majority of the waged employees of the public and private sector. While sharing with the upper-middle classes the same proprietary genealogical trajectories, a seizable (and growing) salarization, and the absence of additional rentier revenues, the group differentiated first for the greater economic vulnerability. Unable to accumulate savings, and employed mostly in the public sector or in the more 'peripheral' sections of the private one, its members destined most of their revenues to the satisfaction of the basic needs (food, housing), were often engaged in secondary activities to make the familial ends meet, and, in the case of the independents, were at constant risk of salarization. The second major difference was related to the specific articulation of their formative process. In the case of the

264Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 289.

265Dubar and Nasr, 289.Dubar and Nasr, 289.

upper group, the process of formation mainly resulted from a progressive and aspirationally-driven succession of reinvestments allowed by the availability of a capital large enough to maintain their original social position according to the new opportunities offered by the changing economic context. In the case of the middle and lower-middle classes, instead, the processes of mobility (or immobility) from whom they emerged, notwithstanding the same dominant rural-urban landed-education/business or urban-urban ownership-ownership/education trajectories, were to a greater extent suffered, insofar as the reduced initial capital represented a major obstacle to both maintain or enlarge their independent activities, or to achieve an education high enough to obtain a social ascension via the salarization – two elements, those, whereby the exponential rise in the inflation rates, will contribute to increasingly approach them to the subaltern classes in both the living conditions and claiming discourse.

II.III
Subalterns of the subalterns: the rural and urban proletariats

Assimilable with the – here again – widely heterogeneous 20% of the actives with a monthly income equal or lower than 250 LBP per month, Lebanese proletariat found their main differential common denominators in the difficulty or incapability to satisfy the household needs, and the consequent widespread indebtedness, informality and reliance on a secondary activity and/or familial or state help, the non-proprietary origin and relation with the means of production, and the non-intellectual and precarious nature of the economic activity (or activities) carried out. With regards to the genealogy of their social position, while accounting a seizable minority stemming from a fully urban horizontal (or, to a much lesser extent, downward) mobility, these classes mostly came from, or consisted in, that mass of peripheral land tenants and sharecroppers that the transition to the Merchant Republic had compulsory reduced to the urbanization and/or salarization.

Together with the rural/urban socio-geographical location, their internal stratification moved also along the waged or independent nature of their employment status.

The most homogeneous section for employment characteristics and living conditions, was that of the rural proletariat. Consisting in the survived sharecroppers and small land tenants, and the old and new waged agricultural laborers, it was characterized in both cases by an average revenue widely below the subsistence level, a particularly high indebtedness, the structural engagement in a non-agricultural secondary activity (mostly manual for the men, mostly in the personal services for the women), and the wide reliance mostly on the family networks. Much more stratified was instead the urban proletariat. In particular, it could be divided into three great groups. The first one was that of the urban proletariat par excellence, i.e. the mass of the non-specialized industrial workforce. Mostly young, recently-urbanized, and employed in the big industries, they generally found in the industrial or the contiguous suburbs of Beirut and the other main cities also their living residency, while quite often still maintaining – given their recent settlement in the city – with their home village and the extended family[266]. The second one was that of the quite wide and sui generis group defined by Dubar and Nasr as the «semi-proletariat des services[267]», i.e. that heterogeneous conglomerate indicated in the PAL survey as 'independent waged workers specialized in the services' made of street vendors, taxi drivers, multifunctional jack-of-all-trades, and the rest of the set of informal workers endowed with the tools and competences to satisfy specific and immediate needs or facilitate "errands" (often for the price of a bakhshish) whose working means were «strictly linked to the person and the savoir-faire of the individual[268]», as well as with their tight relation with "the street" and the neighborhood. Quoting Mao, Dubar and Nasr further stressed that «while considering themselves as independent workers, they often found themselves forced to sell out their work-force[269]». However, contrary to the proletariat and subproletariat, such a sell-out remains approached and perceived as a mean to achieve immediate gain and

266 Dubar and Nasr, 203–36. and Nasr and Nasr, 'Les travailleurs de la grande industrie dans la banlieue Est de Beyrouth'

267 Dubar and Nasr, 187–202.

268 Ibid., 187

269 Ibid., 187

social relations to be spent politically and economically in the future, rather than a permanent condition to which aspire, or the sole alternative to have a minimal subsistence.

The last group was the platoon of unemployed, daily manual workers, and domestic servants constituting the bulk of the urban sub-proletariat. Endowed with no other alternative to survive than the sole (cheap) selling out or marketing of their work-force to the best offerer, they differed from the industrial proletariat and the services semi-proletariat for the wide exposure to periods of inactivity and the simultaneous lack of minimal tools and social skills or relations to fight it – a condition approaching them with their rural counterparts, with whom shared the (overcrowded) ground floor of Lebanese social pyramid.

Chapter 4

The making of the Lebanese worker:

defining the workers' terms of membership in the post-colonial civil order

I

Workers before Lebanon:

the emergence of organized labor and the struggle for social rights under the Mandate

I.I

Before the Merchant Republic: workers in the colonial order

Despite the integration of the territorial unity meant to become independent Lebanon in the periphery of the global capitalist market since the XIX century, the first documented experiments of workers' organizations aiming at unite together and mobilize the sole employees in the common cause of fostering their interests as dissociated from the ones of the employers, found their earliest emergence only the eve of World War I. As appropriately stressed, among the others, by Paul Saba, Jacques Couland and Malek Abisaab[270], the reasons for this late appearance has to be searched first and foremost in the 'integrating' – rather than disruptive – impact, that the industrialization of the XIX century had on the pre-existing productive system. Organized into almost unmechanized small-size workshops, and coalesced around the silk waving and the tobacco manufacturing, indeed, this industry developed maintaining the same modes of productions and labor patterns constitutive of pre-capitalist manufacturing. Furthermore, contrary to the neighboring Syria, it remained located in rural areas, employing mostly young seasonal journey-women, whereby the selling-out of their manual labor remained frame-worked as part of a broader peasant household's strategy of survival[271]. The second reason has to be searched in the limited space of action allowed to workers' independent initiative in the Ottoman civic order. In 1845, the

270Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation*, 5–15; Jacques Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 1919-1946: son évolution pendant le mandat français de l'occupation à l'évacuation et au Code du travail* (Éditions sociales, 1970), 168; Owen, *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, 1–22; 15–19.

Police Regulation Law officially forbade strikes and the formation of the trade unions in the territories of the Empire[272]. This left manufactory workers no other organizational form than the artisanal guild, which, by hierarchizing workers along a master-apprentice network of relations (even when the latter came de facto to be constituted by waged journey workingmen), and by absolving all the functions of arbitrage, tax collection, and licensing to the exercise at any level of manual crafting activities, it compulsory bounded workers' to their patrons, while simultaneously incorporating guild's chiefs into the Ottoman power system. With the Law of April 27, 1912, artisanal guilds were definitively replaced by workers' associations. The corporative spirit of the former system, however, was nevertheless maintained, the latter kept on prohibiting workers' to organize separately from their employers[273]. Furthermore, in 1908, a law imposing draconian restrictions on strikes had been implemented. This did not forbide workers' from profiting of the tiny space that the new legislation and the progressive Porte's loss of control on the provinces was offering.

In 1908, per initiative of the foreign employees, an association representing the workers of the French-owned DHP was created in the form of organization of mutual help. In 1912, this time in Beirut, the first proto-union (while still formally in the form of Ottoman association) representing the workers of the railway sector saw the light, along with the one of the typography workers. It will be necessary to wait for the Mandate years, however, to assist to the definitive flourishing of organized labor activism of a modern type[274]. Three main factors contributed to its

271 With regards to the labor organization in Mount Lebanon's waving industry in the late Ottoman period, and the organization and labor conditions of Lebanese workingwomen together with the above mentioned Abisaab, 2010 see: Owen, "The Study of Middle Eastern Industrial History"; Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64–65; Salgur Kançal and Jacques Thobie, *Industrialisation, communication et rapports sociaux en Turquie et en: Méditerranée orientale* (Editions L'Harmattan, 1994), 203–13.

272 Yavuz Selim Karakişla, "The 1908 Strike Wave in the Ottoman Empire," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 16, no. 2 (1992): 155.

273 For an historical overview of the Ottoman guild system see:Allan. Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1961), 28–36.

274 The emergence and the evolution of Lebanese labor unionism during the French Mandate, are extensively reconstructed in the already quoted seminal Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 1919-1946 and in Ilyas al-Buwari, Tārīḫ aḷ-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-*

emergence. The first one, was the rapid transformation of the dominant labor and productive relations. As a result of the famine and the coeval crisis of sericulture, the social and productive order of Mount Lebanon had exited completely disrupted from World War I. The same then, were completely reconfigured by the new economic order set up by the Mandate authorities, which directly fostered the emergence of a class of blue and white collar workers of a modern type. Throughout the thirties, mechanized modern industries started to develop at the edges of the biggest cities, and particularly in Beirut. Before, the State had become the most important single employer of the country, reabsorbing manpower both in the ex common interest and concessionary societies (railways and port, public transportations, electricity and water companies, tobacco Régie), and in the expanding State's bureaucracy. Finally, new waged workplaces were created in the new flourishing touristic, banking and commercial sectors, fostering the emergence of a new petty bourgeoisie and middle-class.

The second factor has to be searched in the new set of social tensions produced by the 'interference' between peoples' introjection of the republican grammar of citizenship fostered by the Mandate authorities, and the direct experiencing of the system of paternalistic privileges with whom the latter concretely substantiated[275]. In effects, as brilliantly exposed by Elizabeth Thompson, the construction of the Mandate civic order relied on a fundamental, blatant contradiction: on the one side, on the adoption of a political discourse and structure «based on republican rights and representation», in whose name France, by portraying itself as a caring mother, endowed the future Syria and Lebanon with a Parliament and a constitution, as well as with a French-modeled public services apparatus; on the other, on typically «paternalistic methods of colonial rule, increasingly dependent on local «paternalistic mediating agents», where a non-elected and foreign high commissioner wielded supreme power, and where the entitlement, the forms and the limits for the access to State services and political representation, were designed and distributed among the various religious, class, regional and gender groups, so to create a loyal social hierarchy through which further foster its dominance. As the new republican values and rights entered the official discourses, the constitutional charts, and the mind of people, thus, this same rights were concretely distributed along a hierarchy of privileges favoring French

Niqābiyyah fī Lubnān, vol. I (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1986)

275 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 71–112.

over locals, wealthy urbanities over proletarized ruralities, Christians over the Muslims, men over woman and Beirut over the hinterland. This implied also that, as through such a differential distribution subaltern social groups were produced – i.e. groups «systematically placed at a disadvantaged remove from direct state benefits, under the protection and control of privileged mediating elites, by virtue of their class, caste, gender, race, religion, or ethnicity[276]» – the latter became increasingly aware of their superimposed deprivation, as well as of what was them owed.

In this process of differential subordination, workers represented a case in point. As, at the official level, the Mandate authorities formally committed to the principle of 'humanitarian and equal work for men, women and children' enshrined by the League of Nations, full labor rights and labor protections remained a prerogative of the French employees alone, while the legal baseline for Lebanese citizen remained the sole above mentioned Ottoman legislation, without any further integration involving minimal labor conditions to be granted, neither specific forms of social protection. In so doing, workers were placed, by denying them the right to legally organize autonomously from their employers, and by fostering the promotion of ad hoc elite-created parties, under the mediating control of influent notables embedded in the Mandate power structure and the Mandate authorities themselves. The result was a political short-circuit whereby the social tensions already created by the effects of the war and the economic changes were exacerbated, and the process of subaltern groups' dislocation from the authority of their superimposed mediating agents indirectly fostered. Being the citizens now expecting the State to totally fulfill its caring function, social rights started to be perceived and claimed «not as an act of French [or of any of its mediating agents'] generosity, but as a right that the state was obliged to fulfill for its citizens[277]».

In this process of dislocation, a crucial role was played by the emerging Communist party and militants. Third fundamental factor at the base of the emergence of an organized labor activism of a modern type, indeed, Communists provided active support to the mobilizing workers in the various economic sectors, coordinated their grievances in the struggle to obtain basic universal labor rights,

276 Thompson, 72.

277 Thompson, 155.

fostered the formation of class-based and class-frame-worked labor unions and their federation. In 1924, under the pioneering leadership of the journalist Yousuf Yazbak and the tobacco workingman Fu'ad al-Shemali (to whom is owed also the parallel foundation of the Communist Party), the first labor union of Lebanon was created[278]. The year after, the Committee for Union Organization was founded, with the task to coordinate the action of the emerging unions towards the achievement of basic labor rights (eight-hours working-day, minimum wage, right to unionize, unemployment benefits, etc.), and create new ones wherever absent. By the early 1930s, organizations structured into a unionist framework came to be present in all the economic sectors owned or directly managed by the colonial power (railways and port, electricity, tobacco industry, public transportations, services and function). The latter were soon followed by the workers of the industries of a modern type, as well as in those economic sectors whose development was directly dependent on the new economic turn impressed by the Mandate authorities on the Lebanese economic structure (tourism, private transport, banking and commerce). This paved the way for the emergence, in 1936, of the first experiment of union federation, the Committee of Union's Unity (became in 1945 the Federation of Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon), under whose coordinating guide a mass working-class movement for the enactment of a comprehensive labor code emerged. It must be underlined that, despite the leadership remained solidly in the hands of the Communist-dragged unions, the movement was characterized by a certain ideological diversification. In particular, whereas the unions developed in the common interests and the modern industries (where the Communist presence was more marked and labor conditions harder) distinguished for their greater radicalism, the unions developed among the white collar workers maintained a more reformist approach. Important corporatist associations also developed. It was the case in particular of the Union of Taxi-Drivers, established in , which found in Henri Phiraʿoun its political patron. Nevertheless, it was the first type of organizations and leadership to become hegemonical throughout the 1930s, becoming able, by the eve of World War II, to crack «the edifice of colonial paternalism with the first changes in the legal boundaries of the civic order[279]».

278 For a history of Lebanese Communist Party we refer to Tareq Yousif Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon* (University Press of Florida, 1998).

279 Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 156.

I.II

Cracking the colonial order: workers' activism and the road to the Independence

With the passage of decade, the working and living conditions of Lebanese urban population witnessed a sharp decline. As a result of the countercoups of the Great Depression, in the seven years 1930-1937 the purchase power of wages in the cities barely halved, mass layoffs and underemployment became endemic, and unemployment arrived to reach an estimated quota of 30%. This allowed the owners of the modern industries which in parallel start to develop, to maintain the wages law, push forward the working hours, widely rely on the cheaper female and child labor. Furthermore, given the lack of regulations also for the workplaces, the hygienic and security conditions were in general quite scarce, and no indemnities in case of accident were envisaged. This created the perfect cocktail for the explosion of a long wave of strikes on a mass scale. Between 1930 and 1932 huge strikes shook the transport, typography and tobacco industry, asking, together with the specific sectoral claims, the regulation of working hours and layoffs, indemnities in case of accident, healthier and safer working conditions. Besides, a mass anti-unemployment movement coalesced, pretending the State to engage in favor of occupation and the containment of inflation[280]. Whereas throughout the 1920s, strikes had remained mostly spontaneous and mutually isolated events, the consolidation of a unionist network had now endowed workers with the organizational infrastructure to engage a common and coordinated action to rise their grievances and engage a unified struggle to finally obtain social rights. In this process, the release from prison of the movement's radical leaders at the end of the 1920s, played a major role. In effects, the rise and consolidation of radical unionism and of the organically linked Communist party had not passed unnoticed in the eyes of the Mandate authorities. As a reaction to

280Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 1919-1946*, 203–26.

For a further outlook on the mobilizations in the trasport and tobacco sector see instead Carla Eddé, "La Mobilisation «populaire» à Beyrouth à l'époque Du Mandat, Le Cas Des Boycotts Des Trams et de l'électricité," BookSection, 2002, http://books.openedition.org/ifpo/3200. and Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation*, 19–34.

the explosion of the Great Syrian revolt, in 1926 a resolution of the french High Commissioner establishing that any association created with the scope to «foster social transformation through illegal means, shall be considered as a committing a crime against public peace[281]» had been issued. This had been exploited to persecute, together with the participants to the insurrection, also the Communist and radical unionist movement, which was hit by a wave of mass arrests. The strategy revealed to a greater extent successful. As, in fact, the wave of draconian arrests did not forbade workers to mobilize, the temporary dismantling of a coordinating structure deprived them of the force and the coordination to exit the dimension of spontaneism and particularism.

Their release from prison in 1928, changed again the rules of the game. Taking advantage of the time of detention to further strengthen their political formation, once returned to freedom they re-organized the Committee, refined its pressure and communicative strategies, started to regularly publish leaflets and political material, re-established the linkages with Profintern. Mandate's reaction to this renovated activism did not took long to arrive. Between 1930 and 1931, further repressive laws to contrast the mounting wave of urban unrest were issued. At the same time, demonstration and strikes were systematically repressed by force, leaving also workers' corpses on the ground. Finally, in 1932, the Parliament and the Constitution were suspended. The results obtained this time, however, were of a completely opposite sign. If in facts the repression of the 1920s had brought to a significant retrocession of social movements, the effect now sorted was to push more people to take the streets, further strengthen workers' solidarity networks and anti-colonialism, cement the relation with nationalist movement. Put on the spot, thus, the Mandate authorities remained with no other choice than finally address workers' claims. In order to contrast the unemployment unrests, in 1933 a massive program of public works was launched. The first concessions of social rights to workers also started to arrive. In 1934, provisions pertaining the regulation of labor relations were included in the Code of Obligations and Contracts, and the Ottoman Law on associations was partially amended, restricting the membership of any occupational association in the same or in similar trades to the employees alone. In 1935, then, a law providing a basic regulation of female and child labor was enacted. Finally, between 1939 and 1943, a

281 Resolution n° 276 of May, 25 1926 reported in Kamal Bohsali, *Contribution à l'étude de la situation de la classe ouvrière au Liban* (Paris, 1951), 415.

series of decrees introduced the first forms minimum wage, the principle of salary increases according to the rise in the cost of living, the salary equality between men and women, and the institution of a Department of Social Affairs within the Ministry on Industry[282]. As the outbreak of World War II started to push again inflation to unsustainable levels and revivify the labor and the anti-French mobilizations, indeed, the cynical necessity to secure the loyalty of the greatest portion of Lebanese citizens possible, opened again, after the short repressive Vichy parenthesis, the windows of the bargaining, arriving to endow Lebanese workers and citizens with unprecedented rights. The consolidation of colonial welfare state, however, will paradoxically coincide with the end of the colonial rule.

I.III

Re-negotiating the social hierarchies:

the Labor Code and the struggle for the evacuation

The French effort to rebuild a loyal constituency through the extension of social rights, did not payed back. On the spring of 1943, the parliamentary elections marked the undisputed victory of the nationalist elites, which, under the seal of the National Pact and after months of blank confrontations to obtain the direct control of all the State's apparatuses and economic activities, on November 8 unilaterally proclaimed the independence of Lebanese republic. French reaction was furious. Wishful to impose the signature of a treaty granting France a privileged status on the ex-Mandates as price to pay for the independence, on November 11 a veritable coup was staged, involving the suspension of the constitution, the imposition of a new President, and the arrest of the all the deputies. If, after a wave of massive mobilizations, on November 23 the latter were released and the constitutional life re-established, French troops and their control over the Concessionary companies and the security forces forcedly remained in place until January 1 1946, only after that, as long as WWII started turning to an

282J. Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," *International Labour Revie* 65,(1),(JAN 1952,) (1952): 73–77.

end, Great Britain before, and later United States and Soviet Union, finally took side in favor of the two denied Syrian and Lebanese republics. In the meantime, the labor movement reunited in the CUU was living a particularly prosperous moment. Arrived at the eve of the independence as one of the better organized intermediate bodies of the country, it could count on a widespread presence in the workplaces and mobilizations, on the renovated strength of the Communist party, and on an ever-growing popular base, guaranteed also by the prominent role played in the anti-French mobilizations. Three main struggles animated this period: on the one side, the one for the application and the extension of the just acquired labor rights to the greatest number of workers possible; on the other, the one for the enactment of a comprehensive labor code, which would include also the definitive recognition of the right to strike and unionization. Finally, the struggle to further extend the State welfare and reinforce the national economy. The achievement of all the tasks, however, revealed soon harder than the initial expectations. As for the colonial order before it, the foundations of Lebanese post-colonial civil order came to lie in effect on yet another – and pretty similar – blatant contradiction. On the one side, on a formal endorsement, affirmed in particular during the electoral campaigns, to the republican values and institutions already experienced during the Mandate, and further reaffirmed in the Constitutional chart, wherein the equality of citizens before the law represents a substantial element. On the other, as alreasy seen, on the concrete institutionalization, once assumed the power, of the paternalistic power structure emerged during the mandate period, whereby the National Pact became the seal and the major disciplining dispositive, and wherein, insofar as the State was imagined and designed as nothing but the space to foster the reproduction of the national elites' narrowest class interests, the universal distribution of political, social and civil rights could find no space. This incurable contradiction became evident soon after the liberation of the newly elected parliament. While Beshara al-Khouri had made the promise of "bread and freedom" the great slogan of his rise to power, once released from prison he and the rest of the government came back to foster the same corporatist positions adopted in the 1930s, closing again the doors of social bargaining, and answering to the subaltern movements fighting for reforming the civil order in a democratic sense with repression or, in the best cases, with empty promises. From 1943 onwards, thus, as strikes came back

to hit the concessionary companies and the modern industries as a reaction to the missed application of laws by the patrons and the State, the refusal of France to extend the existing rights to the employees of the foreign and the controlled public companies, and the perennial Damocles swards of inflation and unemployment, the State found no better answer than the recourse to the army. Alongside, the struggle for a labor code gained its great momentum, becoming the core of a relentless confrontation between the movement and the State, calling into question the very premises on which the nascent post-colonial order was supposed to rely. While, in facts, under the banner and the legitimating authority of the National Pact, the post-colonial ruling-class was canalizing all its efforts to definitively set up the liberal "elite-dominated sectarian Lebanon" they had coalesced together for, in the eyes of the labor movement the code was rather imagined and approached as a pivotal cornerstone for a broader reshaping of «the civic order into a more level playing field»[283], according to those republican values to whom the proclamation of the independence had contributed to give a new strength.

The confrontation on the Code got to the heart from the end of 1945. On the month of November, a first draft of labor code was finally sent to the Parliament to be discussed. The movement, however, found little to celebrate. Eloquently fallen on their heads as a fait-accompli, and when all the major Federation of Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon (FUWEL, ex CUU) leaders were abroad to attend the first congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions, the latter was presented to satisfy two strategic urgencies which little had to do with a surrender to the unions' pressures. On the one side, the necessity to maintain the greatest social cohesion possible in the perspective of an imminent French evacuation. On the other, the necessity to fulfill the international obligations that the country found in need to fulfill as a result of the recently acquired UN membership. In its quality of participant country to the San Francisco Conference in the summer of 1945, Lebanon had in facts become, precisely on the eve of the beginning of the latest phase of the Code's bargaining, one of the UN founding states. This had implied, together with the official commitment to the principles of the UN Carter, also the pre-admission by default to the UN specialized agencies, whereof the ILO was one of the most prominent one, and whereby the

283Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 276.

achievement of the full membership was subordinated to the formal acceptance of the obligations of the Constitution (Art. 3). This included the adoption of a set of minimal, urgent provisions[284], which became the main bulk of the Code's draft[285]. This consisted, from its side, into nothing more than the integration of the existing legislation with few others additional indemnities, leaving untouched all the questions pertaining workers' organization and the right to strike, and excluding from its spectrum the most vulnerable categories workers (agricultural, daily, domestic)[286]. FUWEL's counter-answer, this time, was launched starting from the institutional front. Among the social forces composing the National Congress set up after the November 1943 coup to foster the independence, the movement was in facts now acting not as a subaltern social group asking its governors to fulfill their caring functions, but as a component of the State itself, and for this reason entitled to recognition and participation in the political decision-making.

Strong of the prominent role played in the struggle for the evacuation and of the appointment of the secretary Mustafa al-ʿAriss as delegate for the Arab Countries in the newborn World Federation of Trade Unions, thus, a number of official petitions were launched to ask and obtain from the State authorities first the vision of the document, and later the formal engagement to uphold the remarks

284 The urgent measures were identified in ILO Constitution Preamble as follows: «the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education».

285 This legitimating urgency hinging on the Code, emerges with clearness looking at the presentation of Lebanese labor legislation offered by Donato on the ILO official journal in 1951. Introduced as a summary of «the efforts of one of the smallest countries in the world to introduce social legislation in a period of novel circumstances and many difficulties», the text constantly tilts between a self-absolutory frame-working of the Code's deficiencies as the result of the particularly complex Lebanese context, and the apologetical presentation of the legal provisions there summarized as living proof of Lebanon's capability and desire to live according the UN's founding principles of «universal concord and good will». Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation."

286 Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 1919-1946*, 333–35.

going to be presented. To this scope, an ad hoc commission was created, holding periodical meetings all over the country with all the existing unions which, after having elaborated and presented by the end of January its final list of claims, canalized its efforts to pressure the recalcitrant Parliament to discuss and address them. Alongside, the mobilization in the streets regained a momentum. Under the thrust of the wave of dismissals following the dismantling of the Allied-dragged war economy, and the refusal of the concessionary and public companies to apply the existing laws, another massive wave of strikes came back to hit Lebanese public life. As for the Code, however, no answers were provided by the State. The situation started to unlock with the late spring. After the umpteenth postponement of the parliamentary discussion on the Code, a general strike was called for May 20. Soon after, ad-interim strikes were launched by the workers of the public transports and the Régie, whose repression by the army on June 27, will leave the young workingwoman Warda Boutros Ibrahim murdered. The wave of popular indignation which followed, finally started to move the balance of powers in workers' favor. By the end of July, the claims of the public transports and Régie workers were finally addressed. More importantly, at the end of the summer the amended Code entered the Parliament. On September 23, Lebanese workers finally had their labor law.

II

Defining the space for Lebanese workers: the Labor Code and the post-colonial civil order

II.I

A victory or a Trojan Horse? The Labor Code as a disciplinary dispositive

The 'terrain of the conjunctural' set up by the struggle for the evacuation, created the conditions for Lebanese workers to finally discuss, and partially re-shape with success, their terms of membership in the post-colonial civic order. The major

outcome of this re-negotiation, was undoubtedly the recognition of workers as legal subjects on their own right. With the Articles 4 and 83 of the Labor Code, the right for the wage and salary earners to constitute themselves into unions separately from their patrons was finally enshrined. Significant re-negotiations were imposed also on the set of labor rights and protections that the Code came to enshrine. This included: the limitation of the weekly working-hours to forty-eight, and the reduction to seven hours for the working-day of children and adolescents; the recognition of a surcharge of the pay by 50% for the extra hours; the institution of end-of-service proportional indemnities, extended also to the old workers, and the young women permanently leaving the job to get married; the organization of the apprenticeship, payed leaves up to fifteen days and sickness and maternity payed leaves; the limitation and the regulation of the arbitrary dismissals. The most significant provision in this sense, was the crossing-off of the strike from the justified causes for a dismissal tout-court, so turning it – while still with some restrictions – into a legitimate pressure weapon into workers' hands[287]. Equally important was the establishment of institutions specifically devoted to watch over the employer-employee relations. Through the Title III, a Commission for Labor Arbitrations under the control of the Ministry of Labor was instituted, with the task to watch over the respect and settle the disputes of the norms involving the minimum pay, the labor accidents and the respect of the Code's provisions (Art. 79). The same title set up also a system of labor inspections, finalized to monitor the respect of the hygiene and security provisions. Finally, Article 50 established the institution of a Conciliation Board to mediate the disputes hinging on the legitimacy of dismissals. Despite this important provisions, however, the main substance of the Code fell pretty short of that democratic, universalistic and horizontal reshaping that the unions had hoped for; rather, it remained solidly rooted in that corporative, paternalistic and repressive spirit making of the substance of the pre-Code State-labor relations.

The immanence of this spirit reveals in particular in the hiatus permeating the whole text between the formal recognition of workers' rights to association and collective action, and the strict limitations and governmental directive control to whom the concrete exercise of this right was subordinated. According to the Article 87, no union could be licensed – and so be endowed with a juridical

287Couland, 371–72.

personality – without the prior conjunct approval of the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of the Interior. The latter could then be arbitrary denied or revoked at any time to any union explicitly ideologically oriented, or to any union frame-working its collective action into a broader critique of the State's policies. As in fact Article 84 clearly stated that «all political activity is prohibited to labor unions, including the participation in meetings or demonstrations of a political color», Article 105 entitled the government to «dissolve any trade union committee which has not taken into account its incumbent obligations or has performed acts exceeding its competences». The same article endowed the government also with the right to request the replacement or taking legal actions against the single committee members committing the same facts. The directive control guaranteed to the government over the union activities and the union-workers relations was besides capillary. So to be admitted to a union, the preliminary approval of a specific work certificate by the Ministry of Social Affairs was needed to the applicant worker. Similarly, so to be licensed, the police record of the founding committee and a copy of its internal regulations was requested to the applicant unions. Once licensed, then, a detailed record of the members and the activities carried out needed to be periodically submitted to the Ministry which, at any moment, could intervene to change the internal regulations, revoke or foster memberships, and, as seen before, dissolve the union. Government directive control mediated also the grouping criteria with whom the unions could be formed and joined. Article 4, after forbidding «to the one and same trade union to rally persons belonging to different professions», it proceeded to establish that the «boundaries between similar professions and trades, and the boundaries of professions whose members are authorized to merge into a union shall be laid down by ministerial order». The police spirit permeating union provisions, was even more marked in the measures regulating the right to strike. To be considered not prosecutable tout-court, a strike could in fact not occur than after the mandatory passage of the dispute to the Arbitration Board, whose Administrative Council was directly appointed by the government, and whose legally-binding decisions could not be eligible for appeal to a higher court. The latter, furthermore, was assimilated to a criminal offense when addressed against the State and its institutions, whose sentencing could made any ‘guilty’ worker

passible of a non-compensatory arbitrary dismissal (Art. 50, Comma 6) and of the permanent loss of his right to be part of a union (Art. 91, Comma 4).

In substance, if the right to strike and unionization were formally recognized by the Code, the same Code endowed the government not only with all the instruments to legitimately persecute any direct overrunning of workers' agency – weather individual or collective – on the political sphere, but also, and above all, to legitimately foster the formation and the reproduction of a government-sponsored – or at least, government-liked – unionism. In so doing, as stressed by Jacques Couland, the post-colonial ruling class confirmed and institutionalized in the text two attitudes meant to shape out the future State-labor relations as much as the single Code's provisions. First, that in the Merchant Republic labor was not thought as question per se, but rather as an eminently political question. Second, that by prohibiting «employees from introducing social issues into politics, i.e. prohibit any union intervention that would maintain and improve the democratic regime upon which application of the law depended[288]», they meant to retain and armor the paternalistic monopoly over any form of intermediation between the citizens and the State, and the distribution of social rights.

II.II

Playing with the patrons' rules: the Code and the reiteration of master-laborer paternalism

The forms and the limits for workers' collective action and rights, were defined also by what the Code did not said. In the whole text, no measures pertaining the collective bargaining were included. The Code lacked also of comprehensive measures pertaining the social security. Furthermore, the majority of the provisions it enshrined remained limited to slightly more than general principles, whose definition of the concrete terms of application were or delegated to ad hoc law-decrees to be implemented, either left open to administrative or direct employer-employee determination and litigation. This evident deficiencies, were justified by the main designer of the Code as the result of the desire of the

288Couland, 372–73.

Lebanese government to leave to employers and employees «full freedom of negotiation and mutual assistance in the search for social justice[289]». In reality, this freedom meant to keep the Law still tilted to the employers' favor. With regards to the working-hours, for instance, if the maximum of weekly working-hour was in effect fixed to forty-eight, the Code left wide room for the employers to legally overcome it up to twelve hours a day, with little notice for the employees and without their consensus. Ambiguous were also the measures concerning the wages. As in facts Art. 44, established that «the minimum pay must be sufficient to meet the essential needs of the wage-earner or salary-earner and his family», and that the pay «is not to be less than the official minimum wage», the fixation of the amount and the parameters for this legal minimum wage were delegated to a Ministerial commission to be formed (Art. 55). Another critical element of the Code, was the maintenance of the contractual validity of oral agreements for all the types of professions and professional categories (Art. 12). If a workbook for each employee was made mandatory, the employer obligation to register on it the daily, weekly or monthly wage was maintained facultative (Art. 14). Conversely, the workbook could include the list of fines applicable on workers in case of negligence or material damages, whose determinations were totally delegated to the employers (Art. 67). This left clearly little instruments for workers to demonstrate, in case of litigation, the occurrence of payment and extra-hours abuses, as well as against an eventual abusing uses of the disciplinary fines. This left also little space of emancipation for workers – including in the bigger establishments – from the personal and paternalistic boundaries still permeating labor relations. The maintenance of this tilted bound was further fostered by the remission of essential social security provisions to the employers' discretion. This was the case in particular of medical insurances and family allowances which, in the absence of specific legal initiatives making them mandatory and regulated, kept on being frame-worked as an act of employers' generosity, rather than a right to be guaranteed. This discretion included also compensations for labor accidents and occupational diseases, exception partially made for the professional categories covered by the Law Decree n°25/ET of May 4, 1943, i.e. wage and salary earners employed in mining and quarrying, building and construction, forestry, land and water transport (excluding seagoing shipping), loading and unloading, electricity production and distribution, archeological excavations, and all

289Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," 81.

undertakings wherein explosives are involved, and non-human or animal-dragged machines[290]. The last controversial element, was represented by the set of provisions regulating the termination compensations, i.e. the compensations for the legitimate dismissals, the reaching of the working-age limit, and the natural expiration of a labor relation. Thought as surrogates for the retirement and unemployment indemnities, those measures too left in facts to the employers a wide space of maneuver to both intervene downwards on the amount of compensations to withdrawal, and their distributive criteria. In particular, being the amount of those compensations calibrated on the combination between last wage received and length of service under the same employer, the employer, per admission of the same Donato, «cannot help feeling reluctant to increase wages for fear of setting this ruinous calculating machine in motion, and the employee becomes the first victim of a law which is intended to protect him[291]». Second, by including among the legitimate causes for a non-compensatory dismissal the disciplinary measures already discussed, it could be easily be turned into yet another weapon in the employers' hands to both foster the formation of a docile and vulnerable workforce, and directly punish the unliked workers.

A good litmus test of this employers-warded imbalance, comes from the fact that, as stressed by Lampman, the text as landed in the parliament on June 1946, found little opposition in both the political and entrepreneurial circles. During the parliamentary passages, out of 144 articles, 82 were discussed briefly and without any amendment. Out of the 32 amendments offered, then, 22 were adopted, whereof 14 of simply technical order, and 13 consisted in further conservative provisions, such as the exclusion of public employees from the Code's provisions and the adding of government representatives in the labor courts. Among them, then, eloquently no one involved the organization of labor unions – sign that, once found the successful formula for their political defusing, their legalization represented no more a danger[292].

II.III

290 Joan Clarke, *Labor Law and Practice in Lebanon*. ([Washington]:, 1966), 76–77.

291 Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," 84.

292 Robert J. Lampman, "The Lebanese Labor Code of 1946," *Labor Law Journal* 5 (1954): 497–98.

Full workers vs subaltern workers: rights distribution in the Lebanese Labor Code

The differential distribution of rights among groups of workers that the Code enshrined, did not move solely along political-disciplinary binaries.

In effects, despite the Article 1 of the text defined a worker as «any man, woman or adolescent who works for consideration of a wage or salary», its distributive criteria were based on a fundamental, blatant lopsidedness. In the face of an employment structure made in 1950 still of 55% of employed in agriculture, about 7% in the public sector and the military, and, more in general 57% of waged workers outside the private sector, the rights and duties it enshrined remained mostly preserve of the already privileged minority made of private-waged urban workers in medium-large companies, establishment and institutions[293]. According to the Article 7, excluding from the whole set of the text's provisions the domestic servants, the agricultural workers «which have no connection with trades and industries», the family-employed, the public employees and the «casual wage-earners and journeymen who are not governed by the civil servants regulations». Significant denials pertained also the workers in the small craft industries, i.e. in the manufacturers with «fifteen or less workers» (Art. 3). The first set of restrictions tackled labor protections. Contrary to the bigger establishments, small crafts were exempted from the mandatory application of the hygienic and security provisions enshrined by the Code, from the mandatory submission (and hence elaboration) of the establishments' labor regulations to the Ministry of the Economy (Art. 66), as well as from receiving labor inspections. Small-craft waged workingmen were also not included in the four "corporations" (industrial, trading, agricultural, professional) entitled by the Code to constitute themselves into unions or professional associations on their own right (Art. 4-5-6). In this way, while if contrary to the workers of the Article 7 no formal forbidding subsisted for them to individually join an industrial union related to a productive activity assimilable to the one carried out, the bargaining of their labor conditions could not subsist than in the single workplaces, and within the master-laborer direct personal relations. Less substantial, was the differential distribution of the amount of indemnities for the sick leaves per professional category (Art. 40), which imposed the payment of only a third of the salary (rather than the full or

293Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, Tabb. 5.9, A.II.1 and A.II.2.

the half pay allowed to the other professional categories according to the length of service) again to the workers of the small-craft industries, and to the free professionals' and the small commerces' employees. The result was the production of a veritable hierarchy of workers, whose major outcome was to further exacerbate, rather than level out, the sharp differences already built by wages and qualification, productive activity and custom. At the top of the pyramid stood the permanent waged skilled senior employees and technicians of the private sector. This included in particular senior employees and managers in the hegemonic branches of the tertiary sector, high medical and educational staff (specialized doctors, university professors) in private educative and healthcare institutions, and directors and high qualified technicians in the construction and industry. Together with enjoying full labor rights, they could count on the highest average wages among the dependent workers, coupled with further additional benefits such as advantageous health insurances, longer payed leaves, thirteenth and even fourteenth month. Their employment stability and privileges were strictly related to their higher specialization, which made them a precious and hardly replaceable resource for the employers. They were followed by a larger middling group made by the permanent middle range employees of the private sector, and the specialized industrial production workers. Equally enjoying full labor rights, those two groups differentiated from the former for the lower wages and an amount of benefits generally not exceeding what established by law. Also in this case, their labor position was generally stable, may it be by virtue of their skills or prior personal ties with the ownership that often determined their hiring. Middling was also the position of the stable public employees. While not enjoying full labor rights, in facts, the civil servant regulation to which they were subjected, and the clientelistic channels through which their introduction to labor articulated, guaranteed them the same basic labor benefits and stability of their middling private counterpart. Below this middling group stood what can be defined as a parasubaltern cluster made in particular by the plethora of rank-and file daily production workers in the big industries, the waged workingmen in the small craft industry, and the daily manual workers employed in the public companies and authorities. Together with earning average wages barely sufficient to guarantee their subsistence, this group distinguished itself for the permanent job insecurity derived by their labor status and the unskilledness of their labor

mansion, as well as for the high exposure to the exploitative violation of their labor rights by the employers (disrespect of the eight hours, speculative denial of labor protection and benefits, etc). The bottom of the pyramid was occupied by the fully subaltern army of agricultural laborers, daily construction workers and the waged workers of the already «semi-proletariat des services». In this case, the total denial of any form of legal protection, was coupled with average wages widely below the subsistence threshold, a job insecurity further amplified by seasonality, and a quite common customary provision of free labor in favor of the employers.

III

To enforce and not to enforce: State and workers' rights after the Code

III.I

A game of empty boxes: the politics of (non) enforcement of Khouri and Chamʿoun

In the conclusion of his presentation of the Labor Code, Joseph Donato stressed with a certain emphasis that «the effectiveness and virtue of a law lies not so much in the excellence of its provisions, as in permanent and unrelenting vigilance to make sure that it is respected[294]». The statement arrived to introduce and framework the system of the new system of labor inspections and the related recent institution of the Ministry of Social Affairs, as definitive confirmation of the commitment of Lebanon to the labor question, and hence of its worthiness to occupy a seat at the United Nations.

In effect, by the beginning of the 1950s, Lebanon seemed to have definitively fully engaged to the enforcement of the Code's provisions. As just mentioned above, on June 1, 1951, the Department of Social Affairs, was transformed into a ministry on his own, with full powers and credits on the following departmental fields: a Labour Department, covering supervision and enforcement of the labour laws,

294Donato, "Lebanon and Its Labour Legislation," 91.

and consisting in turn of a Labour Inspection Bureau, a Hygiene and Safety Bureau, an Aliens Control Bureau and a Legal Disputes Bureau; a Trade Unions Department, responsible for the organization of trade unions and the provision of technical assistance for them; a Concessionary Companies Control Department, centralizing and controlling all matters relating to quasi-public companies of this type; finally, a Department of Social Affairs, responsible for social security, labour protection, family, and child welfare, and all matters involving research and action to improve social conditions[295]. Few months later, then, a Ministerial Decree (Decree n° 6341 of October 24) defined the health and security measures to be applied in the industrial establishments, marking the first executive legislative enforcement of the Code's principles. Early 1950s witnessed also the first attempts to endow Lebanon with a national social security program. At the end of the 1940s, per initiative of the Lebanese Society of Political Economy, a project for the creation of a National Found for Social Insurances had been elaborated, with the scope to reform and reinforce the system of the medical and termination compensations. The project was received by the Lebanese government in 1952 in the form of two decrees, the Decree n° 8586 and n° 8585, establishing respectively the institution of the Found, and the terms and coverage of the new system of medical insurances[296]. With the only exclusion of the Decree n° 6341, however, all those initiatives remained a dead letter. With regards to the Decrees n°8585 and n°8586, once landed to the Parliament to be approved, they were both rejected. Pretty more than a formal maneuver remained also the institution of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Not became fully operative than by the end of 1959, indeed, if in the meantime, it saw anyway most of its services activated, the budget and the personnel with whom it was endowed remained widely insufficient to guarantee en efficient management even of the basic ordinary activities. The picture taken by Labib Hawa in 1956, left in this sense little room to misunderstandings. Working with a dedicated budget «hardly enough to employ forty persons with reasonably adequate qualifications», the Ministry-in-transition was described as structurally lacking personnel «in both quality and quantity», with significant repercussions on the fastness of the procedures, the enhancement of new projects,

295Donato, 72–73.

296Houssam Yehya. La protection sanitaire et sociale au Liban (1860-1963). PhD Thesis, Law, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, 2015: 281-390

and the monitoring of the existing ones[297]. The same could be said for the Arbitration Boards, whose equally chronic lack of personnel stretched the average time for an adjudication between six months and two years, regardless of the urgency and the nature of the procedures. Inefficiency dominated also in the realm of labor inspections which, always in 1956, in the face of 31.709 estimated workers to be monitored, could count only on fourteen inspectors[298].

The rise to power of Camille Chamʿoun, seemed bearer of a change of pace with the previous regime. By 1954, a framework agreement with the International Labor Organization was signed and approved by the government, with the scope to host a series of specialized missions to empower the existing health, medical and security provisions, the system of labor inspections, professional formation, and the social security. The most significant in this sense, was the mission devoted to the social security. On the spring of 1956, the ILO attaché Wilhelm Dobbernack landed in Beirut with the scope to study an overall plan, tanking into account also its eventual financial coverage. In the meantime, Lebanese government issued a ministerial declaration announcing the intention to submit to the Chamber, as a first step towards the introduction of social insurances, a project of law instituting a national health insurances system. In the light of the above, Dobbernack readdressed its mission towards the elaboration of a plan of helth-maternity insurances in favor of workingwomen, including also provisions for familial allocations, labor accidents and layoff compensations[299]. 1956 saw also the institution of a special committee, including also employers and employees representatives, charged of the task to reform the Labor Code, in the light of the experience accumulated in the ten years of enactment. This produced a new text of 167 articles, including among its new measures the extension to the accident compensations to all the professions cover by the Code, the introduction of collective bargaining, and the possibility to introduce Court Appeals[300]. As much as the health and the health-maternity insurance projects, however, the project of new Code remained a dead letter.

297 Labib A. Hawa, "Labor Legislation in Lebanon an Analysis of the Labor Code and Its Relations with the Lebanese Economy," *American Business Law Journal* 2, no. 2 (1964): 132–33

298 Hawa, 133–34.

299 Yehya, La protection sanitaire et sociale au Liban (1860-1963), 398-400.

300 Hawa, "Labor Legislation in Lebanon an Analysis of the Labor Code and Its Relations with the Lebanese Economy," 134.

Despite the attempts of reform, in the eyes of the post-colonial ruling class – which, besides, remained to a greater substance the same as the one expressed by the 1946 elections – the Labor Code kept on being solidly perceived as the first and last commitment to the labor cause. This finds a further confirmation in the fact that, in all the reform projects presented (Labor Code included) no measures pertaining the enforcement of workers' political rights, neither the extension of the acquired ones to the still uncovered workers' categories, was included. Untouched remained also the questions pertaining the fixation and the regulation of the minimum wage, as well as the budget reserved to the Social Affairs administration. Political and class interests put a mortgage also on the addressing of the social security reforms. Despite, in facts, by including among their sources of founding also the State and the employees, the reforms purposed relieved entrepreneurs from taking charge of the whole financial coverage of the compensations, the entrance in block of the Lebanese bourgeoisie on the field of charitable associations after the achievement of the independence, made the preservation of the status quo much more profitable, insofar as it offered them yet another weapon to foster, through the selective provision of welfare services, their za'ama[301].

III.II

Reshuffling the rules of the game: Fuad Chihab social reforms

It was necessary to wait until the rise to power of Fuad Chihab to see a national social security program finally implemented. The first steps towards the execution of his reform program, started to be concretely moved from the spring of 1959. On the month of June, an Office for Social Development was instituted within the Ministry of Social Affairs, with the task to plan, manage and supervise the long-term national social development, including in its financial part. On the month of September, then, a mission to study the needs and the possibilities of development for Lebanon was lunched, under the direction of Pére Henry Labret, a French Dominican priest director of the I.R.F.E.D., and main economic advisor of the President. Besides, different ad hoc commissions were instituted to develop law projects concerning the enforcement and the provision of new social and labor rights. Alongside, Lebanese public expenditure passed from 11% to 23,2% of the

301 Yehya, La protection sanitaire et sociale au Liban (1860-1963), 402-403.

GDP, arriving to reach the same percentage of the neighboring Syria by the end of the mandate[302]. Finally, a project of law to reform the public administration was presented and approved, redefining the criteria of admission and promotion on the bases of merit, rationalizing the efficiency of the ministries and the departments, and putting the whole administrative machine under the supervision of an ad hoc created Public Service Council[303].

This preliminary phase, passed also through the coercive autonomization of the State's functioning from the paternalistic control of political feudalists. Deep connoisseur of the Lebanese system and open despiser – in line with the Gaullist tradition –of its political class, Chihab was in facts perfectly aware that no "State of the Independence" could have been achieved, without a preemptive, subtile work of cooptation and isolation of the political establishment at the margins of any executive process of decision-making. Three main set of measures were adopted to achieve this end. The first and most important one, was the creation of a veritable parallel administrative system by instituting specialized independent offices and agencies (Office of Social Development, Office of Waters, Housing Council, among the others) devoted to the single development projects, to side and control the existing ministries. The second one was the inflation of the parliament with new (and loyal) political figures with whom side – here again – the old establishment, by intervening on the double front of the massive recourse to the intelligence services (the infamous Deuxiéme Bureau) and of a new electoral law. The third one, was the displacement of the center of power from the legislative to the government, to whom the stunning majority earned in the elections of 1960 (also thanks to the interferences of the Deuxiéme Bureau), guaranteed unprecedented powers and stability[304]. Alongside, a "decumvirate" of trusted technicians became his executive eye and arm in the bureaucracy and the administration, becoming the inner core of the Chihabist power structure.

The executive phase of Chihab's social program, started getting to the heart from 1962. The change in pace had been announced loud and clear in the speech addressed to the nation on the Independence Day of 1961, when the President

302Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, Tab. 25.

303Law Decree n°112 of June 6, 1959. For an examination of the law and its impact see: Ralph E. Crow, 'Confessionalism, Public Administration and Efficiency in Lebanon' in Binder, *Politics in Lebanon*, 167–86.

304Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 297–308.

solemnly announced the entrance of Lebanon into «a new and crucial phase of its development [...] destined to wipe out an anachronistic State [...] in favor of a state founded, this time with the consent of all the Lebanese, on dignity, justice and effectiveness[305]». On September 17, a law on social housing, further perfected through a series of decrees between 1963 and 1966, was approved, envisaging the construction of 15.000 housing units, and credit facilities for low-income households to buy or renovate already existing units. The following year, then, the Law Decree n° 13949 of September 23, launched a program to enforce rural health. In the same spirit, the Law Decree n° 16662 of June 18, 1964, ensured free medical care to indigent Lebanese. Chihab social reforms, did not lacked to directly touch workers and labor rights. In 1963, the Law Decree n°, 14273 established a mutual found for public employees, finally endowing them with the right to the major indemnities and compensations (family allowances, sick and maternity leaves, death and wedding compensations) that the Article 7 of Labor Code had denied. The next year, a law regulating the collective labor agreements was approved[306], so compensating yet another great lacuna of the Code. Soon after, also under the pressure of the national business class, a law regulating the employment of foreign workers was approved. In 1961, then, the hygiene and security provisions enshrined by the Law Decree n°6341 of October 24, 1951 were extended to all the types of industrial establishment, and the minimum wage had been risen from 94,25 to 125 LBP per month[307]. More importantly, after two years of tribulations, on September 23, 1963, a law instituting a national Social Security system was finally approved by emergency decree[308]. The foundations of a modern welfare state, seemed to have been finally laid.

IIII.III

Changes and continuities in Chiahab's reforms: partial re-shapings and reiterated denials

305Fouad Chehab, Les Discours du Président Chéhab – 1958-64, Discours du 23 Novembre 1961.

306Law Decree n° 25352 of February 5, 1964.

307Clarke, *Labor Law and Practice in Lebanon*., 67.

308Law Decree n° 13965 of September 23, 1963.

The Social Security law, undoubtedly represented the most important social reform of Fuad Chihab presidency. Tailored on the French model, the law was structured into four macro areas of intervention (sickness-maternity, family allowances, labor accidents-professional illnesses, termination indemnities), to be implemented in three progressive phases, each one extending the new set of provisions to specific professional categories. In the first phase of application, to be implemented from the eighteenth month since the publication of the law on the Official Gazette, full rights would have been guaranteed to «all Lebanese waged workers and employees, permanent or temporary, working in non-agricultural companies (…) under one or more employers, Lebanese or foreigner, as well as the waged non functionaries workers and employees linked to the State, the municipalities and any public administration or company, whatever the nature and the form of the labor or training contract and the wage is» (Art.9 Comma 1). Alongside, compensations for labor accidents provoked by «machines alimented by mechanic, human or animal force» would have been guaranteed to Lebanese agricultural waged workers (Art. 9 Comma 2), while to the public functionaries, the one to medical indemnities for labor accidents and professional illnesses. The second step, to be implemented through an apposite law decree after two years from the activation of all the four branches of intervention, was meant to extend full provisions to the waged and independent agricultural workers (Art.11). Finally, the third step, would have guaranteed, in the same modalities and timings after the completion of phase two, full rights to all the remaining categories of workers, including self-employed, owners, etc., after the (Art. 12). The administrative and financial management of the system, was entrusted to a National Social Security Found (NSSF)[309], divided into four sub-departments dedicated to the four branches of activity, each of which endowed with its own financial autonomy.

Together with its symbolic rupture with the past and its universalistic hiatus, the enactment of the Social Security Law, had the great merit to finally turn into executive measures that set of social rights which in the Labor Code had remained little more than an empty declaration of intents. Nevertheless, the deficiencies and lopsidednesses that the two texts shared remained significant. The first one concerned the distributive criteria. While endowing public

309The institution, the functions, and the organization of the NSSF are established by the Title I of the Social Security Law.

employees with a number of unprecedented rights, the law, by remaining calibrated on to the same criteria as the Labor Code, not only did not correct, but possibly even sharpened the dichotomy between "full" and "subaltern" workers that the former had created. In the whole law, no guaranteed provisions were provided for the army of non-skilled waged workers in the service sector constituting the hard nucleus of the urban proletariat, such as domestic workers, employees in barber and coiffeur shops, plumber and electrician helpers, etc.. If for agricultural workers the right to the law's indemnities had been at list formally enshrined, its execution remained anyway remitted and postponed sine die to the uncertainties of the law decrees. The rights divide was further sharpened also among the workers of the secondary sector, insofar as the new sets of protections enshrines by the Chihabi decrees remained in the preserve of the bigger establishments. The second common deficiency pertained the sources of financing. With the only exception of the sickness-maternity branch which envisaged a State contribution by 25%, in the three remaining branches the charges remained fully charged on the employers and, with a minor percentage, on the employees. In the light of the absence of laws and institutions organically regulating and monitoring wages, this exposed workers first to the risk of seeing the patrons' fees directly withdrew from their base salary. Second, it left them with little guarantees in case of missed payments of the employers' due contributions, insofar as – here again – the mechanisms of payment and inspection remained often lacunous and vague. Particularly vulnerable in this sense were the employees in the small crafts and businesses. With regards to the family allowances, for instance, an ILO report of 1966 underlined how if the monthly-based payment method per direct intermediation of the employer envisaged by the law, was revealing effective for the medium-large business which could dispose of capitals to anticipate, the same it was on the contrary revealing particularly onerous for the small patrons, often unable or adversed to pay, so leaving their employees «temporarily deprived of their rights[310]». In case of litigation, then, if the Labor Court remained the judicial organ to whom resort for disputes not involving strictly medical issues, the number of effectives, despite the increase in the tasks to fulfill, was maintained unvaried. Similarly, if the Social

310 International Labor Organization, ILO, OIT/TAP/Liban/R.9, "Rapport au Gouvernement De La République Libanaise sur L'Organisation Administrative de la Caisse Nationale De Sécurité Sociale" (Geneve, 1966), 21.

Security law endowed at least the NSSF with its own control and inspection services, the latter remained widely under-numbered. According to the same ILO report, for instance, out of at least 140.000 workers registered to the NSSF, the NSSF employees devoted to the medical and payment controls were five each[311]. Another critical element undermining the effectiveness of the law's provisions, was the missed enforcement of the collateral measures necessary to support them. With regards to the sickness-maternity insurances, for instance, in the face of a national healthcare system structurally dependent on the private sector, and of a system based on indirect provisions, no framework agreements regulating the fares to apply to the covered workers were concluded with the private clinics, dispensaries and physicians, neither with the pharmaceuticals providers for the buying and the distribution of the pharmaceutical products covered by the NSSF. Lagging remained also the statistical datas (employment statistics, wages and prices indexes, mapping of the registered and non registered establishments, etc.) necessary to calculate, enforce and monitor the terms of application of the law's provisions. This implied the use of figures mostly gathered on piecemeal basis, with the result to adopt fares and enforcement policies often inadequate to guarantee to workers their due rights. The decisiveness of these deficiencies was eloquently expressed in a dispatch of the US Embassy of Beirut, written in the aftermaths of the first phases of the law's enforcement. Commenting on the fares established for the sickness-maternity and labor accident insurances, the dispatch stressed how the latter would have been almost certainly inadequate to endow the NSSF with the necessary fundings, «compelling the Government to make up the deficit from its own resources». It then proceeded to remark how «problems of adequate hospital space, physicians' fee schedules and administrative personnel still must be resolved, before medical protection may be extended to eligible workers and their families[312]».

Another element of continuity with the past, was the reiteration, in the Law on Collective Labor Agreements, of the Labor Code's hiatus between the formal recognition of workers' right to collective action, and the strict limitations and directive control to whom the concrete exercise of this right was subordinated. The first critical element, was represented by the ample space of maneuver left to the Government to determine from above the unions eligible to participate to the

311 Ibid.

312 American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A-965 of May, 25 1966, 3.

collective bargainings. According to the law, a collective contract, to be considered eligible for ministerial approval, required the preemptive official endorsement of both the employer and at least 60% of the workers directly concerned, i.e. of a majority of at least two thirds of the representatives of the unions or professional associations directly concerned (Art. 2 and 4). Whereas those conditions were not satisfied, the bargaining procedure, as well as any workers' collective action regarding the application of the Labor Code, the establishment's internal regulations, union representation, was required to mandatorily undergo a State-managed mediation of a maximum of only fifteen days, to then pass straight forward, in case of further failure, to the judicial arbitration of a Government-appointed committee, whose members – including the workers' ones – were eligible to be chosen regardless of the representative organisms and the issues involved in the dispute, and whose decisions were normative and compelling. Alongside, any work stoppage occurring during the mediation and the arbitration phases, as well as during, was declared illegal, hence making eventual striking workers passible for disciplinary actions (Art. 63). This implied that, as the restrictive forms of consensus envisaged for the first phase and the shortness of the second, made the arbitration – especially in the settlements hardest to achieve – a compelled step to conclude a collective labor agreement, the simultaneous strikes' forbidding deprived workers of the most important pressure tool to participate to the process of decision-making from whom they would have been eventually excluded from. In this way, what was supposed to represent an emancipatory instrument, became for workers yet another Trojan Horse.

Chapter 5

The re-organization(s) of Lebanese labor: anatomies of cooptations and dislocations

I

The great "Labor Game": repression, cooptation and the 'geopolitics of labor' from Khouri to Chihab

I.I

Resetting labor unionism: the autocratic centralism of Beshara al-Khouri

The intrinsic dispositive function of the Labor Code, found its great litmus test in the ways how, along the whole post-Independence period, and particularly in the aftermaths of its enactment, the selective provision of the ministerial authorizations to exercise the union activity articulated. While following different strategical patterns, and in favor or at detriment of different specific forces according to the decades, licensing represented in facts the great tool through which repressively integrate the labor movement within the boundaries of the existing status quo, in a veritable "labor game" influencing the shape, the agency and the effectiveness of Lebanese organized labor as much as the legal boundaries within whom it was confined.

In the immediate aftermaths of Labor Code's enactment, Lebanese labor unionism was divided in three major political-ideological tendencies, which, while with changing protagonists and political weight, will remain the three great archetypical models making of Lebanese post-colonial unionist panorama. The first one, was the class unionism embodied by the FUWEL, whose pioneering drive towards the organization of Lebanese working-class and, above all, the prominent role played in the struggle for the Labor Code, had guaranteed a hegemonic position in the representation of both the new class of urban waged blue-collar workers emerged during the Mandate and World War II (manual workers in the Common Interest Societies, production workers in the emerging

modern industry), and Lebanese labor movement as a whole. While having abandoned any strict revolutionary drive already from the early 1930s, FUWEL's class unionism kept on frame-working and orienting its unionist activity and claiming program towards a broader transformation of the national socio-economic relations, and defense of the interests of working-class also outside the workplaces. The second one, was a corporatist tendency, rooted in particular among the independent craft workers (taxi drivers, bakers, drivers, barbers, vegetable sellers, etc), stemmed from the attempts promoted by the end of the 1930s, and particularly during the confrontations for the Labor Code, by Lebanese notables and zuama, to simultaneously clientelistic co-opt workers in their constituencies and split the labor movement, wherein unionist affiliation as well as the model for political socialization represented nothing more than an expression of political feudalism 'for other means'. The third one, was an emerging moderate-reformist tendency, finding its major pioneers in the white-collar employees of the Common Interest and the hegemonic sections of the rising service sector (bank and commerce employees, insurance employees) and which, while having actively participated along with FUWEL to the struggles for the Labor Code, remained anyway independent from both the Communist influence and class unionist vision, in favor of a claiming horizon free from any wider political drive than the sheer tutelage of workers' interests in their workplaces.

The great target against which governmental efforts coalesced in the immediate aftermaths of the Independence, was represented quite unsurprisingly by the FUWEL, and, more broadly, by Communist labor activism. The strategic urgency was here twofold. The first one, eminently inward, was related to necessity to consolidate the civil order just established, against which Communist unionism and the organically related party represented the most rooted and well structured mass force whose agency, socialization and political discourse questioned and challenged the political, social and economic premises on which independent Lebanon relied. The lessons of the struggles for the Labor Code and the evacuation, besides, had not gone forgotten in the eyes of Lebanese elites. Another further alarm ring had arrived also from the elections of 1947, where the Communist party had been able to earn votes which, while not guaranteeing them any seat, had shown anyway the growing rootedness that it was building up.

The second strategic urgency was dictated instead by the international context, where the winds of Cold War, found the new Lebanese leadership oriented towards the Atlantic.

The trajectories through which this process articulated, are well summoned in a dispatch send by the American Embassy of Beirut Charge d'Affairs Bertel Kunihom to the US State department in early 1947[313]. Eloquently entitled "The Anti-Communist Labor Movement in Lebanon", the report offered a detailed overview of the licensing strategy that Beshara al-Khouri presidency was following. Reported directly by Joseph Donato, the strategy was axed on three main pillars. The first one, was the denial to FUWEL and any other suspected militant radical labor organization of the ministerial authorization. Legitimated behind the curtains of the Articles 84 and 74, it was being pursued thanks to the close collaboration between the Department and the General Security whose agents, after having been duly infiltrated among workers and unions, were also engaged in sabotaging activities to prevent mobilizations. The second strategic pillar was to authorize the highest number of unions possible outside of the FUWEL's and Communist spectrum. To be fostered also through the direct government sponsorship of new neutral unions if the case required so, this strategy was based on the evergreen Caesarian assumption that «the best way to control political activity is through diversity[314]». The aim was to atomize workers' unionization into different organizations purged from the Communist presence, to then make them converge into a single, ad hoc created government-sponsored authorized federation. The last strategic trajectory, was the adoption of an ad-hoc hyper-centralized and co-opting strategy for the foreign concessionary companies and particularly the oil ones, which represented the very core of the US and British interests in the country.

This strategy of cooptation, was actively supported by the interference of «influential citizens», and particularly of Sa'ib Salam, which became the great executor of both the disaggregating infiltration of labor movement, and its re-compacting under the umbrella of the State. The attempts of workers' patronization by prominent political figures are as old as Lebanese unionism. We

313 Legation to the Secretary of State, Mar. 3, 1947, Foreign Service Despatch #1511, "The Anti-Communist Labor Movement in Lebanon," RG 59, 890E.504/3–347

314 Ibid., 9.

have already mentioned the case of Henri Phiraʿoun with the union of taxi drivers. The latter, then, moved forward throughout the 1940s when he fostered, together with the Beirut's Merchant Association, the formation a pro-governmental union federation, the Labor Front, with the specific aim to split the FUWEL's dragged movement by opposing the former as privileged State interlocutor when the struggle for the Labor Code was definitively appearing to turn into workers' favor. His example was soon followed and overcame by Sa'ib Salam. Strong of his position as Ministry of Interior, in the spring of 1946, Salam took advantage of the defection of the activist Muhammad al-Masri from FUWEL which, after having been put on the payroll of the General Security, was used with a certain success as agent provocateur to monitor the movement, push group of workers against al-ʿAriss, defuse strikes. He then proceeded to foster the formation of new unions, especially in those sectors where FUWEL occupied a hegemonic position, and to reunite them into the a brand new federation, the Labor League, to whom he guaranteed the first and exclusive license once the Code entered into action. Finally, so to further reinforce his hegemonic aspirations, he connected the League with the Popular Party and al-Masri with the US embassy, and endowed it with an homonymous publication through which better spread his anti-Communist propaganda. As underlined by the US attaché, the message he was spreading to the workers and patrons was crystalline: «to the employer he said: "have no fear"; to the workers he said: "we can win for you advantages which no employer would give you if he knows you are a Communist"[315]». His final aim was equally crystalline: he wanted to maximize the gains of the Communist purging by turning workers not only into politically docile subjects, but also into an active component of his constituency. It must be noted that little effort was made by the post-war ruling class to hide the League's tight connections with the government. Soon after its licensing, for instance, the honorary presidency was assigned to the President's son Khalil al-Khouri. The League received from the State also considerable benefits, such as subsidies, an exclusive presence in the bargainings, and the official entitlement to represent the country at the ILO[316].

315 Ibid., 5.

316 Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 202–3. and al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah fi Lubnān*, vol. II (Dar al-Farabi, 1986), 39-46.

The fruit of this massive (and US blessed) anti-communist, autocratic re-shaping of Lebanese organized labor scenario, showed soon. By 1950, thanks also to the umpteenth arrest of Mustafa al-ʿAriss in 1949, only four licensed unions over forty could count a communist influence, while more than the half, grouping alone about 50% of Lebanese unionized workers, were affiliated to the League. Alongside, the creation of legal 'empty-box' unions in those labor sectors where the illegal FUWEL affiliated unions occupied a dominant position, further contributed to restrict the margins for their political influence in the bargainings and their outcomes. The remaining labor panorama was made up of independent unions which, while not affiliated with the League, remained moderate-reformist and anyway far from the Communist influence. Their spectrum of action, however, despite they could count on a genuine representativeness, remained forcedly circumscribed to sole the company relations. It was in facts the League to represent the privileged and sole interlocutor with the State, as well as its great watchdog over workers' insubordination.

I.II

Winds of Pan-Arabism, winds of Cold War: inside Camille Chamʿoun's gentle cooptation

If the autocratic centralism through which Beshara al-Khouri had reshaped Lebanese labor unionism succeeded in disrupting the hegemony of Communist unions and union leaders on Lebanese organized labor in a maze of atomized organizations lacking of an organic coordination and common program, much less successful had resulted instead its plan to turn the League into the great magnetic pole wherein make all the licensed unions spontaneously converge. Despite the privileges and the exclusive federative licensing with whom it was endowed, in facts, its blatant organicity to the government sorted as final effect to act as pull factor mostly for the small craft unions, pushing back, on the contrary, the ones grouping together what represented the hard nucleus of Lebanese waged (weather white or blue collar) working-class. In 1951, as a result of internal dissents

related to the lack of internal democracy, four among the largest blue collar unions which had opted to join the League (Iraqi Petroleum Company workers, Socony – Vacuum workers, Régie and DHP workers, Maritime Transport workers) decided to split[317]. Those had been followed the next year by the equally blue-collar Union of Mechanics, whose leader Abd el-Majid Mihyu, after having been elected the same year secretary of the League, was forced to dismiss after having hazarded to call a general strike without the governmental blessing[318]. Deliberately outside of the League since their earliest licensing remained also the particularly large white collar unions of bank and commerce employees. It was thus clear that as much as workers were distrusting the official unionism sponsored by the President, they were equally not intentioned to give up the exercise of a right so hardly conquered.

When Camille Chamʿoun rose to power, he was well aware that leaving workers no other alternative than the League could have sooner or later left room to a discontent ready to shift towards more radical positions. The same view was widely shared also by the US administration, in whose eyes the blatant counter-productivity of the autocratic centralism sponsored by Beshara al-Khouri had equally made mount the urgency of a change in step. While marginalized, besides, Communist unions were certainly not standing idly by. Despite the illegality, in 1951, success was obtained by the Communist-led union of hotel and restaurant workers for a revision of the working-hours. Alongside, in a textile sector hit more than the others by a wave of dismissals following the dismantling of the Allied war industrial apparatus, consensus and dissent were growing side by side[319]. Consensus was thus reached on the necessity to promote a new moderate union leadership on which workers could finally trust, and which could serve alone as natural, inner antibody against any form of workers' radicalization.

The first initiative undertaken to foster this end, was the concession of a greater political agency to that group of already licensed moderate-reformist unions to

317 Marc Van Leeuw, Les Syndicats Libanais Vus par les Americains au debut des Annees Cinquante' in Kançal and Thobie, *Industrialisation, communication et rapports sociaux en Turquie et en*, 299–307, 303–7.

318 Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 203.

319 See: Van Leeuw, Les Syndicats Libanais Vus par les Americains, 307, and al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah,* vol.II, 71-74.

whom the previous administration had authoritarianly denied a space. On November 1952, the Federation of the United Unions of Lebanon (United Unions), a coalition of the biggest non-League affiliated unions which the Union of Bank Employees' leader Gabriel Khouri had succeeded to gather in the previous years, and which had already presented in vain a request in 1950, was authorized. It was soon followed by the Federation of Independent Unions, a group of formerly League affiliated unions coalesced around Mihyu after his splitting. Finally, in 1954 the first territorial federation was authorized, the Federation of the Workers and Employees of the North, born the same year in Tripoli under the blessing of Rashid Karameh. Alongside, together with the League, particularly the first two started to be sustained by the United States, which deployed also significant energies to try to foster their affiliation to the International Confederation of Free trade Unions, as well as to 'educate' their leaderships to a "democratic" unionism through ad hoc formative initiatives, and through a consistent provision of founds specifically devoted to labor within the wider Point IV technical aids program[320].

It was Khouri's federation to become the great State referee under Chamʿoun administration. With a unionist consciousness solidly built on the Church Social Doctrine, which simultaneously made him a sincere anti-communist, and an irreducible anti-League independent leader, Gabriel Khouri had given prove of a remarkable charism in the creation of a united independent labor front on the eve of the 1950s. This made him the ideal candidate, in the eyes of Chamʿoun and the US administration, through which re-shape Lebanese labor unionism in a credible "Western-accepted sense", maintaining it within the boundaries of the existing socio-political and economic system, and according to a contentious dialectics resolute and moderate enough to credibly seat on both sides of the bargaining table[321].

The process of silent backing through which this attempt of gentle re-shaping substantiated, was fostered in particular in two major ways. On the one side, by guaranteeing United Unions a position of primacy in the official and most delicate labor disputes, legitimated with the large base on which the latter could

320Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 208–9. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 116–28. and al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah,* vol.II, 64-67.

321 Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 203–4.

count; on the other, by working on the hypes, weather through licensing or bribing, to guarantee Khouri's affiliates a share of representatives in the various unions large enough to minimize – if not neutralize – the influence of radical forces, while maintaining a formal pluralism. The latter, from their side, witnessed the emergence of a new force meant to soon side Communists at the top of Lebanese establishment and its foreign allies political concerns, i.e. Pan-Arabist labor militancy which, particularly after the creation of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) in 1956, high-handedly entered, along with the winds of Pan-Arabism blowing all over the region, also Lebanese labor world[322].

The reliability of Khouri's figure, as well as a first taste of the effectiveness of the strategy of silent backing that Chamʿoun new strategy inaugurated, gave prove of themselves in the prominent role that United Unions played to defuse the ICATU-blessed attempt of oil workers to set up their own federation in 1956. Advanced in the aftermaths of the Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, when the oil workers were in motion all over the region in an anti-British sense, and when in Lebanon tensions were mounting between the Government and the IPC over tax issues and the IPC decision to fire of about half of its organic, Khouri succeeded, thanks to a coordinated tandem work with the Ministry of Social Affairs, in make converge five over the eight licensed oil workers' unions within his federation, and in successfully mediating, thanks to a direct ministerial appointment, the crisis between fired IPC workers, the company and the Government, preventing undesired strikes and defusing arabists attempts of capitalization of the crisis[323]. Khouri played also a fundamental work in forbidding Communists to be elected in the directive bodies of the United Union's affiliated DHP and Tobacco workers' unions, as well as to steal, thanks to yet another ministerial appointment to mediate a dispute wherein the latter were involved, the official representation of textile workers to the Communists[324].

322 al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ aḷ-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah,* vol. II, 151-155. For a closer look on Pan-Arabist labor unionism see instead: Willard A. Beling, *Pan-Arabism and Labor*. (Cambridge University Press, 1961).

323Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 263–75.

324al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ aḷ-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah,* vol. II, 144-151.

The positive effects of this organic ruling partnership revealed soon. By 1956, out of four licensed union federations, all the heavily unionized industries and white-collar labor branches were under the banner of Khouri's federation, leaving crafts and specialities to the others. Alongside, Communist influence was again re-circumscribed to the hard nucleus of illegal unions re-united within the equally illegal FUWEL, while the influence of ICATU to a marginal section of the oil workers remained outside of the United Unions' spectrum, and some elements within the equally marginal remnants of the Labor League. This guaranteed Khouri also a position solid enough to start asking and obtaining important concessions from the Government. In 1955, for instance, by virtue of a strike, Kouri's Union of Bank Employees obtained, in the form of a proces verbal, the ratification of a proto-national categorial collective labor agreement including (the so-called Statut Interbancaire), among the various benefits, the payment of the 14th month, a 36 hours labor week and a particularly advances set of social security provisions[325]. In early 1958, then, in the background of a mounting inflation and the first specters of the political crisis ultimately heading up to the first civil war, a memorandum was presented to the Government with a list of comprehensive labor and social demands including, among the others, the enactment of a social security law and the engagement in favor of a program for social housing which, while not having seen met all of its most sensitive demands, guaranteed anyway Lebanese licensed union federations an injection of new founds [326].

The marriage of convergent interests completed on May 1, 1958, when the government, resuming a project already thought to contain communist unionism, a general confederation uniting together United Unions, Independent Unions and Labor League, the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers and Employees (CGTL) was licensed, with Gabriel Khouri as its president – a licensing, whose long-term impact on the future evolution of Lebanese State-labor relations will be meant to be substantial.

I.III

325 Snyder, *Organized Labor in Lebanon and Jordan.*, 251–55.

326 Snyder, 299–301.

'New' enemies, old practices: the labor movement under Fuad Chihab

The war of 1958 and its immediate aftermaths saw the emergence and the consolidation of three phenomena meant to mark the Lebanese labor unionism of the whole following decade. The first one was the definitive consecration of Gabriel Khouri among the top political players of the country. Capitalizing the influence earned during the previous decade first by calming down the humors of workers during the fightings, and later by launching an ultimatum under the threat of general strike for the formation of a new government soon after the end of the hostilities which acted as major input for the end of the impasse inhibiting its formation, Khouri had in facts proven of an influence and, above all, a mobilization capability over Lebanese workers whose weight could be no longer be ignored, and in whose regards his political management of the conflict only contributed to further strengthen. The second one was the emergence of a new leftist front whose changing political climate will provide with the right framework to recuperate and expand the rootedness that al-Khouri and Chamʿoun's strenuous work of dismantling from above seemed to have definitely compromise. As, in facts, the outbreak of the conflict offered the conditions for the emergency and the consolidation of a political alliance between Lebanese Communist Party (PCL), Arab nationalists and Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the latter's inclusion, by virtue of the prominent role played during the war, in most of the Chihabist cabinets with positions of prestige, offered that institutional side able to finally guarantee leftist unions a wider space of maneuver. The first fruits of this different climate showed already in 1960, when, in the background of a massive wave of mobilizations shaking the cement industry, the transport, water and electricity, and communications sectors[327], the ex-communist and PSP member Assad ʿAkl succeeded first in taking over the of the United Unions' affiliated Beirut Electricity and Transport Union, and later to foster its split. The same happened also in the powerful Railway Workers, Régie Workers, Port of Beirut Employees and IPC Refinery Workers, which also, after strenuous internal confrontations between leftist and conservative leaders, where able to split from Khouri and its federation, depriving all at once United Unions of about 4,500 affiliates over a total of around 11,000[328]. Finally, in 1963, thanks to the appointment of Kamal Jumblatt to the Ministry of Interior, through the

327 al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah,* vol. II, 183-191.

expedient of a law on political parties, the Labor Liberation Front (LLF) was legalized, an umbrella-party expression of the new leftist unionist cartel, meant to act as legal interface for the coalition of leftist unions whose missed licensing by the Labor Minister Jean Aziz kept on forcing to illegality[329].

The renovated strength of class unionism, did not represent in those years the sole threat to Gabriel Khouri's hegemony. With the passage of the decade, a new generation of reformist union leaders headed by the Port Employees' Union secretary Antoine Bechara, the secretary of the Federation of Petroleum Workers George Saqr, and the secretary of the Federation of the Autonomous Offices John Tweini, profiting of the personal rivalries among the old-guard troika Khouri-Hussein-Mehyu inhibiting the confederative project of the CGTL to concretely enter into force[330], started to emerge, especially in the eyes of government officers and Western powers, as increasingly reliable union leaders through which more effectively fight the perennial leftist threat.

President Fuad Chihab, for its part, had not laid still. In line with the same carrot-and-stick policy through which he had been able to take the control of the national political-bureaucratic apparatus, he actively proceeded in fostering the containment strategy of his predecessors leveraging, along with the by now classic selective licensing, on the double front of the social reforms, and the infiltration of the unions by the Deuxiéme Bureau. In particular, the latter actively engaged in securing the conservative unionist old guard in all the necessary support in sustaining their efforts to prevent leftist unions to succeed in the attempt to take over the United Unions' most prominent affiliated unions. Such a sustain revealed to a great extent successful. As, in facts, thanks to the rootedness gained in the 1960s' strikes, leftist unions succeeded to obtain the necessary consensus to successfully foster the Régie, Railway, Port and IPC defection from the United Unions, the same had not anyway been able, contrary to what happened with the Beirut Electricity and Transport Union, to take over the

328Nick Kardahji, A Deal With the Devil: The Political Economy of Lebanon, 1943-75, PhD Thesis, Univeristy of California - Berkley, 2015, 165-168 and American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Airgram n° A 905, Annual Labor Report [1962], March 15, 1963. American Embassy estimated the overall number of affiliated workers to the 11 leftist unions to about 6675.

329 American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A 905.

330 American Embassy of Beirut, *Ibid.* and Arigram n° A-720, *Annual Labor Report* [1963], April 1, 1964.

leadership of the union. Furthermore, the reiterated denial of the licensing and yet another Deuxième Bureau backed operation of internal sabotage, succeeded in make split and reintegrate again within the ranks of the United Unions, through licensed mirror organizations, the white collar sections of the four defected unions already by the end of the following year[331]. United Unions' influence, from its side, despite the numerous new challenges, was anyway pretty far from the edge of a crisis. Solidly detaining the primacy over the CGTL and the representativeness of Lebanese workers both in numerical and political terms, it kept on witnessing its base constantly growing, remaining the great hub were the hard nucleus of the expanding Lebanese waged workforce coalesced.

II

Towards a common ground:

the social crisis and the unification of Lebanese labor movement

II.I

Winds of change: the failure of Chihabism and the emergence of unified class stances

As partially suggested by the periodical upsurges of leftist unions in the periods of relative economic stagnation, much of the success of the operations of containment and cooptation from above of the political influence of organized labor, and the relative social peace which ran in parallel, had been debtor to two structural phenomena offering the favorable framework for these double operations to succeed. The first one was the still relatively marginal share of industrial workforce in Lebanese employment structure, in favor of a constantly growing mass of more stable and better payed waged white-collar employees in the service sector (see: infra, Chapter 3). The second one, was the economic growth that the country was witnessing and which, despite the growing inequalities that was producing, was anyway guaranteeing Lebanese population an improvement of the general living conditions high enough to prevent mass mobilizations.

331 American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A 905.

The situation started to drastically change from the end of the 1960s. Under the crossfire of the structural countercoups of the Intra-bank crack, and the absence of any form of price controls, from 1967 inflation started mounting with a yearly average by 3,65%, pushing the cost of living to almost double by the eve of the war. This implied that if average wages witnessed a parallel nominal yearly growth by 4,6%, this growth barely maintained their real purchase power above the subsistence level[332]. It must be noted that, following the concentration and power of the monopolistic cartels, were fundamental primary goods to witness the sharpest rise. In 1972 alone for instance, when about 80% of the consumed basic foodstuffs was imported, the overall price of imported goods rose alone by 10-15%. Particularly sharp was the inflation on medical products, whose marketing was monopolized by a powerful cartel of few firms endowed with absolute power over their price.

The devastating effects that the inflation sorted on the real purchase power of wages, were further amplified by the failure of Chihabist reforms to accomplish the redistributive mission they had been thought for. Looking at the rural world, for instance, if the programs of rural development (Green Plan, Litani River project) only marginally succeeded to satisfy its ambitious goals in favor of the middle and little landowners, the empowerment of the rural infrastructural network facilitated the rise of monopolistic agribusiness, with the paradoxical consequence to sharpen the process of devastating disaggregation of the rural world that it was supposed to revert. Similarly, as real estate speculation pushed rents to absorb at least 40% of average household monthly income, the social housing program approved at the end of its mandate remained just ink on paper. Slow and partial remained also the implementation of Chihab's social security provisions. With regards to the first step of the Law, the last law decree to accomplish its full implementation, found its approval only in late 1969. The same time range was employed to prepare and make pass the law-decrees to finalize the second step. In the meantime, if formal adherence was achieved for the most part of the entitled workers, chronic lack of financial coverage inhibited with facts the access to the established provisions[333].

332 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, Tab. 5.1 and 5.8.

333 In 1968, estimations attested at about 4 million LBP the deficit of the NSSF and at 50% evasion rate by the employers of the due fees. See: *Le Jour*, March 5 and July 6, 1968.

Before than the criticisms in the identification of the sources of fundings discussed in Chapter 4, however, the roots of such a failure, as well as of the slowness in the Law implementation, need to be searched first and foremost in the tenacious obstructionism that Lebanese entrepreneurial and business class systematically lifted to make shipwreck what was considered in their eyes, not only an undermining of their immediate sheer economic interests, but also, and above all, an outrageous act of lese-majesty. Soon after the entrance into force of the first part of the programs' provision, a wave of mass dismissals started to indistinctly hit the industrial and service sector, with the double scope to get rid of the labor surpluses preventing employers to maintain unaltered their margins of profit, and exercise political pressure to delay and renegotiate in their favor the terms for the implementation of the further steps of the program[334]. This was coupled by the equally politically-oriented organized boycott of the payment of the indemnities to the NSSF, as well as, whenever classical lobbying techniques failed to achieve success, to the selective use of strikes. Strikes and lobbying were widely used also to make shipwreck the timid attempts of reform of the import system which were hazarded in the first biennium of Franjiey's presidency. In 1971, a package of measures to protect the expanding national industry purposed by the newly appointed Minister Elias Saba, envisaging a rise in the custom duties for a number of imported goods, was ultimately withdrawn, after a threat of general strike by the powerful Beirut Merchant Association. The same destiny was reserved to the project of reform of the medicines' marketing purposed soon after by the Ministry of Health Emile Bitar, after a wave of massive mobilizations by the pharmaceutical importers cartel, culminating with the withdrawal from the market of vital medicines such as insulin[335].

The result was the inauguration of a decade of unprecedented labor unrests, which arrived to touch also those socio-professional categories, such as peasants and public employees, until that moment remained dormant.

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334 See: American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Airgram n° A3, Lebanese Economic Situation During the Week June 25 – July 1, 1967 (July 3, 1967), Arigram n° A-965, New Developments in Social Security (May 25, 1966), and Airgram n° A-101, Social Security Enforcement in North Lebanon (August 3, 1966).

335 See: Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 110-111, Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes Sociales au Liban*, 327-328 and *al-Ḥurriyyah*, n° 525, May 3, 1971.

II.II

Reorganizing leftwards, 'unifying' rightwards: pattern of unification of Lebanese labor movement

The activation of a massive wave of labor unrests, ran in parallel with a phase of equally hectic ferments within the ranks of Lebanese labor movement.

In late 1966, in the background of months of sharp tensions with the CGTL for his alleged too sympathetic attitude towards the Communist labor unions, PSP-backed Labor Minister Gen. Jamil Lahoud decided to grant license to the two major national leftist union federations, the ANM-dominated Federation of the South, and the Communist FENASOL (ex-FUWEL)[336]. This new state of the art naturally did not left indifferent the governmental and unionist conservative circles. Granting legal recognition to leftist labor forces, meant besides not only endowing them with the instruments to start reorganizing their operations on a stable base, but also, and more importantly, with the status to finally be able to compete on equal footing in the struggle for the political representation of workers. In the phase of concerned discussions which followed, a new conservative axis animated by the newly appointed, influent president of the NSSF Rida Wahid and the reformist troika Beshara-Tweini-Saqr soon emerged. Convening on the assumption that an effective long-term containment of leftist labor forces could not be achieved without a broader structural reform of Lebanese unionism, a number of talks to define a strategy of action started to be held on a regular base from the end of 1966. The first fruit of this convergence was the institution, in early 1967, of a Supreme Council of Labor Unions, an informal organization meant to gather the representative of all the nine licensed unions (including the leftist ones) and provide them with a platform «to exchange ideas and in the process take a measure of each other's goals and stature[337]». This was followed by the presentation in 1969 of a project of reform of Lebanese union system envisaging the reorganization of the unionist structure along industrial lines, under the coordination of a single national labor confederation. The spirit animating the two projects – and shared, here again, also by the US labor attachés

336 American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Airgram n° A-931, 'Minister Lahoud and the CLL general strike threat' (November 8, 1966)

337 American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Airgram n° A-910, 'Evolution of Labor Movement in 1967 and early 1968' (April 8, 1968)

– leveraged on the shared assumption that in the face of an increasingly restless base and leftist unions on the rise, it would have been much easier to keep under control workers' radicalization and leftist influence, by making converge labor dissent and organizations into the framework of a single State-supported union confederation which, legitimated to act and speak for the entirety of Lebanese workers by virtue of the inclusion within its ranks of the whole range of labor forces, would have been able to maneuver and canalize from above radical instances into moderate and systemic binaries.

The reasons to be concerned of a mass turning leftwards, were besides well stored. In the background of a wider regional growth and 'marxistization' (see infra, Chapter 9) of the Arab Nationalist Movement, accelerated by the disruptive political and ideological countercoups of the Naksah[338], in 1967, per initiative of Lebanese ANM, Communist Party and PSP, a Front of the Progressive Parties, Organizations, and Personalities was created, with the scope to offer a political platform to approach and make converge around a minimal common program the various souls composing Lebanese leftist and progressive spectrum. This was sided by the emergence of a radical student movement, whose turning towards marxism was being alimented also by the appearance of numerous books, pamphlets, and periodicals, which in students and intellectuals found a particularly receptive audience. Alongside, economic stagnation and crisis, were offering the right terrain for leftist labor forces to earn increasing credit among Lebanese workers. This included firs and foremost the emerging peasant movement which, along with increasingly politicized and radical stances, was also rapidly organizing and claiming recognition. At the same time, rapid industrialization was started producing an equally rapidly expanding mass of precarious and under-payed industrial unqualified workforce, so further cracking the delicate employment balance on which the relative labor peace of the previous decade had relied.

Re-organization along industrial lines was thought also by the conservative reformist block to erode the consensus of the old-guard. Entrenched in its personal rivalries, and by now not anymore able to work as effective dam against

338For a closer outlook on the ideological impact of Naksah on the Arab and Lebanese leftist forces, we send back to the brilliant Sune Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 497–512.

the left, old-guard conservative leadership started to be perceived as nothing more than a ballast from whom get rid. It was from the latter's side that the most firm opposition to the project of reform of Lebanese unionist structure was lifted. It was also from the latter's side that most firm opposition was lifted against the integration of leftist unions in the unification process. The latter, from their side, while for completely opposite reasons, were on the contrary looking with a certain favor to the process of unification, which was critically approached as yet a further strategic building block in the path towards the hegemonization of the labor movement. Furthermore, while in more decentralized terms, a project of reorganization of the national unionist structure on sectoral bases, had already been envisaged by the FENASOL and its allies. This offered the favorable framework to make the process of unification progress[339]. After moths of strenuous bargainings and confrontations, on the end of April 1970, the charter of CGTL was modified, allowing membership to all the nine existing union federations. Publicly formalized with a big celebration in the presence of prominent government representatives and the great founding fathers of Lebanese unionism in occasion of the forthcoming May 1[340], the specific form that this unification assumed, represented the result of a series of mutual compromises reflecting grosso modo the specific political weight that its three souls possesses. In particular, whereas leftists and reformist conservatives had to give up on the sectoral restructuring, the old guard, from its side, revoked its veto on the integration of the leftist federations. Reformist block had to give up also on the adoption of a system of proportional representation of the federations within the CGTL's decisional bodies, in favor of the maintenance of the existing egalitarian one[341]. Whatever the case, a new turn in the development of Lebanese labor movement had been marked.

339 For a detailed overview on the steps heading up to the unification see: American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Telegram n° R 231036Z, 'Lebanese Labor Unions Agree on Confederation" (April 23, 1970), Airgram n° A-213, 'Lebanese Labor Celebrates Labor "Uinity" Day' (May 12, 1970), Airgram n° A-261, 'Trade Union Unity' (June 11, 1970) and al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ aḷ-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah*, vol. II, 351-368. sl-Buwari offers also a detailed inshight on the approach of leftist unions to the unification process.

340 Le Jour, May 2, 1970

341 For the statute of the united CGTL see: *Fī al-Ittiḥād Kuwwah? Baḥaṯ fī Muškilāt al-Ittiḥād al-ʿUmmālī al-ʿĀm fī Lubnān*, (Beirut: Mokhtarat, 1999): 185-189

II.III

Change everything so that nothing changes: struggles, gains and constraints of the united CGTL

As during the latest stages of its making of, and in the immediate aftermaths of its concretization, the unification of Lebanese labor movement within the CGTL seemed barer of a net change in step with the past. Soon after its formalization, a list of common demands, tackling also a number crucial issues until that moment remained confined to the sole ranks of leftist unions, was adopted. This included a rise of the minimum wage proportional to the cost of living, the guarantee of application of the Social Security provisions, the abrogation of the Article 50 of the Labor Code, and the inclusion of peasants in the NSSF, as well as the adoption of measures to fight the rise of the inflation, protect the national industry and face the increasingly affecting housing problem[342]. In the meantime, thanks to the collective institutional mobilization within the framework of the Supreme Council, and the latter's close ties with Wahid and other high rank Ministry of Labor officers, in the previous couple of years, some gains had been able to be achieved, such as a rise in the minimum wage, and the enforcement of the inspections on arbitrary dismissals and Labor Code violations[343]. This had been sided by a comparatively high labor peace[344], so further contributing to keep high reformist block's optimism around the effectiveness of the path undertaken. Optimism was further reinforced after the unification, with the CGTL being able to earn, thanks to threats of general strike and the assiduous adoption of public and official stances addressed to the Government, a further rise in the general and minimum wages and the institution of an ad hoc governmental commission to take charge of the most incumbent socio-economic problems in a sole year[345]. Furthermore, strong of its 70.000 and increasingly growing represented workers, it became regularly involved in any process of decision making pertaining both the single and collective labor disputes, and the governmental social policies.

342American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Arigram n° A-201, Annual Labor Report 1970-1971 (July 12, 1971)

343American Embassy of Beirut, Airgram n° A-910.

344Confront: al-Buwari, *Tārīḫ al-Ḥarakah al-ʿUmmāliyyah wa al-Niqābiyyah*, vol. II, .

345L'Orient-Le Jour, May 23 and 25, June 24 and September 1, 1971.

The enthusiasms, however, were meant to be short-lived. As a result of the maintenance of a representative mechanism guaranteeing to any federation an equal number of votes regardless of their real representativeness, in the month of September, after a hotly-contested election which barely split CGTL's ranks, Gabriel Khouri succeeded to win the presidency of the Confederation[346]. This paved the way for the creation of a political short-circuit whereby if, on the one side, radical stances and practices became integral part of General Confederation's political discourse and modes of action, on the other, once succeeded – preferably under treat of a general strike – to open a bargaining table with the State, the . Furthermore, the meagre economic gains anyway extorted, started to be immediately sapped by merchants, for whom became a common practice to rise the prices at any wage increase. The result was an inexorable crisis of legitimacy of the CGTL, in favor of the transposition tout-court of labor conflict in the streets. This became particularly true for those categories of workers lacking – weather by virtue of legal constraints, such as peasants and teachers, or their later emergence on the employment and social scene, such as the new expanding industrial working-class – and which simultaneously represented the categories the most hardly affected by CGTL laxity on social issues, in whose regards CGTL did not have any mean of control and legitimacy than the force of their superimposed authority[347]. Their radicalization and dislocation was further fostered by the particularly harsh answer of the State towards their insubordinaiton. Lacking of any mean – including traditional leaders' political influence – Between 1970 and 1971, the mobilization of sharecroppers against absentee landlords and the mass evictions which were occurring alongside to left space to agro-capitalists inflaming the northern ʿAkkar plain since 1968, was sedated with a veritable military occupation of the area. Repression by police became also the privileged answer to the wave of wildcat strikes which since early 1970 had been inflaming the factories of Beirut, and which, as we will see in the following chapters, will left two corpses on the ground. Blood will be versed also in the South when, on January 1973, an army intervention to stop the occupation

346 American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Arigram n° A-236, Annual Labor Report 1971-1972 (August 29, 1972)

347 American Embassy of Beirut, Department of State, Airgram n° A-138, Annual Labor Report 1972-1973 (July 20, 1973)

of the Régie plant in Kfar Remmaneh by tobacco growers, will kill the young Ali Darwish and Muhammad [348].

On the eve of the war, attempts to regain a credibility through the adoption of a more radical attitude will be tried. This will bring also some gain on a social front, such as the inclusion of peasants on the NSSF and the partial reform of Article 50. None of them will be sufficient, however, to repair the fractures between workers and political leaderships.

348Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, 131–39 and Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 165–71.

Chapter 6

Where was industry going:
Early 1970s industrial development and its impact on Lebanese industrial employment

I
Towards a new industry. Patterns of industrial development on the eve of the 1970s

I.I
New markets, new investors, new productions: expansion and changes in the Lebanese industrial sector

As already quickly mentioned in Chapter 1, from the end of the 1960s Lebanese industrial sector entered a phase of comparatively timid, but constant expansion. While in facts its share in the GDP timidly rose from 13% to 15%, in the six years 1967-1973 alone, the value-added produced increased by 111,4%, passing from 492 million LBP to 1040 millions[349], and the amount of investments by at least 50%, passing from 990 million LBP to an estimated 1,5 billions[350]. Particularly impressive was the rise in the volume of the exports, which in the same time range passed from 87,4 million LBP in 1967, corresponding to about 6% of the national production, to 128,5 in 1968 and 446,3 millions in 1973, equivalent, in turn to 21,44% of the production[351]. This phase of expansion coincided also with the emergence of a timid, but nevertheless increasingly important, reconfiguration of the internal structure of Lebanese industrial production. As in facts the agri-food, textile and constructions-related (non-metallic minerals and furnitures) sectors kept on maintaining their historical lion's share, the industrial investments started to progressively switch towards more modern and specialized industrial sectors, such as the metallurgic, mechanical, chemical and pharmaceutical ones, impressing the first – while if still timid – changes on an internal structure which since the independence had remained pretty statical. In particular, if in the

349CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban' (Beyrouth, 1978), Tab. 6.

350The datas have been derived by multiple ministerial sources reported in Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth: première approche sociologique' (Beyrouth, 1974), 19 and Ibid., Annex 5, Tab. 3.

351 Ibid., 14 and Tab. 7.

quinquennium 1965-1970 the contribution of the three traditional sectors to the national industrial production registered a decrease by 2,6% against a rise of the wood/paper/chemical and metals/machineries/appliances sectors by 3,2%, the overall investments in the latter two sectors registered an increase by circa 58,3%, against the 23% of the former. While not corroborated by more detailed statistical datas, a certain structuralization of the trend can be deduced looking at the evolution of the volume of the exports per productive activity in the triennium 1970-1972 which saw the contribution of the wood/paper/chemical and metals/machineries/appliances sectors passing from 37,2% to 44,3%, arriving to equate the traditional sectors, out of an increase in value by 97%[352].

The roots and the trajectories of this double expansion, were largely determined by the combined effect of two conjunct – and, to a greater extent, conjunctural – phenomena. The first one, was the opening of the Arab Gulf and Levantine markets to the penetration of Lebanese goods, as a result of the closing of the Suez Canal after the Six Days war. The opening played a crucial role for what concerned both the expansion and the diversification of Lebanese industrial productions. In their quality of rapidly expanding economies in the midst of a construction boom, and increasingly in need of durable finished goods, their demand became in facts the main motor of Lebanese industrial expansion, as well as the main orienter of its diversification. The relation is testified from the fact that as by 1972 the Arab markets arrived to absorb Lebanese exports by 84,4%, the export share of the wood/paper/chemical and metals/machineries/appliances sectors, was at least the double than the one that they had on the internal market[353].

This two interdependent phenomena were further corroborated by the new strategy of subordination of Lebanese and Arab markets that the Western industrial capital started to adopt at the passage of the two decades. Thanks to the growing inter-Arab custom agreements and the cheap prices of the local workforce, indeed, the latter started to be progressively redefined around the substitution of selected imported western-produced finished durable goods with locally produced ones, strictly controlled or through the transfer of the technological means (licenses, brevets, productive processes, technical assistance)

352 CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', Annex 4, Tab. 2 and 5.

353 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', Tab. 3 and 8.

or components necessary for the production, either through joint ventures with local companies or, to a lesser extent, the direct opening of local branches. The final aim was to turn Lebanon, thanks to its favorable social, geographical, and economic context, into a dependent productive "relais" from which penetrate and control the rest of the regional markets with finished durable goods, while simultaneously closing to Lebanese entrepreneurs the new strategic assets that the opening of the Arab markets was offering. The facilities which Lebanon offered vis-a-vis the neighboring countries were, besides, significant. Together with the absence of protectionist policies, except for some light protections on the textile industry and cement industry, and the non-interference of the State on the national economic life, Lebanon could count on particularly advantageous fiscal policies in favor of new and innovative businesses, as well as on particularly advantageous initial requirements for what concerned the minimal initial capital and the employment of local workforce to open new industrial activities[354]. Furthermore, together with being member of the Arab Leagues' Inter-Arab Transit Convention, the country could count also specific commercial agreements with the most important neighboring States (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt), whereby if some industrial goods were totally exempted from custom duties, the latter could in general count on a set of reductions on the normal tariffs stretching between 25% and 33%[355].

The strategy revealed successful. As underlined by many observers, the export-oriented industrial sectors witnessing the highest growth rate per volume and value, coincided with the ones were Western investments were more intense[356]. A

354 The complete list of legal requirements and facilities affecting Lebanese industrial sectors can be found in André Mesropian, 'Strategie et Politique de Developpement Industriel: l'expérience du Liban 1950-1972',(UNIDO, 1973), 17-23 and UNIDO, Industrial Deveopment in the Arab Countries', Selected documents presented to the Symposium on Industrial Development in the Arab Countries Kuwait, 1-10 March 1966 (UN 1967), 109-111. Among the most significant ones, we signal a regime of fiscal exemptions from the payment of taxes on income, real estate and transfers for a period of five years since the establishment of the firm (extended to ten-years if the enterprise is located in peripheral areas), subordinated to an initial investment of I million LBP and a minimal amount of salaries to guarantee to the personnel, regardless of the position, of 150.000 LBP per year (i.e. grosso modo the equivalent of the legal minimum wage for 55 employees), and the absence of a specific tax regime for the industries.

355 UNIDO, 1973, 14.

356 CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', Tab. 7, 8 and 9.

good example in this sense, arrives looking at that group of eleven single products (outer garments, iron and steel bars, super phosphates, cement, carpets pharmaceuticals, cables, wooden furnitures, shoes,) which alone contributed to the whole value added of Lebanese exports by more than 50%. With regards to the cement and cables, for instance, the two leading companies in the sector (Societé des Ciments Libanaises, Liban Cables) were associated with the Swiss Holderbank Group, and the French Le Cables de Lyon and USA Phelps Dodge respectively. The same could be said for the pharmaceutical industries. If the rest of the exports remained constituted by textile-leather and, to a lesser extent, food products, the latter were analogously dragged by those productions (diary products for the food sector, and confections, knitted material, synthetic fabrics for the textile one) where the control of Western capitals was more marked[357]. It is also worth of mention that, in the face of an import of the industrial inputs by almost 60%, and concentrated precisely in favor of the developing sectors, about 75% of Lebanese imports came from the Western block, as well as 90% of the machineries, electronic devices and transport material destined to the industry[358].
While not having at our disposal detailed facts and figures, an idea of the share of western capitals in Lebanese industries can be derived looking at some of the scarce studies and enquiries published in the mid-1970s on Lebanese industrial environment. Looking at two enquiries published in 1974 and 1975 by L'Orient Le Jour[359] on the state of Lebanese industry, out of new 15 enterprises taken as a model of development and innovation, at least three envisaged a technical cooperation with Western companies, and two represented Western companies' local branches. A pretty similar ratio between local and Western capital was registered also by Salim and Marlene Nasr in their enquiry on the big industries of the Beiruti eastern banlieue, where out of 26 enquired establishments, six were associated to Western companies trough brevet licensing, technical cooperation or joint venture, and three were local branches of western industries[360]. Significant

357 Catherine Paix, "LA PORTÉE SPATIALE DES ACTIVITÉS TERTIAIRES DE COMMANDEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE AU LIBAN," *Revue Tiers Monde* 16, no. 61 (1975): 170.

358 CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', 22-23.

359 L'Orient-Le Jour, Weekly Supplement "Special Industrie", Unknown Number, 1974, and Unknown Number, February, 21-28, 1975.

360 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 71-72.

was also the contribution of the Arab non-Lebanese capital, which owned one quarter of the Nasers' enquired industries[361]. In both cases, the parallel capacity of Lebanese entrepreneurship and the traditional industrial activities to innovate could be seen – a capacity which, as we will see in the following sections, will also play an important part on the restructuring of Lebanese industrial employment.

I.II
Changes and innovations in the Lebanese traditional sectors: developmental patterns in the food and textile industry

Together with the reconfiguration of the internal structure of Lebanese industrial sector, the opening of the Gulf markets and the patterns of penetration of Western industrial capital played a prominent role also for the internal reconfiguration of the internal structure of the two traditional and still dominant food and textile sectors. Their impact was significant in particular for what concerned the textile sector. Dragged since its earliest establishment in the 1930s by the domestic-oriented production of semi-finished goods, and most notably by cotton yarns and fabrics, in the first half of the 1960s Lebanese textile sector had entered a veritable crisis. As, in facts, the dominant cotton weaving activities reached stagnation, the whole sector entered a phase of recession, to the point that, in 1967, it came to be (timidly) subsidized. The situation drastically changed with the opening of the Gulf markets. Thanks to the growing demand of textile finished goods, and most notably of garments and, to a lesser extent, carpets, a new wave of massive investments coalesced in the sector, leading up to a veritable rebirth for what concerned both its general turnover and its internal specific structuring. With regards to the last aspect, the most important change consisted in the shifting of the towing sectoral activity from spinning and waving to confectioning. Whereas, in facts, by 1972, garments and carpets became the respectively the first and fifth single industrial products per export value, contributing alone to the overall value of the Lebanese textile exports by 98%[362], the waving and spinning industry recovered and reconverted their productions according to the new needs that those two industries set up. Between 1968 and 1972, for instance, in the face of a

361 Ibid., 76.

362 Ibid., Tab. 8 and 9.

decrease in the production of pure cotton yarns by about 62%, the production of woolen ones increased by 110%, and that of synthetic yarns by 64,5%[363]. The dimensions of this restructuring in terms of turnover were besides more than significant. After a quinquennium of recession, between 1965 and 1970 the volume of investment in the textile industry increased by about 100%, and the value added produced by 40%. As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, part of those investments was debtor also in this case to the penetration of Western industrial capital. With regards to the clothing sector where its presence was particularly intense, one of the privileged forms which assumed, was the subcontracting of the confectioning to local establishments. By the early 1970s, brands like Pierre Cardin, Lanvin, Loius Féraud, Ted Lapidus, could count on an established Lebanese-based production of this kind. It must be noted that in this process of revitalization and innovation, the contribution of the capacity of adaptation of Lebanese entrepreneurs to the new market exigencies remained anyway substantial. This was true in particular for the long-rooted weaving and spinning activities, which in the same period witnessed, together with a general modernization of their equipments and productive techniques, also an increasing internal integration of the spinning-weaving (and in some cases also confectioning) activities, and the emergence of pioneering regional excellences such as the production of industrial fabrics.

I.III
A two-fold development: the articulation of early 1970s industrial development in the craft and industrial sectors

As underlined by Salim Nasr, the modes through which the process of expansion and diversification of Lebanese industry articulated, moved along two distinct and radically different binaries. The first one was that of the small craft production. In effect, despite between 1964 and 1970 the average number of workers per

363Cfr. IBRD and IDA, Report n° 162a-LE *"Current Economic Position and Prospects of Lebanon"*, July 25, 1973, Tab. 8.1 and L'Orient Le Jour, Supplement 'Special Industrie', Unknown number, 1974, p.41.

industrial establishment with more than 25 employees passed from 85 to 105[364], on the eve of the Civil War small-craft production still occupied a significant position in Lebanese secondary sector. In particular, with its 15.699 workshops, small-craft industry still kept on accounting for about one third of the industrial production, generated 40% of its value added, and employed 42% of the waged industrial workforce, as well as about the half of the overall employed in the secondary sector[365]. Such a persistence over time, however, hardly represented the symptom of the presence of a healthy craftsmanship or semi-craftsmanship, able to find a solid market positioning walking on his own legs. On the contrary, it was the ultimate gasping re-configuration of a manufacturer sector continuously reshaped by the imbalanced interaction between craftsmen individual entrepreneurial initiative and possibilities, and the increasingly stringent Damocles' sward of indebtedness, concurrence and bankruptcy. With regards to the first half of the 1970s, most of their survival came to be dependent from the affirmation of a new system of labor division with the big industry, which consolidate alongside the expansion whereof we have given notice in the previous paragraph, i.e. the growing recourse of big industries to the subcontracting of part of their productive processes to the small workshops. Clothing industry represented in this sense both a bridgehead and a paradigmatic example. As long as garments demand exponentially grew, indeed, the production started to increasingly rely on the much cheaper subcontracting of the confectioning to home based "invisible" small productive units, arriving to employ an estimated overall working army of 150.000 workers[366]. The reasons for this reliance were pretty easy to sense. Subcontract part of the productive process meant in facts escape taxes on revenues and workforce, answer to the changing demand needs without the necessity to invest in new machines and personnel. At

364CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', Tab. 31.

365Salim Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism," *MERIP Reports*, no. 73 (December 1978): 10, https://doi.org/10.2307/3012262.. For further figures on Lebanese artisanal or semi-artisanal sector see Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, Tab. 4.2, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6. With the small-craft production we are here indicating the enterprises employing less than 25 workers.

366Cfr. Interview to Puzant Markarian in L'Orient-Le Jour, Weekly Supplement "Special Industrie", Unknown number, 1974, 44. Major textile entrepreneur, Markarian owned, among other businesses, the most important fully-Lebanese clothing industry, the MANCY s.a.l..

the same time it meant download on craftsmen's shoulders all the risks of the business cycle, while simultaneously creating an economic environment legitimating the maintenance of law regular wages.

If for the artisanal sector the industrial development of the 1970s translated in its subordinating integration in the big industry, for the latter it reified through the consolidation of that process of productive and capital concentration in a restricted number of big industrial firms, and for specific branches, whose symptoms had already manifested in the previous decades. The degree of concentration reached was besides impressive. According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Beirut, in 1973 the twenty bigger national industrial firms arrived to account alone for 50% of the total national production. Looking at the phenomenon more broadly, an industrial census conducted two years before, underlined how the establishments with more than 25 workers, i.e. about just 3% of the total, guaranteed alone 67,1% of the national production, 60,3% of the value-added, and the employment of 76% of the waged workers of the sector, against a contribution of the establishments with less than five workers, equivalent to about 73% of the total, of 7,5%, 11% and 4%[367]. This process of capital concentration in further testified by the exponential rise of the industrial public limited companies (SAL) as preferred form of ownership among the big industries over the (anyway still dominant) individual one, and their turnover which, passing from 61 to 228 within the space of ten years, came to absorb by the triennium 1971-1973, about 37% of the overall industrial investments. Particularly impressive was also the productive concentration per productive branch. With regards to the new developing sectors, for instance, one establishment retained all the production of electric cables, three establishments 80% of the production of laminated metal products and bars, three enterprises 65% of the veneered and plywood, and thee and two industries the production 100% and 90% of non-cosmetic powders and soaps respectively. With regards to the developing exports-dragged productions in the textile and agri-food sectors, 64% of the production of garments was in the hand of three enterprises, 95% of the diary products was provided by a single establishment, and 84% of carpets was produced by three establishments. Finally, with regards to the inward-oriented productions of the traditional sectors, all the production of sugar and cement was retained by three industries each, three industries guaranteed 94% of the spinning and waving of

367 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, Tab. II.7 and II.8.

cotton, three industries the half of the spinning and weaving of wool, and two industries 100% and 90% of the production of beer and dry legumes respectively[368]. This concentration moved also along familial binaries.

The last terrain on which industrial concentration consolidated, was the geographical one. Despite the attempts of decentralization promoted through the tax holidays, in facts, Beirut and its banlieue still hosted in 1972 about 75% of Lebanese enterprises, followed with a significant gap by Tripoli with its 11%, and the remaining marginal share distributed more or less homogeneously among the rest of the provinces. It is worth of mention that, notwithstanding the fiscal exemptions, such a concentration had even increased throughout the years, as testified by the industrial census of 1964[369], where the industries of Beirut and banlieue registered accounted for about 66% of the total. Shaping this concentration per productive activity, Greater Beirut 75% included, along with the totality of the metallic mineral national industries, 61% of the national agri-food industry, 67% of the wood/furniture one, 57% of the rubber and petrochemical altogether, 81% of the textile/clothes/shoes manufacturing, 78% of the leather excluding shoes, 89% of the paper/printing sector, and 77% of the non-metallic mineral production[370]. Comparing the data with that of the indusrtial census of 1964, it can be seen that the major push behind this growth, was the coalescing on Greater Beirut of the developing modern industrial sectors. Greater Beirut represented also the great expanding core of Lebanese big industry, hosting in sole Eastern and Southern suburbs 43% of the establishments with more than 100 employees. With regards to the wood/furniture, non-metallic mineral, petrochemical and textile sector, most of the remaining share was absorbed by Tripoli which, since those four productions constituted about 85% of its industrial geography, witnessed a more specialized industrial profile. Tripoli, furthermore, hosted some of the biggest national industries per both number of employees and productive turnover, such as the already mentioned Societé des Ciments Libanaises, and the subordinated Societé Libanaise des Ciments Blancs, or, with the regards to the textile industry, the Aritex s.a.l. spinning and weaving plant of

368Cfr Dubar and Nasr, Tab. II.9.and CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', Annex 9.

369CERMOC, 'État et Perspectives de l'Industrie au Liban', Annex 6, Tab. 5 and 6.

370Ibid., Tab.6. The proportions relative to 1972 are derived by the datas provided by Social Security.

the ʿArida family. What was left of the remaining sectors, and particularly of the agri-food processing, was distributed in roughly equal shares among the remaining cazas. Anyway, with the exception of some spare while relevant examples of big mechanized industries such as the Régie transformation plant in Kfar Remmaneh (caza of Nabatiyyeh, South Lebanon), or the sugar factory of ʿAnjar (Beqaʿa), the latter remained by average pretty small and scarcely specialized and mechanized, so contributing to the overall productivity and industrial employment only with a very marginal share.

II
Changing industries, changing industrial workforce: the impact of 1970s industrial development on the structure of Lebanese industrial employment

II.I
Expanding industry, expanding industrial workforce: patterns of growth of Lebanese industrial employment

Early 1970s industrial development and its modes of articulation, naturally had important consequences on the dimensions and the internal structure Lebanese industrial employment. According to the two major surveys on Lebanese active population, between 1960 and 1970, the number of employed in the manufacturer sector, passed from about 60.000 to 95.535 effectives, out of a share in the national employment structure rising from 12% of the active population to 17%. In particular, following an average yearly growth by about 5%, between 1960 and 1970, the number of waged workingmen directly engaged in production, passed from about 50.403 to 73.175, to then jump, as a corollary of the parallel exports booming, to 113.000 in 1973 (+18% per year!)[371]. Shaping this growth per productive activity, the sectors witnessing the fastest expansion, unsurprisingly coincided with the developing metallic/mechanic and wood/furniture manufacturing. Whereas in facts the former saw within the space of a decade its effectives quadruplicating, and its share in the composition of the national industrial

371 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 24-25.

employment passing from 8% to 20%, the latter' effectives increased from their side by three times, witnessing their share passing from 2,7% to 6,7%. Slightly above the average was also the growth of the industrial employment in the agri-food sector which, in the face of a doubling of its effectives in the same time range (8443 workers in 1960 against 17131 in 1970), saw its share passing from 16,7% to 22,7%. A particular case was that of textile industry whose effectives, after have drastically fallen from 11.354 to 8.084 in the first half of the sixties, also thanks to the towing of clothing, in the following quinquennium literally doubled, bringing again the share of the sector to the 1960 levels (20,7%). What registered a significant decrease was instead the industry of non-metallic minerals which, despite a contribution to the national industrial production sensibly rising from 9% to 10%, as a result of the mechanization of the sector, witnessed its effectives fall from 7.359 in 1964 to 2.651 in 1970, passing from 12% of the share to a meagre 3,6%[372].

Mirroring again the articulation of the industrial development, it was the expanding and increasingly concentrating big industry to drag and supersede – and hence to absorb – the expansion of the industrial workforce. Looking at the workingmen distribution per establishments' size, in 1964 the establishments with more than 25 employees, occupied about 43% of Lebanese industrial population – whereof 33% concentrated in the industries with more than 50 employees –, with the remaining 57% employed by the artisanal or semi-artisanal sector. By 1971, the two proportions literally reverted. As, in facts, the number of workers employed in the artisanal and semi-artisanal sector decreased to 42%, the number of employed in the industries with more than 25 employees rose to 57%, out of an average number of employees per establishment rising from 85 to 105[373]. The trend, then, tended to further consolidate in the following years. In its enquiry on the industrial population of the 26 establishments with more than 100 employees of the eastern suburbs of Beirut, Salim Nasr recorded how, in the sole biennium 1971-1973, the number of effectives increased by 25%, for an average number of employed in each plant of 272 workers. It must be underlined that, given the growing imbalance in the capital and productive concentration characterizing the development of the big industry, the specific weight of the expansion of single

372 Ibid., Tab. 38.

373 Cfr. André Mesropian, *Strategie et Politique de Developpement Industriel,* Tab. V; Ibid., Tab. 13 and Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 10.

industrial plants played a major role. Looking at the textile sector, for instance, the sole cotton spinning and weaving Filature Nationale de Coton (Esseily), which already in 1970 employed alone about 20% of the effectives of the sector, in the following quadrennium saw its workers rise from about 1000 to 1400. Another example was the Gandour chocolate and sweets factory which, with the inauguration of its second branch in 1970, within the space of a single year, saw its effectives passing from 250 to 1350, absorbing in this way about 18% of the workers in the food sector. It must be also noted that, as a further symptom of the structuralization of the phenomenon, while not having detailed national surveys posterior to 1970, the exponential acceleration of the industrialization process so articulated, was impressing a change in the national employment structure much deeper than the industrialization of the 1960s. According to some estimations immediately prior to the outbreak of the war, by 1980, Lebanese industrial population would have arrived to represent 40% of the national actives. The outbreak of the conflict on 1975, drastically interrupted the process. However, the bases for the consolidation of a modern industrial working-class had been laid.

II.II
From periphery to periphery: geographical origin and residential collocation of Lebanese new industrial working-class

Mirroring the geographical concentration of the industrial establishments, it was in Beirut and its suburbs that, by arriving to provide alone about 80% of the workplaces in the sector, industrial employment concentrated. Notwithstanding the decline of small-craftsmanship, the overwhelming majority of the new working-class was recruited among the army of rural migrants that, as seen in Chapter 3, reversed in the capital as a result of the inexorable disaggregation of the rural world. The net predominance of workers of rural origin clearly emerges looking at the already mentioned enquiry conducted by Salim and Marlene Nasr on the workers of the big industry of Beirut's eastern banlieue. Out of 7070 workers employed in the 26 recorded establishments, the workers of rural origin represented 78% of the total, against a meagre 18% native of Beirut and banlieue. In particular, the largest share was composed by the workers of the two districts of

the Beqaʿa (30,2%) and South Lebanon (17,8%), soon followed by Mount Lebanon (21,7%), and a relatively seizable minority coming from North Lebanon (8,3%). The enquiry underlined also how, among the workers from Mount Lebanon, their villages of origin mostly coincided with those external caza (Chouf, Jbeil) only marginally touched by that touristic and commercial reconversion which had guaranteed to the region a level of development and wealth second only to Beirut[374].

Exception made for the Beqaʿa/South Lebanon proportion, Nasr and Nasr's rural/Greater Beirut ratio and the regional sub-shares, reiterated grosso modo the general demographic composition of the residents of Beirut suburbs emerged in the PAL survey in 1970[375]. The predominance of the Beqaʿa over the South Lebanon, was strictly related to the specific geographical patterns along which rural migration to the capital articulated. As, in facts, for reasons of geographical proximity and inter-migrant networks, migrants from South Lebanon mostly installed and worked in the Southern suburbs and its factories, Beqaʿa migrants on the contrary mostly concentrated in the eastern one, becoming therefore the main workforce basin for the industries of the area. The reasons lied to a greater extent on their comparatively later migration to the capital, and on the extended-family

374 The peripheral origin of the residents in Beirut and banlieue natives of Mount Lebanon is testified also by the PAL survey, where, out of 64.755 recorded residents original from the region, 59.715 (i.e. 92%) were reported to come from rural areas. Cfr. PAL, vol. II, Tab. 12.05b.

375 PAL survey estimated the percentage of the Lebanese residents in the banlieue of Beirut to 84%, according to the following regional sub-quotas: 37,3% from Mount Lebanon, 27,7% from South Lebanon, 13% from the Beqaʿa and 5,7% from North Lebanon. It must be noted, however, that the main criteria assumed in the survey for the attribution of the residents' origin was the registration in the respective electoral districts which, being bounded back to the citizens' ancestry as frozen by the 1932 census, and including Beirut suburbs in the electoral district of Mount Lebanon, makes the results obtained for the two percentages scarcely representative. Taking into account the incidence of the sons of the non-Grand Beirut natives installed by less than twenty years on the residents of the suburbs classified by the PAL survey as "non-migrants", thus, the series can be readjusted as follows: 74% of Beirut suburbs' Lebanese residents of non-Greater Beirut origin, whereof 28% from Mount Lebanon (18,5% of the total), 43% from South Lebanon (27,7% of the total), 20% from the Beqaʿa (13% of the total), and 8,7% from North Lebanon (5,7% of the total). Cfr. PAL vol. II Tab. 22.16 for the first statistical series, while for the second Ibid., Tab. 22.15, 22.17, and 22.18. The fertility rate employed for the readjustment, is the one calculated by the World Bank for the year 1960 (5.7).

modalities through which the latter articulated. This worked as push factor to find a residency in the less saturated, but rapidly urbanizing, eastern area of the metropolitan city, which could offer more space to settle. This migratory pattern is testified by the high concentration of co-villagers and extended families that Nasr and Nasr registered among the Beqaʿawi new residents of the eastern suburbs. Particularly paradigmatic was the case of the Zaaitriyeh clan, originally from villages of Chaat and Riha, whose first installments at the edges of the woods of Fanar hills, turned within the space of few years into a veritable self-centered village within the village. Generally less localized was instead the settlement of Mount Lebanon migrants. Consisting, until the end of the 1940, into mostly Christian spare villages satellite to the Beirut, the old urban centers of the fourteen eastern municipalities progressively incorporated into Greater Beirut metropolitan city, such as Fanar, Zalqa, Bouchareih, Bourj Hammoud, Dikwaneh, Mkalles, Sin el-Fil, Jdeideh represented the nodes – as much as their southern suburbs counterparts – around which the urbanization of the area developed. When mass rural migratory waves started, if Muslim migration tended to coalesce around specific self-centered 'islands' in the expanding inter-village nooks, Mount Lebanon mostly Christian migration tended instead to coalesce at the edges of the historical villages' centers, so distributing itself into homogeneous and less self-centered equal shares among all the municipalities. Localized and village and extended-family dragged was also the migration from the South, which, in the eastern banlieue, found its major dock was represented by the locality of Nabaa[376]. Related to the articulation of the internal migratory routes was also the relatively general scarce share of migrants from North Lebanon which, while counting some of the most deprived areas of the country also comparatively to the South and the Beqaʿa, found in Tripoli their natural dock. It must be noted that, notwithstanding a significant presence of Palestinian residents in the Beirut and above all in the banlieue, as well as of Syrians, the share of non-Lebanese working in industry remained quite marginal (4%). Contrary to the internal migrants, in facts, their reabsorption in the secondary sector remained mostly confined to the more exploitative construction and artisanal workshops, whereby their legal vulnerability made them a reserve of cheap workforce much more 'precious' than the Lebanese counterpart. The modes of articulation of the internal migratory

376 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 47-50.

patterns reflected also in the high concentration of workers belonging the same extended family according to the place of origin. Looking at the Nasr and Nasr survey, for instance, out of a 15,3% of enquired workers belonging to the same families, the latter were mostly constituted by the workers of rural origin coming from the Beqaʿa (88%), and to a lesser extent from rural Mount Lebanon[377]. The same phenomenon was registered also by Malik Abisaab among the workers of rural origin (mostly from South Lebanon) employed at the Règie transformation plant in the Southern Suburbs of Chiah, as well as by Lucien Beorouti for what concerned the workers of the Societé Libanaise des Ciments in Chekka.

In effects, as it was distance to characterize the spatial relation between workers' place of origin and the locus of their new productive life in the capital, it was on the contrary adjacency to characterize the one between the latter and their new place of residency. As testified by the PAL survey, out of 33.600 banlieue residents working in industry, 62,9% worked in the banlieue itself, 24% in the industries within the Beirut's perimeter, and 5% in the industry of Mount Lebanon which, as for the Beiruti ones, in the majority of cases where anyway located at the edges of the banlieue (es. Corniche el-Nahar and Karantina in the eastern periphery, Mussaitbeh in the southern one)[378]. Along with 77% of workers living and working within Beirut, then, working in the banlieue was also 12% of industrial workers resident in the capital's perimeter, whose neighborhoods and factories also in this case edged anyway the banlieue ones[379]. The dimensions of this closeness are testified also looking at the percentage of residents of Beirut and banlieue employed in industry which, in the face of a national average of 17,8%, if for the former corresponded to the national average, for the latter rose up to 30%[380], i.e. almost the double. It must be noted that, especially in the banlieue, the sub-sectors witnessing a higher concentration of big establishments, witnessed also a concentration of residents employed in industry higher than banlieue average. Looking at the comparatively higher industrialized eastern suburbs, for instance, the residents employed in industry were at least 35%. The latter, then, concentrated in particular in the more densely industrialized areas of Bourj Hammoud, Mkalles, Sin el-Fil and Bauchariеh, which coincided also with the most

377 Ibid., 118-124.

378 PAL., vol. II, Tab. 22.34.

379 Ibid., Tab. 21.34.

380 Ibid., Tab. 21.34 and 22.34.

densely populated areas[381]. With regards to the southern suburbs, instead, some of the highest concentration of working-class residents coalesced in the Chiah neighborhood and the neighboring Ghobeiri, and particularly in the surroundings of the Gandour factory, which hosted also other big and long-rooted industrial establishments such as the already mentioned Règie transformation plant, or the Kasrajan.

II.III
Young, men, rural-origined: age, gender and sectarian composition of the new working-class

Following the sectarian geography of the country and its internal migratory routes, it were Muslims, and particularly the Shia, to represent the majority of Lebanese industrial workforce. It must be noted that, contrary to a certain rooted prejudice, the differential gap in Christian/Muslim ratio, was in absolute terms less sharper than what usually perceived. Looking at the workers of the eastern banlieue of Beirut, for instance, the percentage of Muslim workers was estimated at 55%, whereof 44% Shia, against a 45% made by Christians. The ratio sharpened instead shaping the sectarian composition of the industrial workforce according to the professional qualification and the employment status. As in facts 75% of the Muslims employed was made of non-qualified workers, against a meagre 4% employed in the superior cadres, among the Christians qualified workers represented 65% of the total, whereof 19% employed in the superior cadres, and a 13% as professional workers and technicians. The same predominance was recorded also by Lucien Beirouti[382] in its enquiry among the workers of the Societé Libanaise des Ciments of Chekka, which also registered how the overwhelming majority of the employed Muslims was markedly concentrated among the non-qualified workforce. It is in this sectarian division of labor that the particularly the over-perception of Muslims among the industrial workforce finds its roots. With regards to the division itself, instead, four main reasons can be tracked. The first one was the comparatively later integration of Muslims population in the

381 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 36.

382 Beirouti, Lucien, *Premiere Approche de l'Ouvrier d'Industrie au Liban* (Université Libanaise – Publications du Centre de Recherches de l'Institut des Sciences Sociales, 1969)

industrial labor, which implied as a corollary a retard in the career advancements or the acquisition of a specialization. This represented also a further important element superseding the general under-representation of Sunna among the industrial population, insofar as their landing to industrial labor started to reach relatively 'mass' dimensions only from the early 1970s. The second element has to be searched in the higher level of education of the Christian population, which acted as a major discriminant for their access to white-collar positions. This privileged access, then, was further reinforced by the same religious belonging with the factory owners which, as stressed again by Nasr and Nasr, as a result of the still significant importance of family, sect and client relations, still played a significant role. The last one was represented by the particularly low average age of the new industrial – and, as we have seen, Mostly muslim – unqualified workforce, which further retarded career advancements and the acquisition of a specialization[383].

In effects, the average age of Lebanese industrial working-class characterized itself for being particularly low. Looking at the PAL survey, in facts, 35% of the Lebanese industrial working-class was under twenty-five years old (whereof about 4% under the fifteen years)[384], representing, together with agriculture, the sole productive sector where the under-25 section overcame the 25-34 one. The reason was related to two main factors. The first one was the combination between large size of the familial nucleus of belonging, and the latter low income, which thus put the sons in the necessity to contribute to the family income already since an early age. The second one, as we will better see in the next chapter, was the tendency of employers to mostly recruit young workers, so to keep on maintaining the average salaries low. Industrial working-class witnessed also a marked majority of male workers over female ones. Whereas the former represented in facts 90% of the total, the latter were instead only 10%, equivalent to 19,8% of the female active population. It must be underlined that female industrial employment remained in average much younger and unqualified that the male one. Looking at the eastern banlieue, 40% of female workingwomen was under twenty years old. If male unqualified workers represented 58% of the total, among the female workers it represented instead 75%. It must be noted that female workforce was highly concentrated in specific industrial branches. To give

383Ibid., 115-117

384PAL., vol.II, Tab. 14.10.

some examples, 82,6% of female workingwoman was employed in the clothing sector[385]. A high percentage of women was employed also in the agri-food sector, where they almost equated male workforce – a concentration, which will make them actors of primary importance in the struggles which will inflame Lebanese industrial environment on the eve of the Civil War.

385PAL, vol. II, Tab. 14.2.

Chapter 7

Inside the factory:

Labor conditions in early 1970s big industry

I

New industries, old practices: hiring, firing and paying in the early 1970s big industry

I.I

Exasperating extrovertion, exasperating exploitation: employment and wage policies in early 1970s big industry

In the mid-1960s, Samir Khalaf had registered how since the enactment of the Labor Code, Lebanese entrepreneur had generally provided «relatively very little way in extending his obligation towards the worker, or in protecting worker's rights and dignity as a human being», such as by «changing the general conditions of employment, either through wage administration schemes or through any of the other conventional measures designed to guarantee the stability of the employment[386]». Such a tendency had been particularly marked among industrial employers, whose general ideological propensity towards immediate profits, combined with a particularly porous legislation, and an ever-growing industrial reserve army from whom constantly pick up new cheap workforce, offered the ideal ingredients for keeping, in the name of higher profits, wages and labor protections at the lowest level possible. Ten years later, the situation had not only slightly changed, but had possibly even worsened. Despite the expansion and the annexed productive modernization that the sector underwent, in facts, employment and labor policies kept on being solidly structured around an increasingly exploitative extraction of plus-value from the industrial workforce, finding its main bulk on the maintenance of the average

386Samir Khalaf, "Industrialization and Industrial Conflict in Lebanon," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 8, no. 1 (January 3, 1967): 32, https://doi.org/10.1177/002071526700800106.

wages constantly at the edges of the legal minimum, and a veritable "consuming and waste" short-term replacement of unskilled laborers from the mass of young workers entering every year the job market. The dimensions of this intensification clearly emerge looking first at the variation in the value added/variable capital ratio, and in the output per worker produced from 1964 onwards. By 1974, in the face of an increase in the average wage by 47%, the output per worker produced increased by 70%. Similarly, despite a significant portion of the industrial investments was canalized in mechanization, the exploitation rate per worker passed from 171% to 204%, with an increase by about 20%[387]. A further symptom was the progressive rapprochement between average wages and legal minimum wage. Whereas in 1964 the two were of about 200 LBP. and 145 LBP per month respectively, with a differential gap by %, ten years later the two arrived to equate at about 317 LBP per month, alongside a cost of living which, since 1967 had more than doubled[388].

Two structural factors contributed and superseded to its modes of articulation. The first one was the still dominantly unspecialized and mercantilist nature of Lebanese industrial production. Highly dependent on the market fluctuations, and mostly relying on unskilled, and hence easily replaceable, workforce, this nature induced the emergence and the consolidation of an employment structure within the factory made of a restricted permanent and stable nucleus of specialized workers, and a mass of unspecialized workforce temporarily transiting or circulating among the various industrial branches or enterprises in expansion or contraction[389]. This labor division is testified by the ratio between permanent and daily waged workers, and the average working-age in the same company according to the employment status characterizing industrial employment. According to the PAL survey, the waged industrial workingmen classified as "daily", i.e. not payed on a stable monthly base, were estimated in 1970 at about 60% of the total[390]. Similarly, out of about 80% of the overall unspecialized workforce surveyed by Nasr and Nasr made up by workers employed in the same

387Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 11.

388Clarke, *Labor Law and Practice in Lebanon.*, Appendix D; Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War," December 1978, 11; Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 160–61.

389Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 153.

390Cfr. PAL, vol. II, Tab. 14.06a.

enterprise by less than five years, against a 65% of the overall specialized ones made by employed by more than five years, 95% of the former had had at least one professional movement, against a sole 20% among the latter[391]. The above mentioned peculiarities of Lebanese industry explain also the apparently paradoxical inverted impact that mechanization had on the pressure on workforce. As extensively analyzed by Toufic Gaspard[392], in facts, its implementation did not acted as the harbinger of a shift of the main source of profit extraction in favor of the empowerment of productivity, but rather as «a compensation for the poor skills engaged in manufacturing activity», which represented themselves «the main source of growth in manufacturing[393]».

The second structural factor was represented by the deficiencies of Lebanese labor legislation. Those deficiencies impacted on both wages and employment policies. We have already seen in Chapter 4 how the Labor Code left in the hands of employers a particularly ample space of maneuver to hire and fire workforce in function of their sole needs and desiderata. Short-term workforce replacement was further encouraged by the exemption for employers to pay separation indemnities to the workers employed by less than a documentable continuous year. The same law, then, by excluding workers under twenty years of age from the provision obliging employers to pay workers no less then the legal minimum monthly wage, offered a further expedient to exploit them during the vigor of their youth, to then «expel or reduce them so to pick again in the mass of thousands of young workers entering every year the job market[394]». The policy was pretty clear. The younger the worker was, the lower was the salary perceived. This pressure downwards walked also along marked gender binaries. In effect, despite the principle of equal pay for equal work enshrined by the Labor Code, on the eve of the Civil War female workforce was still payed at least one third less than their male counterpart. Female workforce was also significantly more unqualified. According to Nasr and Nasr, qualified workers made about % of the male workforce, among workingwomen the rate did not overcame %. This double gap

391 Nasr and Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', Annex , 51.

392 Gaspard, *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002*, 2004, 120–38.

393 Gaspard, 148.

394 Salim and Marlene Nasr, 'Les Travailleurs de la Grand Industrie dans la Banlieue-Est de Beyrouth', 153.

finds its explanation in the different approach to industrial labor which characterized female and male workforce. Whereas in facts for the male one it generally represented a more or less long step within the framework and the perspective of a whole working-life, on the contrary for the female workforce it mostly represented nothing but a parenthesis between adolescence and marriage, and usually only whenever the family needs required the contribution of all the active members to the household income. This turned them into a particularly precious reserve of docile, easy exploitable and naturally "expiring" workforce for the industrial employers which, especially for those sectors requiring – precisely as for the textile one – low skills and physical force, did not hesitate to prefer them to their male counterparts. The propensity towards young workforce was further encouraged by their civil status, insofar as, being generally unmarried, it discharged employers also from the payment of the family allowances.

The rootedness of those practices and their impact on the pressure downwards of the industrial salaries, emerges looking at the relation between average wage, specialization and employment status of the industrial workforce per industrial branch. In the comparatively highly specialized mechanical sector, for instance, where the percentage of male and, exceptionally, of permanent workers markedly exceeded that of the daily ones, in the mid-1960s average wages exceeded the legal minimum by about 50%, and the ones of specialized workers by about 80%. Conversely, in the textile and even more clothing sector, where the female and unspecialized waged workforce was three times higher than the permanent and specialized one, average wages were 15% lower than the legal minimum, and the average wages of unspecialized workers about 30% and 40% respectively. Re-adapting the datas to the growth rates of the industrial and legal minimum wage registered for the following decade, then, if by 1974 the salary of specialized workers in the mechanical sector arrived to exceed the legal minimum by only 23%, the gap downwards with the wages of the unspecialized workers in the textile and clothing sector arrived to reach the stunning proportion of -50% and -62% respectively[395] – a correction downwards whose role in workers' mobilization will play a major role.

395 Clarke, *Labor Law and Practice in Lebanon*., Appendix D.

I.II

Hiring, firing and paying in practice: factory gates as a limbo

The two-foldness of big industry's employment structure, was particularly well epitomized in the different employment practices adopted towards skilled and unskilled labor.

Coherently with the 'consuming and waste' approach discussed in the previous paragraph, the hiring of that army of unqualified production workers making of the great nucleus of big industry's working-class, usually occurred on a weekly base. The selective procedures and criteria were pretty basic. On an established weekday (usually on Monday), about one hour before the starting of the production, aspiring workingmen and workingwomen gathered at the factory gates, where a responsible of the administration was sent to recruit the new workforce. Here, after slightly more than a quick look at the age, sex and vigor of the gathered crowd of unemployed, men and women were picked up up to the required number, according to their conformity with the contingent productive and replacing needs. After a quick interview generally consisting in the of the generalities and eventual previous experiences, the latter were then sent to the administrative offices, from where, once updated the respective employment sheets, workers were distributed among the various productive sections to immediately start a probationary period. Here again, selection was pretty basic. After having been quickly introduced to the new job by the sections' supervisors (*wakīlwakīl*, plur. *wukalā'*), the latter were tested during the regular productive activity for a period of about one week-ten days where, once evaluated the quickness in learning and, above all, the tenure of the productive rhythms, were decided to be kept or replaced. Introduction to the factory work could occur also through personal channels. It was not uncommon in facts for a worker to be hired thanks to the intermediation of an already employed relative, co-villager, family or extended family friend.

Whatever the case, once successfully passed the probationary period, the worker was considered a factory employee by any effect. It must be noted that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, contractualization remained eminently oral. The formal juridical-administrative frameworking was that of a daily worker, despite

the job continuity and the daily working-hours were absolutely homologous with that of the permanently employed. Different were instead the modalities of payment which, rather than occur on a monthly base, in the majority of cases were on a weekly or bi-weekly one, and calculated according to the number of effective worked hours.

Dismissal procedures were as easy and direct as the hiring ones. With regards to the non-disciplinary terminations, according to the law, for a labor contract (weather written or oral) not envisaging – as for the case of the overwhelming majority of unskilled production workers – a pre-established termination date, a formal notice had to be given by the part wishful to interrupt the labor relation at least one or two months in advance, according to the length of service in the company (more or less than three years). In particular, whereas for the worker a verbal notice was considered sufficient, in the case of the employer it needed to be notified in the form of a registered letter with a receipt form attached. However, consuetude, and above all workers' difficulties to demonstrate, in case of oral agreements, abusive practices by the employers, created the conditions whereby it remained orality and informality the main channels through which dismissals were generally communicated. It was not uncommon, for instance, to receive a verbal dismissal communication straight on the payments' day. It was neither uncommon, as for the case of the student-workers whose productive life was limited to the period of the summer holidays, that a natural 'expiration date' was more or less implicitly bargained at the moment of hiring. The missed accomplishment of the legal requirements implied besides, in case of litigation, little penalties on the change of the employers, which were obliged to pay just the money due from the missed dismissal notification and the day of the effective dismissal. Even easier were the procedures in case of disciplinary dismissals, whereby employers were exempted from both the formalities regulating the non-disciplinary ones, and the payment of the due separation indemnities to the fired worker. Pretty common was also the recurse to preemptive formal disciplinary ultimatums on a large scale, to be used as evidences in case of future disputes[396].

396As evidence of the rootedness of this phenomenon, we signal that according to the data available for the first half of the 1960s, disciplinary ultimatums constituted one third of the overall employers' disciplinary actions registered by the Conciliation Boards. Cfr.:Khalaf, "Industrialization and Industrial Conflict in Lebanon," Tab. 2.

Completely different were instead the practices involving skilled labor. For highly skilled positions, and particularly those characterized by a high level of specialization (high level technicians, production managers, etc), recruitment was generally conducted through formal inquiries such as publication of job announcements on the newspapers or request of graduates' lists from educational institutions, usually followed by personal interviews, where the main discriminant for the final selection was determined by the candidates' competences and eventual experience. Here again, especially in the smaller firms, it may happen that for the occupation of those position located above the unskilled level, but characterized by a law or medium degree of specialization, such as most of the white collar activities, previous training could leave way to blood or extended family ties. In both cases, labor was generally stable and formalized, abusive practices absent, and payments and the provision of benefits regular and systematized. Partially different was the case of qualified production workers and *wukalā'*, whose stable and better payed labor position was generally obtained through career advancements within the enterprise, guaranteed in turn by the combination between maitrise acquired and loyalty to the management which implied, especially for the *wukalā'*, also acting as watchdogs over the discipline of the lowest cadres – a function, this, making them the backbone of the political (and repressive) disciplining policies towards industrial unskilled workforce within the factory.

I.III

Maximizing working-time: working-hours, working rests and working premiums in early 1970s big industry

Together with the short-run replacement of unskilled industrial workforce to keep average wages at the lowest level possible, the extraction of plus value from workers' labor widely relied also on the maximization of the exploitation of productive working time. Such a maximization manifested first and foremost the structural reliance on overtime work. According to the Labor Code, workweek in the industrial sector could not exceed, except for extraordinary and justified exigencies, a maximum of 48 hours, i.e. a maximum of eight hours per day over a

six-days working week, to be reduced at a maximum of seven for children and adolescents. Looking at the PAL survey, however, average weekly working hours in the manufacturer sector stretched from a national average of 50, to a peak of 51 in Beirut's banlieue, where the concentration of big industries was higher. Here again, significant variations among the various industrial branches subsisted. Whereas in facts average in the textile sector was of almost 53 hours per week, in the metallic/mechanical sector it edged the legal maximum[397]. Over the legal minimum was also the average in the extractive industries, which witnessed a weekly average of 51 hours, rising up to 69 for the seasonal workers[398]. Age distinctions were also widely disrespected. A study on labor conditions in the textile industry conducted in 1972, showed how fifteen years old girls could work up to 9 hours a day for a pay lower than the legal minimum by up to 30%. It must be noted that, following the market fluctuations, in the periods of high production such averages could be significantly exceeded. It must also be noted that, contravening again to the Labor Codes' dispositions which envisaged an hourly overtime premium by 50%, overtime work remained often payed as much as the regular one. The rootedness of these practices can be tracked looking at the contents of the mobilizations of big industry's working-class. In 1972, for instance, out of three strikes registered in the big industry for better labor conditions (Kassradjian, Gandour, Poineer-Jabre), two included the regular payment of overtime work in their list of claims (Gandour, Pioneer-Jabre). In the past couple of years, the same practice had been object of yet another contention at the Sleep Well furniture factory[399]. Abusive speculations of this kind could pertain also the payment of night work, which was also subjected by law to an hourly premium of 50%. In 1971, for instance, contention between workers and management over the missed payment of night work premiums was registered at the glass factory

397 PAL, vol.II, Tab. 14.04a/b.

398 Ibid.. The structural reliance on overtime work, is testified also by the results of the few surveys produced on the labor conditions in Lebanese big industries. In their survey on the production workers of the textile establishments "Hadath" and "Valiserie", for instance, Fadia Chamcham and May Metn registered how 2/3 of the workforce interviewed had performed extra hours in the part working-week. Fadia Chamcham and May Metn, La Condition de l'ouvrier textile au Liban: étude socio-économique (École Libanaise de Formation Sociale, 1972), 52.

399 *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 4, June 25, 1970.

Soliver[400]. Maximization of productive hours passed also through the compression of the legal rest time. In 1971, a report written by workers of the Maliban glass factory denouncing their labor conditions, stressed how, out of an average working day of ten hours, only a single thirty minutes break was allowed, against a legal rest time established at least one hour every four hours of work[401]. The same conditions had been denounced also by the workers of the Sleep Comfort furniture factory[402]. Such a compression could involve also the periodic weekly rest, which often disrespected the minimum of thirty-six hours fixed by the Labor Code, and even more in the presence of continuative overtime work.

The second great terrain where this exploitative maximization was exercised, was that of the non-productive working-days, i.e. the payed leaves and the official holiday premiums established by law for every worker. Thanks, here again, to the juridical frameworking of workers as daily, it was in facts pretty frequent that the festivity or the leave days were accounted as a day of regular absence without leave, and so detracted from the final wage. This expedient was often used also for escaping the payment of the already mentioned periodic rest day premium. The denial of the right to payed holidays could be achieved also through much more abusive and coercive forms. On September 1971, for instance, the workers of the Gandour plant in Chiah went on strike after the attempt of the direction to make them compulsorily sign a declaration stating to have already enjoyed their due payed annual rest[403].

Represented an exception in this sense the foreign owned companies, and especially in the non-metallic mineral sector, such as the cement and most notably the oil ones, where working hours and overtime and night-work premiums regularly followed the legal standards. Conform to the legal standards were also the management of holiday premiums, payed leaves (which, in some oil companies even exceeded the legal minimum of fifteen days), and the daily and weekly rest periods. The same guaranteed to their workers additional benefits not necessarily offered by other big industrial plants, such as transportation fees or meal services.

400*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 5, July 13 1971.

401*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 1, May 21, 1971.

402Ibid..

403*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 8, October 15, 1971.

I.IV

No costs at any cost: social security, labor indemnities and cost of living allowances

The last terrain on which exploitative extraction of plus value from labor costs exercised, was that of the social security and cost of living allowances. We have already mentioned in Chapter 5, how the enactment of the Social Security Law had been upheld with open hostility by the Lebanese entrepreneurial class, which reacted to what perceived as an outrageous affront with the adoption of a number of sabotaging initiatives to evade the additional expenditures that the latter was imposing, from mass dismissals to the non registration tout-court to the found. Despite in the following years the number of registered enterprises witnessed a constant – while far from reaching the totality – increase, the boycotting attitude with whom the law was welcomed fell short from disappearing. With regard to big industry, whose establishments were all registered to the NSSF, it substantiated in two major ways. The first was the exploitation of the pores of the Law and the Labor Code. We have already mentioned in this regards the priority given to the hiring of single workers, which discharged employers from the costs of family allowances. The same exigency impacted also on the firing practices. Looking at the workforce turnover, what could in facts be seen was that the average expiration date generally edged the commencement of the second year, after which the employer was obliged precisely to start paying social security tuitions. The second one, was the downloading tout-court of the social security costs on workers shoulders. It was particularly the case of family allowances which, confirming the fears of labor unions, recurrently came to be deducted directly from workers' base pay[404]. This type of downloading could assume also a much more abusive character. In 1970, for instance, workers of a big furniture factory in Beirut mobilized after that the direction compulsory deducted the costs for the accident compensation of an injured worker from the wages of his colleagues[405]. It must be noted that the refractoriness of Lebanese entrepreneurs towards any

404Clarke, *Labor Law and Practice in Lebanon*., 72.

405*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 4, June 25, 1970.

legally imposed labor cost escaping from the nude payment of the labor force, was marked also by a deep ideological dimension. The firm opposition lifted in 1971 towards the implementation of the medical insurances scheme and the application of the cost-of-lining allowances are in this sense a case in point. Contrary to the exploitation of the legal weaknesses which, while representing a common behavior, remained the result of entrepreneurs' individual initiative, the opposition to those two measures was on the contrary the result of a political, concerted collective action.

Second great step of the executive implementation of the Social Security law, the entrance into force of the medical insurances scheme arrived after almost two years of relentless confrontations between the State, the unions and the industrial associations which, as for the enactment of the Social Security Law in 1963, deployed all the means at their disposal to delay and possibly make flounder the execution of the program. The apple of the discord was represented by the fixation of the employers' contributory threshold at the equivalent of 7,5% of the salary per any registered worker, which thus answered — using again workers' rights as privileged expendable exchange money to foster their interests — with the boycott of any payment until fully satisfactory conditions would have been achieved. The deadlock seemed to have been overcame on January 1971, when a threat of general strike by the CGTL offered the final push to open a bargaining table and finally find a compromise solution[406]. Despite the reduction of the employers' contribution threshold at 5,5%, however, the order of boycott kept on being maintained. The bone of contention moved to the retroactive payment of the contributions by three months that the approved scheme envisaged, and the payment of the contributions also for the foreign workers, both judged by Lebanese Industrialist Association as illegitimate[407]. We unluckily do not have at our disposal statistics registering the exact evasion rate reached by the industrial employers after the launching of the second boycott. Looking at the American Embassy dispatches and at workers' mobilizations patterns in the following couple of years, however, it seems that by the end of 1972, it was progressively lifted. The same could not be said instead for the payment of the cost-of-living adjustment

406Le Jour, January 27, 1971.

407Le Jour, February 17 1971 and March 19, 1971.

approved by the Lebanese Parliament on June 1971[408]. Fruit of the bargainings followed by yet another threat of general strike by the CGTL, the norm imposed a rise of salaries by 5% retroactive to May 1, and for a minimal import of 19 LBP per month for any waged worker of the country, independently from the employment status, by way of salary adjustment for the growing inflation. Here again, entrepreneurs' answer reassumed in a firm no. Looking again at the labor mobilizations for the triennium 1971-1974, in facts, the missed payment of the cost-of-living allowances was at the center of all the mobilizations which crossed industrial world.

II

Discipline and Punish:

Labor division and the production of docile working subjects

II.I

A primitive Taylorism: the organization of labor division in early 1970s big industry

Together with the general consuming and waste approach characterizing employment policies in the early 1970s Lebanese big industry, the hiring practices whereof we have given notice in the previous paragraphs, represented an eloquent epitome also of the primitive Taylorism along which the dominant division of industrial labor and its management articulated.

While with different patterns and degrees of automatization according to the specific industrial sector, labor division in the big industry was organized along segmented and specialized productive lines, each one devoted to the finalization of a specific step of the produced good's productive cycle. Such a division found its double in the spatial organization of the factory. Developed horizontally per productive modules, in facts, the productive area of the factory usually consisted in large open spaces where machines were rationally disposed in compact parallel rows or productive lines following the progression of the produced good

408L'Orient – Le Jour, June 24, 1971.

productive cycle, along which workers individually occupied their working place. Especially for those establishments producing different types of goods, such as the multi-product food industries, space was usually partitioned into dedicated productive compartments, each one endowed with its own autonomy. Spacial organization mirrored also the factory social hierarchies. Whereas in fact the productive spaces developed horizontally on a single groundfloor level, the spaces devoted to administration and management on the contrary developed vertically, maintaining with the former a careful separation expressing from the very, rigorously distinguished, entrances.

The degree of segmentation of the productive cycle and the number of workers involved to finalize it, were largely determined by the dynamic interaction between the complexity and the nature of the produced good, and the degree of automatization necessary (or available) to produce it. Productive segmentation acted also as primary blueprint for the hierarchical organization of the workforce. Such a hierarchization was eminently pyramidal. Generally speaking, per every segment of the productive sub-cycles, production workers worked under the control and the coordination of a supervisor, the *wakīl*, answering in turn to a sub-cycle general responsible, under the supervision of the responsible of the productive unit, and so forth along a 'chain of command' heading up to the production manager or whoever exercising the same function. Its length and complexity, depended on both the number of employed workers, and the degree of segmentation of the productive process.

As already glimpsed in our exposition of the dominant employment practices, the criteria superseding workers' collocation in a specific segment of the productive cycle were pretty basic. Whereas for the specialized or controlling mansions the main discriminant was represented by workers' accumulated skills, in facts, for the regular production workers, weather previous experience could be welcomed, the major discriminant usually did not go beyond the worker compatibility with the degree of quickness and physical force necessary to absolve a certain task. In this process of assignment, regional or familial belonging could likewise interfere. It was in facts not uncommon to see co-villagers, relatives or co-regionalists located in the same productive segment. These rough distributive criteria walked also along marked gender binaries. Whereas women were generally destined to those tasks requiring precision and a law degree of physical force, such as garments

assemblage or consumers' products' retail packaging, 'heavy' tasks such as loading or big distribution packaging were on the contrary in the preserve of men. Along marked gender binaries walked also the distribution of the supervising functions. Even in those cases were the bulk of the workforce was made by workingwomen, it was in facts pretty rare that the latter could be promoted to the rank of *wakīl*[409].

The number of production workers under a *wakīl* supervision, generally swayed between ten and twenty. A group of workers could be also simultaneously supervised by more than one *wakīl*[410]. According to the type of labor activity and the productive methods, the hierarchic grouping criteria could entail or the specific activity carried out, either the place occupied in the productive cycle. With regard to those professional figures whose mansions did not imply a static relation with the machine, such as the mechanics or the logistics staff, the command chain was generally activity and unit-based. Generally line-based was instead the grouping and hierarchical organization of the production workers. In this case, basic grouping could not necessary gather workers engaged in the same specific labor task. In the case of mechanical or food industries, for instance, were production was organized along progressive mechanized productive lines, workers under a same supervisor, notwithstanding the collocation in the same productive sub-cycle, could not necessarily be engaged in the same specific individual labor tasks. On the contrary, in clothing industry, where assemblage was organized along endless horizontal raws of sewing machines, each one devoted to the completion of a finished garment, being the basic grouping unit generally represented by the raw, workers under a same supervisor were engaged in the same specific activity.

Whatever the specific articulation of the labor division and its hierarchical organization, the decisional processes pertaining the weekly working rotation, and the factory's productive rhythms and capacity, remained a prerogative of the management. It must be noted that, coherently with the «short run character of the bulk of economic activity of Lebanon[411]», the 'scientificity' according to which the periodical volume of production and labor were modulated and organized did not go beyond the sheer satisfaction of the contingent orders or, at best, the

409Chamcham and Metn, “La Condition de l'ouvriere textile”, 48.

410 Ibid., 14.

411 Nasr, “Backdrop to Civil War,” December 1978, 11.

seasonal market fluctuations. The reliance on market enquiries, anticipated or long-term planning, remained in general crude and limited. Weather an intensification of the demand occurred, the latter was generally faced simply by increasing the pressure on the workforce. In the same spirit, weather technical cooperation with foreign specialists and technologic updating were certainly welcomed, the latter remained finalized to endow the enterprise with a brevet or a technology to enter a new market segment, or to reorganize the basic blueprint of the production in case of expansion of the factory or renewal of the machineries. No investments on research and innovation, neither on the formation of qualified workforce internal to the enterprise were generally undertaken. Exception made for a spare number of companies, the same could be said for any form of material incentives to promote productivity, motivation and loyalty to the enterprise, such as organic production primes, workers' participation to the company's shares, or any form of corporative paternalism. Weather individually allocated, they were rather part of a broader mechanism of control and punishment through which, as we will see in the following section, the coercive disciplining of industrial workforce exercised.

II.II
Exploitation and alienation: an insight on labor tasks, labor conditions, and self-exploitation

If industrial employment accounted among its dominant characteristics underpayment and the permanent job insecurity, the dominant markers of industrial labor were undoubtedly usuriousness and alienation. Together with that towards the produced good, this alienation pertained first and foremost worker's relation with his labor activity. Contrary to craft production which implied the simultaneous deployment of multiple creative and manual abilities, as well as a dynamic interaction with the tools and the machines, industrial labor consisted on the contrary in nothing but the nude, mechanic execution of a movement or a limited series of movements along the whole working turn. Their relation with the machineries was totally reverted. As in the first case machines and tools were passive helpers of workers' labor, in the second it was worker labor to be subsidiary to that of the machine. Workers' task was to offset or facilitate what the

machine alone could not do. It was the machine to impose its rhythms on the worker, circumscribe his functions and working space, shape out his movements. The totalizing disciplinary dispositiveness of the machine interested also that section of the industrial labor the more emancipated from the stricter productive line, and most notably the textile and clothing industry. In this case, the coercive imposition of dehumanizing productive rhythms, found its executive substitute in the payment of labor per produced pieces. The way how machines' authority exercised, are eloquently exposed in an interview to a textile worker in one of the biggest (800 workers) integrated textile plants of Beirut suburbs, reported in Dubar and Nasr seminal work:

> «the overwhelming majority of textile workers is payed per piece, according to the "prime", the "number" registered by their machines at the end of the working-day. […] There are different tariffs according to the type of fabric: 16, 35 or 50 piastres every "100 points"». The intimate relation between this form of payment and self-exploitation, are exposed soon after: «For those who have a family – he continued – working per piece is an obliged choice; he can hope in this way to earn 9 or 10 piastres per day. Otherwise he is payed just the minimum wage, 690 piastres: he has no choice[412]».

The usuriousness intrinsic to the manual and repetitive nature of labor tasks – which, furthermore, in the overwhelming majority of cases were absolved standing –, was further reinforced by the exasperation of working-turns' length. We have already mentioned how the extraction of plus-value from workers' labor widely relied on the structural reliance on overtime work, and the extreme compression of the rest time. In breach of the law, over a general average working-day of nine hours, only a meagre single thirty-minutes break, usually destined to consume a meal, was allowed. It must be noted that this prolonged work often occurred in working environments with inadequate ventilation and conditioning, and without adequate protective equipment, may it consist in protective clothing, or masks, gloves or casks. This contributed to further harshen labor conditions, as well as the consuming impact on workers' health. We unluckily do not have at our disposal reports or statistics measuring the rate of labor accidents or professional diseases. Looking at the interviews collected to

412 Dubar and Nasr, *Les Classes sociales au Liban*, 227.

finalize this work, however, as well as workers' spare testimonies in newspapers, bulletins or other monographs, is licit to suppose that their incidence was pretty high. An eloquent testimony of the phenomenon is offered also in this case by the above-mentioned interview:

> «In summer, work is exhausting. There's no ventilation. Cotton sticks on our skin. We have no masks to protect us from cotton middlings. Because of that, many of us have lung diseases[413]».

Along with their labor activity, industrial workers were deeply alienated also from their proxies. As a result of the intense labor rhythms, labor division and its individual character, as well as of workers' spatial distribution, workers interactions during the productive time were in facts extremely limited and circumscribed within the boundaries defined by labor segmentation. This mutual isolation was further reinforced by the lack of common rest environments. In the great majority of factories, no canteens, neither dining areas existed. As a consequence, meals were consumed in the same, often unhealthy, spaces reserved to the labor activity, so further contributing to foster inter-workers' primary ties, as well as the isolation among workers belonging to different productive segments, lines, raws. Alienation from proxies expressed even more markedly moving along vertical lines. Epitomizing the respective relations with the means of production, no direct interaction between production workers and capitalists existed. Any communication between workers and the management was mediated and hierarchically disciplined. Weather an order, a warning, a communication of any kind from the factory ownership needed to be forwarded to workers or a single worker, the latter always occurred through the intermediation of an avatar, may it be an administrative employee, the production manager, the *wakīl*. Factory ownership was, as much as capital, simultaneously intangible and immanent, omni-dispositive and absent, and untouchable.

II.III

Discipline and punish: labor division and the subordinating control of the workforce

413 Dubar and Nasr, 227.

The absence of common rest environments as well as of any form of corporate paternalism, were pretty symptomatic of the rough muscularity through which the dominant disciplining strategies adopted in early 1970s Lebanese big industry articulated. Finding among their major pillars the abusive use of wage curtails and arbitrary dismissals, the latter were in facts structured around a particularly stringent and vexatious system of surveillance, intimidation and sanctioning, aiming at further fostering the production of docile, passive working-subjects by leveraging first and foremost on fear and prevarication. In the functioning of this system, a role of primary importance was played by the *wukalāʾ*. Accounting as their main function to act as watchdogs of the direction, in facts, it were *Wukalāʾ* to supersede the surveillance over workers' behavior, establish to whom, when and which sanction impose and who dismiss, make feel workers constantly under observation. The centrality of their figure, as well as a taste of the oppressive climate raging in the factories, and the way it substantiated, are well summarized in a report published on the Factory Commitees' bulletin in 1972.

> «Quite often – we can read in the incipit – workers complain among each other about the tyranny of *wukalāʾ*, as well as of the terror that they exercise in the factory. W*ukalāʾ* offend workers in many ways, they abuse them, curtail their wages for whatsoever[414]».

First major pressure weapon to discipline workers in their everyday working activities, abusive wage curtails were in effects applied for the most diverse, often insignificant reasons. This could include few minutes delays at the entrance, real or alleged 'low' daily productivity, the concession of a moment of rest outside the allowed break. Their abusiveness lied also in the fact that despite the law established that wage curtails should be destined to a specific found at benefit of workers, the latter were on the contrary kept tout-court by the direction. This turned them into a further mean to reduce at minimum labor costs. Given their stringent frequency, in facts, curtails could cost a worker – and hence guarantee to the factory owner – at the end of the month up to the equivalent of two or three entire working-days. The impressive degree of frequency is testified also by workers' mobilization patterns. Throughout the whole first half of the 1970s, no mobilizations occurred in the factories not including “the end of the tyranny of

414 *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 8, October 15, 1971

wukalā' " among the major claims. Their disciplining function was two-fold: on the one side, to constrain workers within the boundaries of the stringent productive requirements unilaterally imposed by the management; on the other, to remark and make feel constantly tangible the latter's absolute, omni-dispositive authority over the factory. There was no law in the factory except for that established by the owner. The perennial pressure was fostered also through non-sanctioning, but equally powerful, means. During the whole working-time, for instance, *wukalā'* used to walk through the raws and lines, brandishing in plain view their registers, and bossily ordering workers to accelerate their rhythms, without skimping insults and more or less veiled threats. Before leaving work, then, all workers were compelled to undergo an inspection at the gates of the factory, «as if we were thieves, or criminals», along a vicious circle of humiliations and prostrations defined by workers themselves as «a moral destruction[415]». In the construction and the functioning of this police environment, delation and mistrust also played a major role. Together with the eyes and ears of *wukalā'*, the network of surveillance widely relied also on the active role of – more or less compulsorily – complacent workers, which, in exchange for economic or other labor benefits, referred to the management any eventual 'infraction' to the factory order committed by the other colleagues. Such an inner network of 'spying' could be fostered also by leveraging on primary ties, such as sectarian affiliation, tribal or familiar rivalries, by favoring a group over another through the same briebing means.

Specifically devoted to prevent or punish any form of workers' insubordination to the established factory order was instead the function – weather threatened or executed – of the arbitrary dismissals. As we can read again in the mentioned report, the game was here pretty simple:

> «[Let's assume that] workers complain about their low wages, barely sufficient to buy food and clothes, pay the rent, and the school fees, and threat to go on strike. Patrons, thus, scare workers through their spies, which tell him what is going on chapter and verse, and threat to

415 Ibid..

dismiss whoever rises a claim. As a result, workers retire their all their requests[416]».

Be fired for disciplinary reasons meant in facts for workers not only loose the main – though miserable – source of subsistence for them and their families, but also loose the right to any termination indemnity. This played a major role also in further discouraging workers' solidarity. Whereas, in facts, the wide reliance on delation in the controlling practices of the management alimented mutual suspicion and mistrust, show support to an insubordinate worker could cost a firing as much as the insubordination itself. It was a common practice, after the occurrence of a strike, to see fired, after the arbitrary dismissal of the strike's real or alleged major agitators, also the workers asking for their re-integration at work.

416 Ibid..

Chapter 8

Planting the seeds of insubordination: origins, diffusion and organization of the Factory Committees

I

«To pivot around the working-class»: the Organization for Communist Action and the organization of the Factory Commitees

I

Profiling the father: Lebanese New Left and the Organization for Communist Action

The idea of the urgency to endow workers with a new organizational structure aiming at fostering their interests first and foremost through the means of a grassroots direct action, started to develop in the early 1970s, within the ranks of Lebanese New Left. Before entering the merit of the fundamental assumptions acting as blueprint for the construction of their political and labor agenda, a quick diversion to its genealogy and its component is necessary.

With the term New Left we are here referring to that group of Marxist organizations which, from the late sixties, started to emerge and organize in Lebanon outside of the umbrella of the Communist party. Sons of the revolutionary winds blowing from Europe to the Far East, those organizations developed along two distinct genealogies. The first one, was that developed from the splinters occurred within the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) throughout the 1960s[417]. Founded in 1951-1952 around a central core of students of the American University of Beirut headed by George Habash, the Arab Nationalist

417 The Arab Nationalist Movement, and particularly its Palestinian emanations, have been object of a wide literature. Among the most significant works which have here served as major directory for the brief historical overview provided, here we signal Walid Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and His Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism* (C. Knight, 1975); Yezid Sayigh, "Reconstructing the Paradox: The Arab Nationalist Movement, Armed Struggle, and Palestine, 1951-1966," *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 4 (1991): 608–29..

Movement initially developed as a revolutionary pan-Arab political organization devoted to the cause of the liberation of Palestine, assuming as essential precondition of its political thought and action that the latter could not be achieved unless the Arab countries were fully freed from colonial control. Initially rejecting Marxism, throughout the 1950s it was able to spread all over the region, consolidating, alongside, its relations with the emerging Nasserism. The first divisions within the movement started to develop since 1961, when the floundering of the United Arab Republic, polarized its militants around two main tendencies. On the one side, a right-wing tendency, dominant among the Egyptians, Iraqi and Syrian branches, which remained loyal to Nasserism and which soon became the main bastions of Nasserism in the Levant. On the other, a left-wing tendency, particularly rooted in the Palestinian and Lebanese ones, on the contrary increasingly disillusioned by Nasserism and its authoritarian turn, and which started to reframe the Palestinian and the Arab nationalist question in increasingly stricter Marxist-Leninist terms. The definitive rupture between the two tendencies definitively consumed with the Arab defeat of 1967, when the left-wing tendency, coalesced again around Habash, decided to split from ANM to form the Popular Organization for the Liberation of Palestine. Here again, however, two factions soon emerged. On the on side, a conservative wing, coalesced around Habash, which, notwithstanding the new commitment to Marxist-Leninism, kept on frame-working its political action and analysis in a Pan-Arabists perspective. On the other, a progressive radical wing headed by the younger Nayaf Hawratmeh, assuming in class analysis the main orienting framework of its political theorization and action, and locating on the contrary the Palestinian and Arab nationalist question within the framework of world revolution. The split between the two groups consumed between 1968 and 1969 when, profiting of a period of detention of Habash, Hawrathmeh faction succeeded to temporarily take over the Executive Committee of PFLP, shifting its political line towards more class and radical positions. This inaugurated an open feud among the two factions sedated only after the intermediation of Fatah, at the end of which Hawratmeh group splitted creating the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

Given the Pan-Arab dimension of ANM, this series of split did not lack to produce consequences outside of Palestine. With regards to Lebanon, soon in the

aftermaths of the PFLP/DFLP split, the Lebanese ANM faction linked to Hawratmeh, headed by and Mohsein Ibrahim, definitively abandoned the movement to form the Organization of Lebanese Socialists (OLS).

Marxist-Leninist with some Maoist influences, and organically linked to the DFPL, thanks to the migration within its ranks of most of the Lebanese ANM militant base and, above all, of the echo guaranteed through the inheriting of ANM periodical *al-Ḥurriyyah*, whereof Ibrahim was the historical editor-in-chief, OLS soon became the most influent group of Lebanese New Left. The second pole was the political group coalesced around the homonymous bulletin Socialist Lebanon (SL). Animated by a restricted group of militant intellectuals such as Fawwaz Traboulsi, which, through the lines of the bulletin gave immediately prove all their theoretical virtuosity, the organization was founded in 1964 per initiative of Waddah Chararah after having completed his studies in France. It was in France that Chararah politicized, molding, within the ranks of the French Communist Parties, his Marxist thought. Despite the different genealogies, the two organizations were characterized by a marked ideological proximity. Here again it was in facts Marxism-Leninism to provide the main framework for analysis and action, as well as the main prism for the reading of the national, regional, and international events. This opened the path for a progressive rapprochement of the two groups which, in 1970, culminated in their merging in the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL). As stressed by Fadi Bardawil, the fusion was in a sense a marriage of convenience. Whereas, in facts, OLS «was then searching for theoreticians as it turned further and further towards Marxism», the much less numerous militant intellectuals of Socialist Lebanon, sought, from their side, «a wider platform for their revolutionary practice[418]».

The choice of the new name entailed the three fundamental aspects characterizing the early spirit of the organization[419]. On the one side, its drive towards the construction of a genuine, organic class representativity, on which

418 Fadi Bardawil, "Sidelining Ideology: Arab Theory in the Metropole and Periphery, circa 1977", in Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, *Arabic Thought Against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 163–80, 168.

419 The theoretical foundations of the political thought and agenda of the OCAL here briefly summarized, as well as the political analysis of the Arab and international situation wherein the latter were located, are extensively exposed in the Founding Declaration of the organization, published in *a al-Ḥurriyyah*, n° 579, July 5, 1971.

the organization could not yet count. On the other, its commitment, in the name of that Second International and Marxist-Leninist spirit which the Lebanese Communist Party had abandoned, in favor of «the revolutionary classes, the peasants, the working-class and the revolutionary intellectuals which aspire to be included in that wonderful legacy leading the working-class and liberation struggle under the banner of Communism[420]». Finally, the primacy given to militancy and struggle for the achievement of both ends.

The fundamental assumptions on which the construction of their political and labor agenda was based, can be grosso modo summarized as follows. According to the OCAL, the war of 1967 had represented a crucial test for Arab capitalism. Regional reification of a broader process of worldwide advancement of the imperialist forces and their influence, it had in facts blatantly made visible three intimately related contradictions, which required for revolutionary movements a radical rethinking of their forms of struggle. On the one side, the incapability of post-colonial Arab State capitalism to develop an internal economy solid enough to overcome, despite the nationalization of oil and industries, the agrarian reforms, etc., its structural dependency on the West. On the other, the incapability of the post-colonial Arab ruling classes to create a historical block reflecting the entirety of the social relation of production, in favor of the consolidation of closed and authoritarian ruling blocks excluding from the access to power –- and hence unable to represent – the Arab popular masses, while simultaneously reinforcing their organic ruling partnership with reactionary social forces. Finally, the failure of that same ruling blocks in pursuing that liberation and nationalist struggle which had guaranteed and legitimated their access to power, and which had represented the fundament of the social contract with the Arab masses guaranteeing their dominant position. Facing this triple failure, what was necessary for Arab revolutionary movements to keep on fulfilling their historical mission of avant-garde of the liberation struggle, as well as their commitment in favor of the revolutionary classes, was to redefine their political agenda in a way that, in the farrow already traced by the revolutionary movements from China to Palestine, from Yemen to Vietnam, could conciliate «the elimination of imperialist domination with the consolidation of the construction of socialism, and the construction of the foundations of socialism with the construction of socialist

420Ibid., 1.

relations of production[421]». In particular, what was necessary in the eyes of OCAL, was to work for the construction of a new historical block stemming from, and organic to, the revolutionary classes, able to express a new leadership whose organic alliance with the Palestinian resistance, in its quality of most important regional ideological and political anti-imperialist avant-garde, would have finally redefined the terms and the direction of the struggle for liberation.

If it was thus the Arab world to constitute the political horizon within whom, and towards which, OCAL revolutionary mission was located, for the theorization of the modes through which the construction of this block could be realized, it was on the contrary the post-'68 European New Left, and particularly the Italian experience, the horizon to which the Organization looked at. Drawing from the experiences of the Manifesto group and, above all, Lotta Continua[422], OCAL agreed in facts on the urgency that the new block so to be endowed of a genuine transformative power on the "social relations of production", had to be based on the aggregation and the co-participative organization from within of the new struggles and social forces that the crisis of Lebanese capitalism was expressing, and most notably the students and the working-class. In the same spirit, priority had to be given to the organizational aggregation of those multitudes orphan of a representation, and which represented the sole possible true protagonists not only of the struggles, but also of the whole revolutionary process.

The centrality that this strategic drive came to occupy in the political agenda of the organization, was reflected from the very structure with whom it endowed. At the top of the organization, stood a politic bureau of about 8-9 members, mostly charged to set the political line of the organization and its strategic priorities. Below stood a central committee of about 20 members, reuniting and coordination the referees of the regional branches of the organization, and of their main sectors of activity, each one endowed with its internal organigram which included, in turn, together with the referees of the editorial board of *al-Ḥurriyyah*, the referees of two specific sub-branches devoted to the organization of the students and the working-class. In both cases, the great programmatic slogan became to «pivot around the working-class», which subsumed, along with

421 Ibid., 2.

422 For a history of Lotta Continua we remind here to Luigi Bobbio, *Storia di Lotta continua* (Feltrinelli, 1988).

the centrality assigned to working-class organization, also a precise division of the revolutionary labor: whereas, the working-class was thought as the dynamite from which make explode OCAL revolutionary project, OCAL had to be its detonator.

I.II
"What is to be done?": Setting-up an action plan

In fostering the executive passage from theorization to action, the OCAL found itself in front of two major challenges. The first one was the concrete reaching of the working-class and their instances. This included first and foremost an in-depth and comprehensive clue of the labor conditions in the single factories, the dimensions and the nature of eventual law violations, the concrete presence and activity of the formal unions. Such a difficulty was related first to the social composition of OACL original nucleus. While, in facts, some workingmen or student-workingmen were presents, OACL was mostly made of students, intellectuals, and members of the petite bourgeoisie. Insofar as no effective strategy could be developed without having well clear how the concrete situation of Lebanese working-class was, the first step undertaken by OCAL was thus to conduct a capillary sample survey among workers to know directly from their mouth how the life behind the factory gates was[423]. Questionnaires were thought, in he best Marxist tradition, also to derive from workers the necessary, and equally lacking, informations to estimate the degree of exploitation and the amount of plus-value extracted by the entrepreneurs from workers' labor. The questionnaire elaborated was particularly detailed. Articulating along 71 questions, it included informations about the factory form of ownership and dimensions, the number of workers employed and their labor status, the forms of payment, the price at detail of the produced good. It included also questions about the adequacy of the plant with the legal standards, the respect of the legal medical and social security provisions, the recurrence and nature of wage curtails and arbitrary dismissals. Finally it investigated the occurrence of eventual collective mobilizations, their outcomes, the role played by the unions in it, and the strategies deployed by the ownership to compromise workers' collective

423All the informations reported in this paragraph have been drawn from a series of interviews conducted by the author with Ahmad Dirani, former OCAL responsible for the Factory Committees of Beirut southern suburbs, between October 2015 and June 2017.

actions and solidarity. The administration of the questionnaire was thought also as a first step to "put a leg" into the working-class. This implied first to immerse in their everyday life. After having assigned to the involved militants a specific area to approach, the latter hang around the neighborhood, attend working-class leisure places. Some of them even installed. The prior network of knowledge of OCAL workingmen and student-workingmen in this phase revealed particularly important. The firsts approaches usually occurred in the streets, possibly at the end of the working-turns, where the militants, after having introduced themselves as members of non better specified factory committees, asked workers if they would have been disposed to have a talk on their labor conditions. In case of affirmative answer, this inaugurated a series of visits at workers' houses, where colleagues, friends relatives employed in the same or other factories were invited to join. The period necessary to build a solid relationship was pretty variable, stretching, according to the cases, from a couple of weeks, up to some months. The importance of this preliminary phase was two-fold. As much as it served to identify with precision the nodes and the forms through which go to intervene, the continuous confrontation and the mutual trust built alongside, was the harbinger to start acknowledging workers of their rights, as well as to lay the foundations for their concrete organization. As stressed by Ahmad Dirani, the deep knowledge showed by OCAL militants of the general working-class problems and of the situation in the single establishments, endowed them with an authoritativeness whereby were the same workers to ask them first what to do to improve their situation[424].

The choice of the form-committee, i.e. of a grass-roots, self-representative, non-bureaucratized, organizational structure, over the form-union, had answered to two sets of evaluations. The first one was its greater conformity with the political aims and attitude characterizing OCAL's drive towards working-class organization. Whereas, in facts, the form-union presupposed an act of 'delegation of sovereignty' to the elected union representatives which, by virtue of their election, become the mediating body of action and decision-making, in the committees the latter remains located on the contrary in the multitude of workers and their agent bodies, which with their constant meetings and, above all, mobilizations, sought to consciously take charge of their liberation through their own hands. The second, but certainly not in order of importance, resided in the awareness of the

424Interview with Ahmad Dirani, Beirut, May 23, 2017.

impossibility to foster a class struggle able to concretely revert the balance of powers between workers, patrons and the State within the ranks of Lebanese formal unionism, and particularly after the unification of the CGTL. According to OCAL, in facts, as the numerical primacy of right-wing federations inevitably leveled its claiming discourse and practices on moderate, pro-governmental, positions[425], the organic ruling partnership consolidated over time between the president Gabriel Khouri (eloquently labelled as za'im) and the national political establishment to fight any attempt of workers' conflicting left-warded political recomposition, made the General Confederation not only a simple ineffective intermediate body, but first and foremost yet another concrete weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie to keep the working-class in its subordinate position. Furthermore, its internal structuring envisaging an equal representation of all the federations regardless of their effective rootedness, extremely reduced – as demonstrated by the neutralization of the political instances lifted by the left-wing federations in the aftermaths of the unification – the possibility of change from within. It was thus necessary to endow Lebanese working-class with a brand new political organization which could serve not only as radical alternative to the CGTL, but also as a challenge from below to their political hegemony.

I.III

The 'paper comrade': *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* and the recourse to the delegated word

If in the execution of the preliminary phase the main obstacle envisaged by OCAL militants was the lack of a prior rootedness among the working-class, in the executive passage towards the concrete organization of the committees in the factories, the same had to cope with a much bigger hurdle. As examined in the previous chapter, production workers in the big industrial establishments were subjected to a stringent system of surveillance and punishment, wherein every workers' movement and word, was constantly filtered by the eyes and ears of the

425 Lebanese labor unionism has been object of multiple analysis by the OCAL. The critical analysis of the process of the unification of the CGTL, as well as the state of the art of their reflections around the crisis of Lebanese labor unionism here briefly summarized, have been extensively exposed by the organization in the edition of *al-Ḥurriyyah* published in occasion of the International Workers' Day of 1970. See: *al-Ḥurriyyah,* n°, May 4, 1970.

wukalāʾ. This created the conditions whereby, as much as, thanks to the Damocles' sward of Article 50, no contentious political activity could be carried out in the factories without running the risk to be fired, factory were inhibited to be used also as a place for politicization. This rose the certainly not easily unraveling question to find a communication and connecting strategy that, as much as could capillary reach workers behind the gates, could also escape the repressive control of *wukalāʾ*. The solution was found in delegating the intermediation of the alive word and body to paper.

Along with the approaching of individual workers whereof we have just given notice, loose leaflets signed under the general signature of Factory Committees, started to be distributed to workers at the end of the working-turns in the vicinities of the factory. This soon took the much more structured shape of a few pages bulletin, *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, which, in a direct and simple language, started acknowledging workers of their rights and the political roots of their deprivations, of the importance of unity and organization, of the centrality of direct action. At the same time, it provided quick notices and analysis of the mobilizations in progress and their developments, of the different forms of exploitation in the various industrial establishments, of the ferments crossing the whole Lebanese labor world. This was coupled with pills of history of the Lebanese and international working-class movement, in a work of historicization meant to laterally acknowledge workers of the historical mission whereof they had been endowed of. In so doing, acknowledgment of what the committees and their function were, and why and how they should have been formed in any factory started to be progressively instilled. In particular, the communicative strategy adopted to foster this performative end, consisted in publishing a serialized self-presentation of the Committees and *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, where, in the form of rhetoric questions on who they were and what they were doing, the descriptive-perscriptive answers offered from time to time, added a new element in the 'instructions booklet' for the formation and the organization of a committee, and in the politicizing acknowledgment towards the making of a working-class consciousness. We report here some paradigmatic extracts from the number devoted to the committees' structuring:

« – Is the work of a Committee limited to a single factory?
– No. In every factory there are many Committees. And wherever a committee does not exist yet, *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* tries to form one and invites workers to join. It is necessary that in every workplace, company, there are at least one or more specific committees, so that unity can acknowledge workers of the company's problems and, of course, question employers and pressure them. […]

Why the work of a committee does not limit to a single factory? Because workers' problems do not limit to the sole workingmen, and problems do not resolve in a sole factory. Let's take, for example, health insurances. Would single workers be able to impose it on the employer? Of course not. And even if they could eventually make it, its enforcement would require the enactment of a general law, and general laws do not enact to solve the problems of a single factory […] The sole real advantage for workers is unity. […] That's why it is necessary that workers takes charge of the problems of their factory, and, along with it, of the problems of all workers and all factories.

– How to connect workers in the different establishments?
– If in a single factory more committees have been formed, the same will elect two militants to represent them in a second committee, uniting together the representatives of the other committees. This second committee will be the committee of the whole establishment. This second committee, in turn, will elect two representatives for a third committee that will reunite the representatives of the other factories. In this way, the reunited workers will discuss together the positions to take for what concerns: social security, dismissals, insurances, working-time, rest days, wages, union organizations, etc. …

– How can Comittees satisfy workers' claims?
– We have said that workers' greater advantage stands in unity and organization. However, this unity is does not reach rapidly […] because employers and the State persuade workers that each one of them can solve his problems on his own. Employers calculate worker wage as if it

> is a kind of special treatment, gives worker a rise and persuades him that he is special. Employers separate workers among them. Each group of workers works in a sector and does not communicate with workers of other sectors. Worker thus supposes to be independent from the other workers, the other sectors and the other factories. If workers take a unified stance, the State sends the army and the gendarmery to punish them, and to persuade them that their unity does not help. So to reach workers' unity is necessary to persuade every single worker, or at least the majority, that the satisfaction of their demands does not realize through a *wasṭah* or a clientele. It is necessary to persuade workers that subordination does not pay back, and that workers are strong, despite the control of the employers and the State. [...]
>
> Committees can satisfy workers' demands through the unity, the organization, the acknowledgment of their rights. Who says workers to satisfy their claims without their direct involvement and mobilization, lies. Any demand satisfied without struggle or is extorted through adulation or is distorted. This is what committees can do: contribute to workers' organization. This is the mean to satisfy the united demands»[426]

In this first phase of its diffusion, the contents and the material distribution of the bulletin remained in the preserve of OCAL militants. As long as committees started spreading, however, the workers progressively integrated became integral part of both its circulation and contents. This changed also the function of the bulletin which, from an eminently agent text mostly devoted to foster workers' organization, became simultaneously agent and acted platform for workers' organization, coordination and mobilization. As long as committees spread and activated, in facts, as *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* become the megaphone through which workers launched their calls for mobilization, coordinated their struggles, asked, expressed and exercised solidarity, it circulation, on the other side, became the great coordinating juncture superseding their realization.

426*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 4, June 25, 1970

II
Inside the Factory Committees: diffusion, organization, action

II.I
A specter hunting the factories: the Committees and the organizational management of political activity

If the process of social penetration of the working-class had required time and patience, the diffusion of the committees in the factories was on the contrary, against any initial expectation, particularly rapid. By 1971, active committees were present in all the bigger industrial establishments of the Southern suburbs. By the end of the next year, they had infected also the whole Eastern one. Alongside, committees were starting mushrooming also among peasants, as well as in the industries of the North. It must be noted that, if in Europe the activity of equivalent experiences had been marked by a distinguished visible dimension both outside and, above all, inside the factories, in the Lebanese case, as a consequence of the hyper-repressive factory space, Lebanese Committees were on the contrary veritable 'specters hunting the factories'.

So to escape the omnipresent eyes and ears of delators and *wukalā'*, exception made for the committees' representatives, committees' members did not directly knew the identity of any other member than the ones of the cluster they belonged to. Political activities and talks during the working-time remained prevented. Meetings and decisions, as well as *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* circulation, were rigorously held outside the factory. The processes of coordination and decision-making, articulated as follows. The basic unity for the creation of a committee was represented by the factory section. Above stood the general factory committee, whose couple of selected representatives participated to the inter-factory gatherings. The latter, in turn, were coordinated by the militants of OCAL labor section, which acted as a juncture between the committees and the rest of the organization – and most notably the central committee and the politic bureau – and between the committees themselves. In particular, within the labor section, militants were divided in cells on a sectoral base (food, wood and furniture, mechanic, textile, etc). Within each cell, then, responsibility over a number of

committees belonging to the same sector was assigned, which thus became the primary cluster for the inter-factory committees' meetings[427].

At any level, meetings were usually held on a weekly base, with representatives and cells' delegates acting as bi-directional transmission belt among the various layers. The places where they were held were pretty variable. In the case of the Southern suburbs, for instance, one of the privileged places for the inter-cell meetings, was represented by the office of Rifaat Misr, a young lawyer member of the OCAL. Meetings could also occur in public but discrete places, such as Beirut's Pine Forest or beachfront. In the majority of cases, however, especially for the single factory and intra-cell meetings, those were generally held in the same militants' private houses.

It was anyway the cell the political locus were the strategic priorities to foster were from time to time discussed and adopted. It was also the cell the locus were posters, leaflets, the distribution and the contents of *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* were prepared and organized. It was also the cell to act as bridge-head for the organization of new committees and their formation, as well as forefront for the integration of workers in the OCAL.

In this state of permanent mobilization, the activity of the committees and the labor cells, was sided by and intertwined with that of OCAL women's section. As a result of the marked gender division of labor, the temporary of their productive life, of the rampant patriarchalism reigning both at home and in the factories, in facts, the politicization and activation of workingwoman with the methods until then experienced, was revealing particularly difficult. Decision was thus taken to create a woman section, endowed with its own autonomy, with the double task to rise the awareness on their exploitation and the importance to actively engage in militancy «hand in hand with their brothers[428]», and also, and more importantly, to foster their self-determination against patriarchate, and make them active subjects in the broader political, women and emerging feminist struggles which were developing outside of the factory gates.

Mutual knowledge occurred only at the moment of the mobilizations, and particularly of the strikes. Mobilizations represented also the occasion in which gender barriers were smashed, aggregating man and women in a same claiming multitude freed of the segregating constraints imposed by labor division and

427*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 4, June 25, 1970 and Ahmad Dirani, multiple interviews.

428See: *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 9, 1971.

social boundaries. Needless to say that in the organization and the realization of a strike, all the bureaucratic passages envisaged by law to open and carry out a mediation were swept over. The organization of a strike articulated grosso modo as follows. After having agreed on its necessity in the cells and committees' meetings, a work of 'preparation of the terrain' to simultaneously check the predisposition and persuade workers to mobilize was fostered through the double channel of *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* and militants' personal networks. Once ascertained that humors were favorable enough, with prior approval of OCAL's politburo, a date was established, with the committees' and cells' militants charged to act as a detonator in front of the factory gates before the beginning of the working turns, declaring the state of strike and encouraging workers to cross their arms. If the operation revealed successful, a strike committee was established, with the task to interface with the administration, produce material to distribute among workers, decide and coordinate the steps to undertake. In none of those passages unions were involved. Unions might intervene in a second moment, weather found appropriate in their own fora to take charge of the risen workers' demands. It remained anyway workers and their bodies to hold in first person the reins of their own stances, finding in their collective direct action their major, great pressure weapon.

II.II
Driving the revolution in the factories: anatomies of a dangerous crescendo

During the first year and a half of activity, i.e. in coincidence with the phase of committees' expansion and diffusion, most of the Factory Committees' political efforts were devoted to the construction and the consolidation of a militant and conscious working-class base. In particular, moving on the double front of the meetings and *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* circulation, an operation of mass politicization was engaged, finding its fundamental axes on three major points. The first one, finalized to disrupt the individualism and the isolationism that the dominant patterns of labor division and disciplining were producing, was the acknowledgment of workers of their common condition of exploited, as well as of the common sources and forms of their shared exploitation. The second one, finalized to define the contours for the transformation of this disaggregated

multitude into a single militant body, was the acknowledgment of what their rights were, and of the multiple constraints – including the ineffectiveness of the existing labor organizations – inhibiting their concrete achievement. The third one, marking the passage towards performativity, was the acknowledgment of the reasons making organized militant working-class unity the sole mean for the achievement of a true emancipation, and the means through which concretely build it.

The fruits of this politicization started to manifest and be capitalized already from the second half of 1971. Starting from the summer of that year, Committees-driven strikes and mobilizations started to shake the industrial world on a regular base. Looking at the sole summer, on the month of May, two strikes were staged at the Pioneer-Jaber (food transformation) and Snibois (wooden furnitures), to ask for the right to a payed rest day for the Mawalid as established by law, and higher wages and better working conditions respectively[429]. They were followed the next month by another strike at Unifid, asking, among the various claims, the right to payed rest days, the stoppage of arbitrary dismissals, and the application of the wage increases and social security provisions established by law[430]. Finally, between June and July, a wave of mobilizations hit the Seven Up plant, again to oppose arbitrary dismissals, and ask for the regular payment of overtime premiums, the application of the Social Security provisions, payed rest days and holidays[431]. Strikes ran in parallel with the first attempts to earn formal recognition as legitimate representative bodies within the factories. Throughout 1971, several attempts were made by Committees' members to compete in the elections for the renewal of different industrial unions' supervisory boards[432]. As much as for the strikes, however, the results achieved remained pretty meagre.

With regards to the strikes, no major gains had been able to be achieved, except for the reintegration at work of some of the workers that, as a result of the mobilizations, had been arbitrary dismissed. Dismissals – weather threatened or executed – were used, along with the circumstantial employment of the police force, and the concerted manipulation of the regulations and electoral procedures,

429*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n°1 , May 21, 1971.

430*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n°3, June 23, 1971,

431 Ibid., and *Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n°5, July 13, 1971.

432*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n°9, 1971.

also to prevent Committees' workers to compete and be elected for the unions supervisory boards[433]. Nevertheless, the effect that this tenacious obstructionism and repression ultimately sorted, fell short from the mass discouragement that employers hoped to achieve. Rather, as we will better see in the next chapter, by unveiling the organic relation and the convergence of interests between State, employers and unions in maintaining the existing status quo, they acted as further accelerator for their radicalization and compacting, as well as for their move towards the Committees, in this way 'per difecto' increasingly known and recognized as sole political referee really and genuinely standing by their side. This process of identification was further alimented by the distance and the compliant attitude characterizing CGTL's position towards the new industrial working-class and its major stances. Concretely entering the factories only to try to bring back to the compliance mobilized workers, and regularly leaving at the margins of its bargainings the great collective questions affecting the most the new industrial working-class (abrogation of Article 50, regular application of Social Security provisions, freedom of association), CGTL was in facts increasingly perceived, in line with Committees' predicaments, as nothing but a compromised and ineffective – if not openly hostile – far entity, unable to fulfill that representative and defensive functions that was in theory supposed to absolve. This not forbade anyway Factory Committees to participate and call to participate to the general mobilizations that the CGTL promoted.

The renewed strength so achieved, allowed in turn Committees to rise the political bar of their labor militancy. As long as workers' radicalization and Committees' rootedness consolidated, the pills of 'Marxism for dummies' silently hidden among the lines of the first numbers of Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl, left room to the adoption of an openly militant lexicon, the elaboration and the diffusion of longer and more articulated analysis of Lebanese political economy and labor scenario, the frame-working of labor strives within the farrow of a wider and historicized rise of the working-class in the path to revolution. Similarly, in the construction of their claiming agenda, the single factory instances were soon transcended in favor of the integration of specific sectoral or global labor stances, as well as of a number further struggles that, while not strictly related to labor questions, touched working-class life at its very heart. Starting from 1972, for instance, the creation of a sectoral union for workers in the food industry became one of the

433 Ibid.

major Committees' political priorities[434]. The same happened for the struggle for housing right, whereby Committees became one of the major animators[435]. Alongside, peasant instances and communiques became a regular presence in the pages of Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl, so playing a major role for the activation of mutual solidarity and support, and the hybridization of their specific demands[436].

Radicalization and trust coincided also with the arrival of the first victories. In 1972, committees' members finally succeeded, despite the same tenacious obstructionism lifted the year before by the employers, the union leaderships and the Sate, in electing members in the Shoemaking Workers' Union[437]. In 1973 it was the turn of the Mechanic Workers' Union[438]. Alongside, as CGTL remained stuck in its game of general strikes' threats and revokes, the Committees-dragged strikes that in the meantime continued to succeed one another, started to sort the first victories. In 1972, as a result of open ended strike, Pioneer-Jaber workers saw addressed all the demands that had tenaciously risen regardless of the police and dismissal threats[439]. Soon before, after yet another open-ended strike, success had arrived for the Kesradjan workers[440]. The next year, then, it was the turn of the Light Metal Manufacturers[441]. This marked the beginning of a long chain of victories which will seal all the further strikes that the committees will stage[442]. Committees' basic assumption that "workers do not liberate than with their own hands", was seeming to reveal indisputably true.

II.III

Driving workers towards the revolution: politicization, alliances and the participation in the national workers' struggles

As the progressive radicalization of industrial working-class created the conditions for Committees to gradually rise the political bar of their labor militancy, the

434*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 14, October 1972 and n° 20, May 1973.

435*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* n° 9, 1971 andn° 14, October 1972.

436*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 7, August 8, 1971, n° 10, March 1972, n° 14, October 1972.

437*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 13, August 1972.

438*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 20, May 1973

439*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 13, August 1972 and n° 14, October 1972.

440*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 10, March 1972.

441*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl* n° 22, October 1973.

442See *as-Safīr*, August 24, 1974 and August 30 1975

same phenomenon provided OCAL with the favorable terrain to progressively rise the bar towards the construction of that conscious historical block which had animated its primary drive towards the organization of Lebanese working-class.
So not to compromise in the bud the delicate construction of a mutual trust, in the first stages of workers' approaching and politicization, OCAL wider stances and struggles had deliberately kept on the background of labor group cells' work, in favor of the prior construction and consolidation of a solid and conscious organized working-class militant body. Weather a worker showed interest or a particular political sensibility, it was invited to join the meetings of OCAL circles, specifically devoted to the critical study and discussion of the classics of Marxist thought. Organized according to veritable politicization programs, the latter served as harbinger to gradually introduce and spread OCAL political thought, as well as to integrate workers or whoever participated in the OCAL ranks.
As long as the first signs of workers' mass radicalization started to manifest, then, cautiousness started to be progressively abandoned, in favor of a gradual but resolute work of 'brick-to-brick' enlargement of their terms of politicization, intervening above all on the contents of Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl. Starting from the second half of 1971, the first articles taking resolute and antagonist stances on Lebanese political and economic situation began to regularly inflame the pages of Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl. Alongside, the stress on the importance to build a solid working-class unity started to be sided and associated to the necessity to work for the construction of sincerely representative party of the working-class and its instances. When, then, starting from 1972, Israeli airstrikes started to regularly hit South Lebanon, solidarity with the South became the pivot to progressively integrate in Committes' political discourse the solidarity with the Palestinian resistance and, through it, establish the last missing link between working-class and Arab liberation.
This work of politicization was paralleled by a work of connection and hybridation of the working-class and their stances with the rest of political struggles and movements were OCAL was actively involved, and most notably the student one. As much as OCAL militants' analysis were regularly hosted on Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl, workers declarations, activities, mobilizations, regularly found space on the pages of al-Ḥurriyyah. At the same time, OCAL militants regularly participated to

workers' mobilizations, brought their instances in their own ones, organized initiatives of solidarity.

This offered a contribution of primary importance to make young workingmen and workingwoman (on both a collective and individual level) and their struggles integral part of the wider and equally rapidly radicalizing socio-political ferments and confrontations that were taking place outside the factory, and for which the solidarity to the Palestinian resistance was acting as great accelerant for the consolidation of two antagonist right and left-wing blocks, whose ultimate terrain of collision will result in the recourse to weapons[443].

443For an overview on the role that the operations and the very presence of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon played on the process of ideological polarization and confrontation between right and left-wing political factions on the eve of the Civil War, we here send back to: El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, 2000, 187–234. For a specific overview of the impact of the phenomenon on the student movement see instead: Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 157–86.

Chapter 9
Breaking-up the line: militant working-class and the political turmoil

I
Connecting leftwards:
The Gandour strike and the bloody irruption of the working-class on Lebanese public life

I.I
Towards the strike: the Gandour factory and its tensions

If a factory needed to be chosen to epitomize early 1970s Lebanese big industry, that factory – or, better, company – would have certainly been Gandour. Established in 1857 as family-run manufacture of «a variety of hard-boiled candies, loukoum and marzipan out of a factory-store in Beirut», Gandour established its first modern industrial plant in the southern suburb of Chiah, in 1913. This marked the debut of a constant, unstopped growth, which, thanks also to a parallel constant product diversification and productive updating, mad it one of the leading national and regional companies in food transformation already by the early 1960s. The flourishing of the company was testified by the decision to further expand the productive capacity with the establishment of a second, bigger plant in Choueifat in 1970, multiplying the number of its effectives in a sole year from 250 to 1500[444]. More importantly, the sweets business provided the family with the primitive capital to become, by the end of the 1960s, the most important industrial dynasty of the country, with active companies and participations also in the sugar refinement, paper, and steel milling sectors. In the best Lebanese tradition, big economic power coincided also with big political power. In 1966 and 1970, the family's scion Rafiq had been elected president of the powerful Makassed Society, the Sunna philanthropic giant in the hands of the other political giant Sa'ib Salam. Rafiq Gandour was also a major business associate of the president of Lebanese Industrial Association and equally prominent industrialist Butrous al-Khouri[445].

444 https://web.archive.org/web/20170702084152/http://gandour.com/site/about

Together with epitomizing the new importance that the developing Lebanese industry came to occupy on the eve of the war, Gandour represented also the great epitome of the exploitations and tensions crossing industrial labor. Representing, especially after the inauguration of the Choueifat plant, one of the major hubs recruiting the army of young, unemployed rural migrants in search for an occupation, Gandour was in facts also a perfect example of the primitive Taylorism characterizing industrial labor policies and relations. There was no abusive or speculative practice among the ones listed in Chapter 7, that in Gandour did not find an archetypical expression. Furthermore, given the absence of a national sectoral union for workers in the food industry, the constant opposition of the ownership to the establishment of a company union, made it also the greatest national non-unionized industrial hub. This had made the two factories, and particularly the Chiah plant, one of the first establishments where Committees succeeded to install, becoming, with active cells in all the factory sections, one of the – if not the – most significant and active of the whole Southern periphery.

The decision to go on strike matured after an escalation of tensions accumulated in the previous months, which were ultimately sparked by the denial of the administration in allowing workers a new 5% salary rise, according to what established by law. On the month of August, in the background of a stringent routine of wage curtails and labor rhythms, a worker of the Chiah plant had literally died of fatigue under the pitiless eyes of the wakīl which, thinking he was sleeping, kept on verbalizing sanctions to his corpse[446]. The wave of indignation that this event provoked, went adding up straight to the discontent already at the edges for the irregularities in the application of wages and social security provisions, the structural and irregularly payed overtime work, the strict control and the abusive practices of the wukalāʾ , along a crescendo of resentment whose umpteenth denial of a right established by law offered the last sparkle. After a series of meetings and discussions, thus, on November 2, agreement was found by the committees and labor cells around the necessity to rise the bar of the conflict and call for a strike. Following the regular protocol of the organization, the

445Michael Johnson, *Class & Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840-1985* (Ithaca Press, 1986), 35–36. For further developments about Makassed Society activities and its political power in pre-War Lebanon, see always Johnson, 46–168.

446Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl, n° 13, August 1972.

decision was immediately submitted to the ultimately approval of the OCAL central committee, which agreed under guarantee that it would have been followed by the majority of workers. On the early morning of November 3, thus, declaring the state of open-ended strike, committee and labor cells' militants started gathering in front of the factory gates of the Chiah plant, succeeding to bring the majority of workers on their side already before the beginning of the working-turn. At same time, another committee member, from the inner yard of the factory, started inciting the remaining workers against the ownership, in the meantime arrived to understand what was going on and try to bring workers back to the order. His action revealed successful: by the beginning of the working-turn, all the production workers were outside the factory. With the scope to coordinate the actions and the further steps to undertake, a strike and an action committee were formed and immediately activated to contact the workers of the Choueifat plant, and the workingwomen group, OCAL and the press, prepare banners and cartels to lift on the walls and the street. Soon after, decision was taken to march towards the Ministry of Labor to rise with their own united voice, and without any other intermediation, all their claims. The strike had definitely began.

I.II
Towards a new beginning: the strike and its bloody end

In the first days of mobilization, the progression of the strike, while certainly frenetic, proceeded in a climate of relative tranquillity. Starting from the following day, the workers of the Choueifat plant entered on strike and joined the Chiah comrades to undertake a common action. In the meantime, a group of delegates from both factories was identified, with the scope to represent workers in the mediations with the ownership and the government. Claims coalesced around thirteen major points: 1) a salary rise by 5% as cost-of-living adjustment as established by law; 2) inhibition of arbitrary dismissals: 3) deliverance of the authorization to join the chocolate workers union; 4) the interdiction of curtails on overtime working-hours; 5) the regular payment of sickness days and the recognition of the right to sickness leaves; 6) the regular payment of working-days in case of absence consequent to labor accident; 7) re-establishment of a eight hours working-day at the Choueifat plant; 8) payment of transportation fees

to the Choueifat plant; 9) prohibition of workers' inspections at the factory doors because of personal dignity; 10) installation of a canteen and of a plant of drinkable water in the Chiah plant; 11) regular payment of the annual leaves and holidays; 12) regular payment of the strike days; 13) inhibition of the dismissal of the striking workers[447]. After a couple of days, committees' delegation was received by the Minister of Labor[448]. Soon after, the same was received also by the Ministry of Social affairs, under whose mediation a bargaining table was opened with the ownership[449]. In the meantime, a further rally was organized from the factory to the central offices of FENASOL, where a delegation was received by the secretary Ilyas al-Buwari. On the way, workers stopped in front of the CGTL building, where they rose slogans praising working-class unity and calling CGTL to take a position[450]. "The unity of the working-class is the essential precondition for the satisfaction of our demands" became, from its side, the great slogan of the strike.

The progression of the bargainings ran in parallel with the maintenance of a state of permanent mobilization at the factory gates. Every morning, all the workers gathered in front of the plant to share updates, organize rallies, keep the attention high. Alongside, workers from other committees and factories, students, intellectuals, activists continuously passed by to show solidarity and offer support.

Much less supportive was instead the attitude of the CGTL. Liquidating the strike as illegal, in facts, CGTL limited its intervention to try to persuade committees, with clearly little success, to demobilize and re-canalize their struggle in the binaries of the law. No pressures or public solidarity was expressed on the strikers' side. The situation started to precipitate from the second half pf the week, when the ownership definitively closed the doors to any mediation.

At the end of the meeting, a committee delegate, hanging on the factory gate, held a memorable speech referring the contents of the talk. Decision was taken to continue on the way of the strike, until requests would have not been satisfied. The counter-answer that workers received this time, however, went far beyond a table of circumstance. On the morning of November 11, a disproportioned police array was sent to factory to disrupt the strike by force. As clashes erupted, police forces answered shooting at men's height. The final toll was dramatic. As at least

447*Niḍāl al-ʿUmmāl*, n° 17, November 1972 and *al-Ḥurriyyah* n° ,

448L'Orient-Le Jour, November 4, 1972.

449L'Orient-Le Jour, November 9, 1972.

450 L'Orient-Le Jour, November, 10 1972.

30 workers were injured, and as many arrested, two people, the committee member Yousuf Ali al-Attar, and Fatmeh al-Khawejah, a seventeen years old girl passing nearby at the moment of the clashes, were killed. The vague of indignation and resentment which followed was disruptive. Soon after the murdering, a manif-sauvage exploded in the streets of the southern banlieue, with workers chanting slogans against the police, the State, the factory ownership. In the meantime, along with the communiqués of the leftist and progressive forces, pictures of the massacre started jumping from a newspaper to another. «The bullets shoot against Gandour workers are indeed bullets shoot against the whole working-class», wrote OCAL in the manifesto immediately issued. It was echoed by the PSP which, on the same wave, stated black on white that such a repression was the umpteenth demonstration that «capitalist enterprises in a reactionary State, exploit the State institutions and the public force at the service of capital[451]». In this turmoil, as accountability for the incidents started to be asked also by the public opinion and the parliamentary opposition, a national demonstration was called for November 13[452]. This was soon sided by a call for general strike by the CGTL[453]. The magnitude of the event and of the popular resentment which followed, were too big to remain silent.

The adhesion to the strike was total. In Beirut, about 50.000 people marched towards the Parliament, where the accusations and slogans shout out the day before by workers, became powerful speeches hitting without exclusions Lebanese economic policies, colluded political leaders, the abuse of force. The example was followed in the rest of all the Lebanese major cities, where also thousand of citizens took the streets[454]. Wildcat strikes and demonstrations continued on a national scale also on the next days.

This unprecedented popular mobilization, offered the necessary pressure for the dispute to finally unlock. Soon after the declaration of the strike, a tripartite commission reuniting the CGTL, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the factory ownership was formed, with the task to study and give satisfaction to workers' demands. In the meantime, the lock-out that the ownership had declared during the mobilizations was lifted, with the reintegration of all the fired workers, and

451 *al-Ḥurriyyah*, n°596, November 20, 1972, and *al-Anbā'*, November 12, 1972

452 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, November 13, 1972

453 *L'Orient-Le Jour*, November 12, 1972

454 *An-Nidā'*, November 14, 1972

the commitment not to dismiss any of them for having participated to the mobilizations. The day after, the production in both plants was regularly restored. The road towards the victory seemed to have been undertaken.

I.III

The quiet before the storm: strike's aftermaths and the end of the age of innocence

The enthusiasms lifted by the opening of the bargaining table, were meant to clash with reality soon. As soon as production restarted, a succession of disciplinary reprisals against workers, and, above all, the ones who had shown a greater activism, was inaugurated. At the same time, as a result of ownership's firm obstructionism, bargainings the tripartite commission got stuck around minor gains. Alongside, despite the numerous influent voices asking for the repression's accountability, Prime Minister Sa'ib Salam, honoring his close ties with the Gandour brothers, refused to allow the opening of an internal enquiry to investigate the responsibilities of the massacre. Breaking-point was reached in mid-December, when yet another arbitrary dismissal, pushed a Committes' delegation to reach the direction and ask for accountability on both the stagnation of the bargainings and the colleague's firing. Facing the silence of the direction, the delegation thus decided to go directly to the Ministry of Social Affairs, where it was received.

The direction counter-answer to this umpteenth act of insubordination was possibly even more drastic than the recourse to the army. Appealing, in the name of the «sacrosanct principle of contractual freedom», to the alleged inviolability of owners' right to fire the workers «incompatible with the good working of the enterprise», a six-months lockout, accompanied by the dismissal en bloc of all the workers, was declared for both plants[455]. This inaugurated another wave of massive mobilizations on a national scale which, after five days of strikes and demonstrations, if, on the one side, succeeded in make the majority of the factory re-open and the majority of workers being reintegrated, on the other side, it left their demands unanswered[456].

455 L'Orient- Le Jour, December 15, 1972.

456 *An-Nidā'*, December 16, 20, 21 and 22, 1972.

Despite the meagre gains of the dispute, however, the Gandour affair had marked a point of no return in the future development (and deterioration) of the triangular State-unions-workers relations.
In the face of an increasingly disillusioned and combative working-class, harsh intransigence and brutal repression became the major guideline for the management of those socio-economic strives that the State, by now in full crisis of legitimacy, was not anymore able to govern through its traditional paternalistic means. This engendered a vicious circle of ever-harder answers counter-answers whereby the attendance of the CGTL, and the tacitly complacent attitude of the Ministry of Social affairs towards entrepreneurs and State repression, only contributed to amplify. The weight of those stresses started to soon to rebound on the same CGTL. On September 18, 1973, after that the bloody repression of tobacco growers in Kfar Remmaneh and the coeval answer to a two-months mobilization of public school teachers with the dismissal tout-court of 324 among them was pushing workers' humors to the tipping point, the umpteenth last-minute withdrawal of a forthcoming general strike by the CGTL[457], pushed leftist unions to the edge of the split. Alongside, with the record quota of 70 strikes up to the outbreak of the Civil War, an unprecedented and increasingly indomitable wave of labor conflict started to hit all the economic sectors. The age of innocence had definitely ended.

II
To quoque: the Mkalles days and the definitive dislocation from the CGTL

The frustrations accumulated by workers towards the CGTL, reached the definitive breaking-point on February 1974.
Since their earliest emergency on the Lebanese labor scenario, Factory Committees, while maintaining a firm critical and openly conflicting attitude towards the General Confederation, had constantly showed support to the general strikes that the latter launched. Despite the growing frustrations, and the never spared harsh critiques reserved to their withdrawals, no autonomous actions to forcedly push forward their execution had been undertaken. Humors started

457 L'Orient-Le Jour, September 19 and 20, 1973. The strike had been scheduled for the next September 28.

changing after the withdrawal of the September 28 strike. In the light of the escalations of the past months, in fact, it was felt necessary that in the face of such an unprecedented attack on working-class rights and unity, an equally powerful and united show of force could no longer wait[458].

CGTL and the State, from their side, were well aware of the impatience mounting at the base. Starting from the end of September, in the desperate attempt to catch with one stone workers' appeasement and the defusing of the strike, a series of ultimatums to the government were launched by the CGTL on a monthly base, to ask addressing, together with updated salary rises, of the full list of socio-economic and labor demands pending unaddressed since three years. In the same spirit, contravening the desiderata of Lebanese business associations, at the end of January Lebanese government agreed in allowing salary rises according to the CGTL terms. This was used as pretext by the general confederation to declare yet another postponement of the strike that had scheduled for the following February 6. Among the base, however, intentions and organization towards the strike had gone to far to be reverted.

After days of hectic meetings and preparations, on the sunset of February 6, Factory Committees of the eastern banlieue were already on the street. This time, any effort of persuasion on workers revealed absolutely unnecessary. As long as a mass of 10.000 workers gathered in the industrial district of Mkalles, a first manif-sauvage on a chain meant to last for four long days, started stretching on the streets of the Estern suburbs, blocking with barricades and burning pneumatics all the major traffic hubs. The slogans shout out by the crowd left no room for misunderstanding that this time it was the General Confederation the great target of their anger. However, the re-appropriation of the industrial space through which such a radical untie articulated, subsumed and expressed another crucial meaning of what that explosion was: it was the radical public affirmation of workers re-appropriation of their own representation and labor spaces, neighborhoods and stances, of their agency and its own terms.

If Mkalles represented the undisputed beating heart of the dissent, the same was not circumscribed to the sole neighborhood. In the city center, a big rally headed by the students brought workers' stances straight to the parliament doors Parliament doors. In Tripoli, under the coordination of a front of progressive forces, another series of wildcat rallies crossed the city, culminating with the

458Nidal al-Ummal, n° 21, September 1973

launch of an explosive device on a big wholesale food deposit. In the South, then, the maintenance of the order of general strike issued by the Federation of the South was totally followed. Here again, as much as in the rest of the major national cities, mass rallies took place, all expressing the same resentment.
As much as they represented the great acto of affirmation of committees' integral autonomy, the Mkalles days marked also the inaugural act of the progressive dislocation of leftist unions from the dictates of the CGTL. Under their initiative, a general strike was unilaterally called for April 2. On March 27, then, in a show of force meant to bond the effective concretization of the strike, a mass rally to protest inflation was organized. In the meantime, the progressive approach to Committees instances, guaranteed the latter a further side to be able to finally mark the first gains. Such a renewed programmatic alliance had been fostered also by a broader process of rapprochement between 'old' and new left, that the Gandour strike and its aftermaths had opened, and that broader the national and regional political developments were contributing to consolidate[459]. This acted as further pressure weapon to achieve the first important collective gains. In 1974, peasants, which in the meantime had started a constitutional process towards the formation of a union, were finally integrated to the NSSF. In the spring of 1975, Article 50 was partially amended. The balance of powers was finally turning.

459 Al-Azmeh, 'The progressive forces', Couland, 'Movimento sindacale e movimento nazionale e progressista in Libano', and MERIP Reports, 'Marching towards Civil War', n° 61 (October 1977)

Epilogue

This process of reversal of the power relations was brutally broke off by the outbreak of the civil war.

On April , 1975, . Eloquently enough, the clashes which sparked, had already had their preview two months in Saida, during the funerals of Marouf Saad, prominent leftist leader dead after the injuries reported reported two months before in yet another repression with bullets of a fishermen's demonstration[460]. Nevertheless, what of the capital of the strives had irremediably gone lost on the stricter labor front, it was retrieved on the political one. As the war broke out, the front of progressive parties forged and re-compacted along the strives of the previous years, coalesced in the Lebanese National Movement, shifting the terrain for the realization of their political project to the battlefield.

In the incessant work of destruction that the conflict before, and, later, the reconstruction, meticolously fostered, factories were, along with the public historical memory of the struggles that had crossed them, among the first edifices to be swept away. However, as for the survived concrete skeletons which still can be seen in the periphery of the capital, spare and discontinuous traces of their presence on the battle-field of history can still be found in the background of the mole of documents which had been able to survive, as well as among the equally dispersed and survived ex workers and militants. To them and the trust given in allowing me the onerous task to manage and give a form to their precious memories, goes my endless and most sincere gratitude.

460El-Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon,

Conclusions

With the retrieval of the political experience of the Factory Committees, we have offered an example of the ways how, on the eve of the 1970s, the progressive acknowledgment of the organic contradictions making of Lebanese post-colonial order consumed through the means of socio-economic stresses, intervened in the production of the process of dislocation of Lebanese subaltern groups from the dominant political structures based on civil leadership – i.e. of organic crisis or crisis of hegemony – marking the path towards the Civil War. In particular, we have shown how, in the background of a stringent socio-economic crisis, and a rapid structural collapse of the rural societal model on which the endurance of Lebanese power system relied, the crescendo of dominant classes' concerted denial to the subaltern groups of both socio-economic rights and access to the processes of decision-making, acted as great motor for, misquoting again Aziz al-Azmeh, the unveiling of «the wall of opacity[461]» surrounding the organic relation between political and economic power in the taking-over of the socio-economic surplus in and through the State at the base of their strives and subordination, and «constructed out of the community-based institutions of civil society». In this process, weather for those social groups whereby the maintenance or the reform of the existing status quo could still offer – or seem to offer – a viable framework for the achievement of their socio-economic and political aspirations, the same paved the way for their political recomposition within the ranks of the new sectarian populist mass parties which also in those years became integral part of the national socio-political confrontation over the access to State power (the new Shia bourgeoisie within the Amal movement, the impoverishing and equally blocked in its hopes of social ascension Maronite petty bourgeoise within the Kataeb, the Sunna petty bourgeoisie and the historical urban "semiproletariat des services" within the Murabitoun, and the remaining Nasserist formations), in those cases were exploitation and deprivation were coupled with alienation – weather real or perceived – from the access to any form of familial, statutory, sectarian or clientelistic privilege as for the case of the new industrial working-class here examined, it paved the way for their recomposition within the ranks of those groups envisaging the integral autonomy from any form of civil leadership. Here, with mechanisms pretty similar to those occurring among the social and

461 Al-Azmeh, 'The Progressive Forces', 64-67.

political forces just listed, the construction, mis-quoting Gramsci[462], of a "sentimental connection" between a popular element which felt but did not knew, and an intellectual element which knew and aspired not only to feel but also, as much as the former, to change the order of things, offered the ideological infrastructure to define the forms and the terms for their recomposition. In any of those cases, contravening the dominant sectarian or 'foreign body' paradigms through which the historical understanding of pre-war Lebanon has been signified, the root and the dynamics of their development, where not only all internal to Lebanon, but also deeply embedded in class.

In the light of the findings and the criticisms in the dominant historical narratives of Lebanon here exposed, we want to conclude our thesis with some methodological reflections. As banal as it may sound, so to understand the emergence and the articulation of a historical phenomenon, the necessary precondition that needs to be satisfied is the prior recognition – intended in its double meaning of capacity of distinction and attestation of existence – of the elements acting as their authority of delimitation as valuable forces to produce historical phenomena. This requires, in turn, together with a certain historical sensitiveness, the prior abandon – within the limits of the impossibility of total neutrality intrinsic to any act of signification – in the approach to a historical phenomenon of any quest for a prior Ursprung, i.e. of teleological ideal continuity or adherence to a more or less structured or ideologically bended archetypical model, in favor of the total abandon – here intended as to let loose any prior resistance – the nude reception of all the historicized forces, dislocations and discontinuities on whose emergence and action historical development articulates. Before than the eventual mis-recognition of class as a valuable force able to produce change in the Lebanese early 1970s – and, more broadly, of modern Lebanon as a whole – what has severely inhibited a full historical understanding of the multiplicity of phenomena and events making of its development, has been the drive towards a quest for a prior Ursprung, rather than for discontinuities that all the text listed in our introduction – weather for different reasons and degrees of arson – . In the past five years, a growing number of scholars and young researchers has started to mark significant step forward in the approach and the

462 See Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, [Passaggio dal Sapere al Comprendere], PN11(XVIII)§67, in Antonio Gramsci, Quaderni dal Carcere, vol. III (Einaudi, 1977), 1505-1506.

analysis of Lebanese post-war historical developments. No significant movements looking at the critical re-examination of the pre-war period have been still been developed. Our hope is that this work, along with compensating an important lacuna in Lebanese labor history, can open a rift in the academic debate on Lebanon to start reframing, this time through the means of genealogy, that intricate labyrinth of forces and actors, dislocation and discontinuities, that the history of modern Lebanon is.

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Estratto per riassunto della tesi di dottorato

Studente: Rossana Tufaro_____ matricola: 956157_____

Dottorato: Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa_____

Ciclo: XXX_____

Titolo della tesi:

Labor and conflict in pre-War Lebanon (1970-1975): a retrieval of the political experience of the Factory Commitees in the industrial district of Beirut_____

Abstract:

While having played a crucial role in the development of the macro-events the whole country was involved in, workers as consciously active collective subjects have found no space in the historical writing of and on Lebanon. At the base of this remotion, the hegemony of an eminently elitist and, above all, sectarian-oriented eye in reading the Lebanese events, that has reduced the history of the country to the history of its religious communities and their (often conflicting) interactions.

The following research, by retrieving the political experience of the Factory Committees in the industrial district of Beirut on the eve of the Civil War, aims at actively contribute to both fill the numerous gaps still permeating Lebanese social and labor history, and also, on a theoretical point of view, to offer new findings for a reframing of the historiographical understanding of Lebanese early 1970s.

Firma dello studente

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