4. PARADOXES OF EMANCIPATION

Revolution and Power in Light of Mao

Organization is the form of mediation between theory and practice.
—GEORG LUKÁCS

There are two ways of making investigations,
one is to look at flowers on horseback
and the other is to get off your horse and look at them.
—MAO TSE-TUNG

The turn to Marxist theory and practice came in the wake of a political failure—the scission of Syria from the United Arab Republic (1961)—and a military defeat (1967). Marxism constituted a powerful critique of both Arab nationalist ideology and the practice of the "progressive" regimes. It was the tool that enabled disenchanted Arab nationalist militants to turn their critical gaze inward to dissect both their society's class composition and the modus operandi of the regimes. Moreover, Marxism worked. The successes of the Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese Revolutions fueled the hopes of the militants who joined the Palestinian Resistance or oscillated in its orbit. Socialist Lebanon was critical in theory of communist stages of development, modernization theories, and the top-down development projects of the national liberation regimes. Having said that, their theoretical virtuosity, which led to their political visibility and merger with the Organization of Lebanese Socialists, reinscribed in practice a vanguardist pedagogical mode of politics.[1] They brought the gift of theory to the much more numerous and veteran militant Lebanese branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement. The Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon (1970–) would be plagued by splits and expulsions from the beginning. The party members could not agree on internal organizational questions and on external ones concerning the modalities of political practice they ought to engage in. Questions of autonomy and discipline as well as what constitutes political practice, where it should take place, with whom, to what end,

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and in whose name shook the young organization from the start. The union brought together militants with different organizational legacies, theoretical genealogies, styles of political practice, and sensibilities toward party discipline and hierarchy who clashed along these lines. The early splits from the OCAL (1971–73) turned the critical gaze inward for a second time, this time to subject Marxist theory and politics to an auto-critique. In this chapter, and the next, I move from the reconstruction of a collective project of emancipation (SL and OCAL), in which Charara played a significant part, to the in-depth examination of his own militant trajectory and critical work.

A couple of years after the foundation of the OCAL, at the height of the social, political, and military polarization that preceded the outbreak of the fighting, Charara subjected the three main components—organization, theory, and political practice—of the revolutionary machine to critique. The people were still, for the time being, the revolutionary subject of History, but they too showed increasing complications. This critique was formulated in a translated and transfigured Maoist idiom when Mao Tse-Tung's thought was, in the wake of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, at the apex of its global influence. The Maoist critique of the party, theory, and practice rearticulated the meanings of power and emancipation as it addressed the political and epistemic dimensions of the question of representation. The vicissitudes of political practice opened up questions that bear a family resemblance to those that would later be taken theoretically in the academy by the labors of critique grouped under the umbrella of postcolonial studies. For now, questions of power, emancipation, and representation were articulated from militant grounds as an auto-critique and a political critique of the OCAL. Charara's Maoist episode put forth a "postcolonial" Marxism that attempted to conjugate the salience of communal solidarities—sectarian, regional, and kin—with class struggle and the possibility of revolutionary militant political practice.

The reflexive, auto-critical dimension and its prescient postcolonial tenor reveal once more a minor tradition of contemporary Arab thought that was forged by militant theorists whose distinctive interventions stand outside the canonized figures and thematics of contemporary Arab thought. The character of the Maoist auto-critique, while highlighting the resilience of communal solidarities, escapes the culturalism of figures like Sadik al-Azm. Moreover, this minor Marxist tradition, which sought to incorporate communal relations into class struggle, was not interested in restricting its intervention to criticizing Marxism for its Eurocentric discourses. It did that, but it was more invested in attempting to forge a theoretical idiom that enables the pursuit of militancy in the wake of realizing the saliency of communal contradictions internal to

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the masses that complicate revolutionary practice. Retrospectively, Charara's Maoist interlude constitutes the first episode of a very early unraveling of leftist political practice as it stumbles upon both the top-down modalities of practice of leftist parties and the recalcitrance and reproduction of communal relations. Charara's militant experiences, particularly his observation of the failure of the worker and teacher-student movements at the time, as well as his dissertation research on modern Arab intellectual thought, revealed to him the complexity of Arab histories and the multiple solidarities at work in Arab societies in comparison to the poverty of theoretical languages that attempt to subsume them by a few concepts. Maoism was the theoretical idiom through which he articulated his early disenchantment with the belief in the political powers of theory and accounted for the multiple logics, temporalities, and solidarities at work in Lebanese society that foreclose the possibility of a revolutionary teleology while retaining the militant's hope in emancipatory political practice.

The Workers' Sector and the Blue Pamphlet Splits

Soon after the unification between the Organization of Lebanese Socialists and Socialist Lebanon, and after adopting a loose organizational structure for a short while, the nascent organization shifted to a Marxist-Leninist form: democratic centralism.[2] In 1971 a major scission—that of the workers' sector—shook the OCAL. The split took with it a substantial number of militant intellectuals who came from Socialist Lebanon who were ill at ease with the strictures of organizational forms associated with official pro-Soviet communist parties. "What was left was an organization whose true effective body was constituted by the Organization of Lebanese Socialists," recalls Abbas Beydoun, a member of the Politburo at the time. Moreover, those who left, Beydoun adds, were "of the same weight as Waddah [Charara], Ahmad [Beydoun], Fawwaz [Traboulsi], and Muhsin [Ibrahim]; you are not talking about us, who were the 'little ones' of the Politburo."[3] The adoption of democratic centralism soon erupted in disputes over decision-making and prerogatives. "The first dispute," wrote Traboulsi, who was a proponent of democratic centralism,

> took place between the rapporteur of the "Workers Sector," a member of the Politburo, and the committee responsible for the sector mostly composed of the intellectual cadres of Socialist Lebanon. It revolved around their mutual prerogatives: Is the committee's power superior to that of the rapporteur or vice-versa? The Politburo settled the matter by supporting the rapporteur as a representative of the higher committee

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> [the Politburo] over the lower one. And after going back and forth it was decided that either the Workers Sector committee abides by the Politburo's decision or be subject to an organizational sentence. The committee unanimously refused to follow the Politburo's decision, which then issued a resolution to freeze the membership of its constituents.[4]

What exacerbated matters was the fact that the Politburo member, an OLS member initially and more of an "on the ground militant," did not come from the same theoretically imbued context as SL's militant intellectuals. Enmeshed in the organizational dispute, and highlighted through it, were the heterogeneity of the two recently unified groups: the democratic heritage and very loose organizational structure of militant intellectuals and the "disciplined traditions" of the Organization of Lebanese Socialists, "which were inherited from the Arab Nationalist Movement."[5] The split brought out the question of the place theoretical abilities ought to play in assuming leadership positions. In a thick ideological political practice such as Marxism—where theoretical virtuosity endows its bearer with political authority—it was difficult for intellectual cadres to bow down to the decisions not only of a politburo member but also of one who wasn't perceived to be of the same theoretical caliber. This was especially the case since it seemed "as if there was a promise to hand over the unified organization to the cadres of Socialist Lebanon to educate it since they were accomplished and superior in this domain."[6] This first split was followed up with a great amount of labor around the four corners of Lebanon to recuperate the OCAL's energy in its wake.[7]

The split of the majority of Socialist Lebanon's constituency a short time after the fusion left its marks on Charara: "They went out in the spring-summer of 1971 and I traveled right after. My travels were partially motivated by this."[8] A fellow member of the Politburo recalls the surprise provoked by Charara's decision to leave directly after the split to pursue a PhD in France, despite the fact that he was at the forefront of upholding the Politburo directives against the worker's sector: "I don't know what was the reason behind it. No one told him no. Although this thing was very 'frappant' [striking], not only surprising. . . . Waddah was not one of those people you say to, what are you going to do. So he went."[9] "He came back a very different person," the comrade adds, "adopting things similar [to the positions of the] Gauche Prolétarienne against democratic centralism, and with a position exactly opposed to the one that led to the organizational crisis."[10] Charara finished his dissertation, entitled "Le Discours Arabe sur L'Histoire" (The Arab discourse on history), in 1972, came back, and headed an opposition movement inside the organization that

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would split in 1973, two years before the beginning of the Lebanese civil war. After a number of meetings with the dissenting comrades, Charara formulated the opposition's political, organizational, and theoretical positions in a lengthy document (ninety-six pages), which came to be known as *al-Kirras al-Azraq* [*The Blue Pamphlet*,] that declared the group's independence from the OCAL. *Al-Hurriyya*, the weekly political magazine and mouthpiece of the OCAL at the time, published a four-page article on July 16, 1973, entitled "A Communiqué from the Politburo of the OCAL Announcing the Expulsion of the Boyish Leftist Band of Apostates [*al-Murtadda*] of Marxism-Leninism."[11] The dissenting group, which called for direct action among the masses and not through institutions, such as syndicates or Marxist-Leninist parties, and for "fusion [*iltiham*] with the Palestinian Resistance,"[12] did not survive long after the split and its members went in different directions. Some comrades adhered to the Lebanese Communist Party, some joined Fatah, while others went home.[13] The scattering of a substantive number of OCAL dissenters between different factions of the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese Communist Party can be understood in light of Traboulsi's retrospective assessment: "While the first split [of the Workers Sector] brought up issues pertaining to organizational structure, and the second [*The Blue Pamphlet*] focused on the modes of militancy, they were also, and especially, bringing out the question of the raison of d'être of the organization in comparison to two references: pan-Arab [*qawmi*] and leftist, i.e., in reference to the Palestinian resistance and to the Lebanese Communist Party."[14]

Some of the dissenters, he added, "deemed that the Lebanese situation does not warrant an additional new communist organization to the left of the Communist Party, so they directly adhered to the Palestinian resistance."[15] Others "realized the weight and popularity of the Communist Party and its importance in the life of the working class,"[16] therefore canceling the justification for the OCAL's existence. The two stronger forces eroded the national and socioeconomic feet on which the OCAL stood.

The prewar years were not exclusively marked by the polarization around the Palestinian resistance. They were also years of mobilizations around socioeconomic questions in the privileged sectors of leftist militancy: peasants, workers, and students.[17] November 1972 witnessed the strike of Ghandour's biscuits and chocolate factory workers. The twelve-hundred-strong workforce at Ghandour's, the largest nonunionized force in Lebanese industry, Traboulsi relates, demanded "a wage increase, equal pay for men and women workers, the recognition of the shop floor committee, and their right to trade union organization" (167). Police opened fire at the workers' demonstration, killing

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"Yusuf al-'Attar, a militant of the OCA's Workers' Committees, and Fatima al-Khawaja, a member of the LCP, and wounding 14 others" (168).[18] Approximately a month after the demonstration, Ghandour fired all his workers. He later opened shop again, reemploying all of them except for a hundred whom he considered to be at the head of the protest. "The outcome of the Ghandour battle," Traboulsi, the historian, writes, "left only frustration and resentment. The trade union attaché at the US embassy noted that the demonstration and the general strike had been a 'moderate success' for the Left, which had managed to go on the offensive and win the 'propaganda war.' However, he concluded that neither the Left nor the trade unions had secured any gains for the workers" (168). The Ghandour strike was followed by the strikes of tobacco farmers in the south and a number of strikes in the educational sector, notably by public school teachers, which included violence between the state apparatus and the protesters, in what would prove to be the last months of a struggle conceived along the lines of an *opposition* to the state before the outbreak of the fifteen-year-long civil and regional wars. The year 1972 saw the strike of sixteen thousand public school teachers, "demanding a wage increase, the right of trade union organization and retirement after twenty-five years of service" (170). The strike lasted two months, and ended when the government stopped paying their salaries. It picked up again from January to July 1973. While 324 teachers lost their jobs, the network of solidarity with the teachers covered all of Lebanon, as "their sit-ins and hunger strikes became a rallying point for all social movements" (170). In January 1973, "a procession of thousands of tobacco planters occupied the offices of the Régie in Nabatiyeh, demanding a 20 percent increase in the purchase price of their products. The following day, the army shot at the demonstrators and killed two peasants" (166).[19]

Waddah Charara wrote *The Blue Pamphlet* in the spring of 1973, in the wake of all of these events, weaving a reexamination of what was called for on the theoretical, political, and organizational levels, the causes for failure as well as the direction for future political action (Fig. 4.1). Charara observed these mobilizations closely. At times, he took a more active part in them, such as attending the public meetings held by the striking Ghandour workers, until he was forbidden by the OCAL to do so.[20] "Why weren't the largest demands-based mass movements," he wrote, that represent "the interests of the main popular classes able to snatch one partial benefit from the authorities? Why could the authorities resort to violent oppression without falling apart, or at least leading to a change in the government?"[21] Two years before his exit from Marxism, Charara engaged in an auto-critique from within the boundaries of

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المجموعة المستقلة عن «منظمة العمل الشيوعي»

توضح وجهة نظرها

- منظمة العمل الشيوعي تنتهي الى خط تحريفي، قطري، اصلاحي.
- الخط الديمقراطي والمسألة الوطنية.
- في سبيل خط وطني جماهيري.

FIGURE 4.1. Front cover of *The Blue Pamphlet*.

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the tradition, repositioning himself in an ultraleftist, fervently pro-Palestinian Maoist position.[22]

The Twilight of the Organizational Idol

In the wake of the 1967 Arab defeat against Israel, and the ensuing reexamination of the causes leading to the defeat of the Arab armies by political parties and intellectuals, the Arab Nationalist Movement previously gravitating in Nasser's orbit proposed resorting to popular armed struggle to fight imperialism in Arab lands. Socialist Lebanon participated in the argument regarding the direction of the Arab liberation movement. After emphasizing that for Marxists the question ought not to rest on the principle of violent confrontation but rather on the suitability of this form of struggle for the present, Socialist Lebanon reached the following conclusion:

> We asked a question about the meaning of proposing the slogan of armed struggle in the current period. Now is the time to answer that what is meant by it is the deferral of the primary task of Arab struggle: <u>the building of Marxist-Leninist parties, which history has not devised any alternative to, for leading the liberation of oppressed masses to victory!</u>[23]

Socialist Lebanon, which was still loosely organized, distinguished itself from the calls for "armed popular struggle" positing the Marxist-Leninist party as the sole agent of emancipation of the masses. Three years after the small group of intellectuals merged with the Organization of Lebanese Socialists, the opposition inside OCAL came to perceive organizational practices as a means of oppression. The organization's leadership, Charara wrote, "sees in every act of political accountability a risk with uncertain consequences. And this has been consolidated after the 1971 split: since the leadership has seen it a result of some comrades' desire to discuss with no limits!" (*The Blue Pamphlet*, hereafter cited as *TBP*, 4). In this veiled auto-critique Charara accused the leadership of evading the discussion of important political events such as Anwar al-Sadat's decision to expel all Soviet experts from Egypt, the issues of contention in the Syrian Communist Party, and the Ghandour workers' strike.[24] Additionally, the splinter group accused the Politburo of "suspending the internal regulations, interfering in the details of organizational issues, establishing special relations with specific members, in addition to using arguments of safety, security, and secrecy for no valid reasons." "In one word," Charara summarizes, "the organizational relationships have become a means of authoritarianism, abuse, and isolation" (*TBP*, 6).

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Charara and his comrades reproached the OCAL's leadership not only for their internal authoritarianism but also for adopting a certain form of political action that went hand in hand with the organizational dimensions of the crisis. The organization, whose primary objective was to lay the foundations of the working class's leadership for emancipation, had reduced its struggle, according to the splinter group, to a politics "from above." The OCAL's contribution in the "Rally of National Parties and Forces" had begun to monopolize all of the organization's political activity.[25] The leadership began to increasingly think that "the only 'struggle' is the one that takes place in meetings of leaders and 'generals' while the main work which takes place in the midst of the masses diminishes" (*TBP*, 15). "The disdain for mass struggle" produced internal repercussions as well, since the leadership started to think that it is the organization and "what it sees is correct," forgoing discussion, political confrontation, and "the rules of organizational relations that permit the comrades to present their views and differ from those of the leadership" (*TBP*, 15). In the summer of 2008, Charara remembered the state of the OCAL when he returned from France:

> When I came back I didn't have any idea of what had happened to our work, to the organization. I came back and found out that Muhsin Ibrahim had made a "bande à part" [separated himself] in a complete way, with a personal link to Arafat and Kamal Jumblatt. And what is called the organization is practically living off this relationship, to which it had no link, and over which it had no control. No one knew what was said, what was happening, and all the attempts to move the OCAL from its student base to popular, workers, rural bases were either stopped, or no longer had any political echo.[26]

Charara's substitionist critique underscored that the organization had been reduced to its leadership, while mass struggle and militancy had been reduced to private meetings with the "generals" of progressive political parties.[27]

The telos of the organization's practices had long forsaken emancipation. This form of politics from above was driven by the increase in the organization's institutional share of power. "When the organization reaches syndicate positions," Charara wrote, "its pretense of democracy ends, and it begins fearing the students' interference in issues that concern them" (*TBP*, 34). Moreover, these political strategies of reaching power, which begin by alienating and fearing those the party seeks to represent, are refracted internally by an increasing stratification of relationships. "Members of cells are not supposed to distribute communiqués," Charara writes, "a task that is delegated to the 'lightweights,' as

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someone describes the members of assemblies and circles" (*TBP*, 33). This political practice, which was predicated

> on reaching power—externally—and on an increasing importance of ranks and relations of power internally, renders the talk about the point of view of the working class, the popular masses, and the national battle empty. And it enables, behind the mask of Marxist jargon, a petite bourgeoisie whose horizon of ambition is constituted by the state apparatus to move forward; a bourgeoisie that glorifies in talk workers and peasants while it does its best [in practice] to retain the differences between itself and them. (*TBP*, 35)

Charara's harsh critique underscored how particular—petit bourgeois—interests had occupied the party, turning Marxism into an ideology that is deployed to serve its own interests. In doing so, it reproduced in practice the relations of power it claims to eradicate in theory. It is not hard to see a continuity between Charara's critique of the OCAL and Socialist Lebanon's earlier critique of the "military-administrative-bureaucratic" regimes during the mid-1960s as apparatuses of power that foreclose the masses' political practice while speaking in their name.

The question of autonomy, of taking part in putting together a movement of auto-emancipation, that is neither dependent on nor subjugated to parties outside of it, whether they are state bureaucracies, nationalist parties, or sectarian formations, has been at the heart of Charara's thought since the 1960s. Decades later, he drew a retrospective distinction between Socialist Lebanon's critical theoretical labor and its political practice: "We didn't have a problem with the critical aspect of things. . . . Tracking inconsistencies, contradictions, ignorance, and deviations from Marxism and Leninism. This was work we had fun doing." Having said that, the political task of building "an autonomous sociopolitical force," Charara continued, "proved to be an astronomical task, particularly that the work was being done by thirty to forty people maximum including about ten of them in cells, and the rest were students, and some were teachers."[28] The expansion of the small and loose group of militant intellectuals into a wider organization in the turbulent years leading to war witnessed the fall of the "organizational" idol, once theoretically assumed to constitute the transparent vector of people's emancipation. It became the vector of a "petite bourgeoisie" in its bid for power with the other constituents of Lebanese society rendering Marxist ideological positions its Trojan horse.

Today, in the wake of the defeat and sclerosis of Arab leftist parties, it is not difficult to be swayed by *The Blue Pamphlet*'s prescient critique of instrumental

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and top-down politics and leadership unaccountability, which turned progressive parties into the means of production of new elites. Muhsin Ibrahim remains till today the secretary-general of the practically nonexistent OCAL, nearly fifty years after it came into being. Having said that, if one brackets the seductive reading of the 1970s from the present perspective of a Left in ruins, we get a more nuanced picture of the conditions of possibility of political action in a particular conjuncture. These very tense pre–civil war years, whether on the Palestinian front or on the socioeconomic one, and the mobilizations that ensued polarized the Lebanese polity. Fawwaz Traboulsi, one of the very few SL militants who did not leave the OCAL in the early years after the union, and stayed on as the number two in command after Muhsin Ibrahim till the mid-1980s, recalled the beginnings of their emergence on the "official" national political field. "The battle of Ghandour [fall 1972] opened up a new period in the life of the organization," wrote Traboulsi, "during which we had to cooperate with the other leftist parties in a mobilization that took larger dimensions than the [usual] factory ones and which surpassed our capacities to carry it by ourselves."[29] "As a result," he continued, "our relationship to Kamal Jumblatt and the LCP improved after a period of boycott, estrangement and mutual accusations that reached the extent of student fights between us and the latter, which were not devoid of violence" (*PYMR*, 134). It was in this context that the OCAL emerged on the national political scene when it was invited to the meeting held by the Rally of National and Progressive Parties—the precursor of the Lebanese National Movement—to protest the severe draft law limiting the freedoms of political parties.

Traboulsi gestured in his memoir to his ambivalence during this hinge moment (1973): "We entered the Left's front [the Rally of National and Progressive Parties] from the door of our militancy at the level of the base. But, is there a possibility of reconciling base-militancy and participation in action 'from above' and public political life?" "This was the question," Traboulsi recalled, "that would trouble us, or rather trouble me personally, and characterize my positions and behavior with much wobbling and hesitancy" (*PYMR*, 135). Muhsin Ibrahim, the veteran of official Nasserite politics, on the other hand, called for the "political fructification" of theoretical analysis.[30] Ibrahim is less concerned with questions regarding the modalities of political practice and its autonomy that troubled Charara and Traboulsi, Socialist Lebanon's founding dynamos, and divided them on the cusp of the war. Rather, Ibrahim's position is articulated as double avoidance: of the endless discussions of intellectuals (theory without a practice), on the one hand, and political opportunism (practice without theory), on the other hand. With the beginning of the Lebanese

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civil war, Muhsin Ibrahim became, alongside Kamal Jumblatt and George Hawi (the assistant to the secretary general of the LCP), one of the main leaders of the Lebanese National Movement, the coalition of leftist and pan-Arab parties that were allied with the Palestinian Resistance.

Power and Emancipation along Maoist Lines

As Marxist political parties became—alongside the bourgeoisie and imperialism—the targets of critique from within the tradition, the meaning of emancipation and power were also rethought. The nodal shift in the rethinking of emancipation and power according to Maoist lines was related to the crisis in political and epistemic representation. If the Marxist-Leninist political party was no longer the representative of the working classes, its reaching power no longer constituted a revolution; it was merely a substitution of one ruling class by another, retaining the "differences" between itself and the masses. Maoism, wrote Charara, meant that

> conflict between the masses and their enemies, takes place in interpenetrating, camouflaged, or overt forms in *all* of society's cells and its institutions. The masses taking the reins of power is not therefore an unforeseen rupture that puts the leadership of the masses' movement in charge of state power, giving it suddenly the task of eradicating from above the relations of oppression and exploitation. Rather, the mass line is present in the conflict in all positions of social power from the narrowest to the widest. (*TBP*, 91)

Power was no longer a thing that was solely concentrated in institutions of rule and at the nodes of capitalist production. Charara's Maoist critique, by extending the domain of conflict between the masses and their enemies into all corners of society and making it internal to all institutions, rearticulated the horizon of emancipation away from the mere fact of seizing power. The political question was clearly no longer monopolized by who was in power. The extension of power and struggle to all cells of society and the stress on the insufficiency of increasing one's share of power in institutions to constitute emancipation was translated in *The Blue Pamphlet* by an emphasis on new forms of struggle that put the masses' practice as the mainspring of political action. Maoism meant "the foregrounding of the masses' own struggle on any pretense of leadership that builds itself outside of its own movement" (*TBP*, 89). The organization that put its own interest before that of the masses and outside of their movement was to be overcome by the masses' formulation of

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their own political project in light of their own practice. For this practice, wrote Charara, in a direct echo of Mao, "always contains a true kernel, behind all phenomena, that ought to be deduced and returned to the masses," (*TBP*, 90).[31] Foregrounding the masses' own practice also entailed a rethinking of the role of intellectual vanguards. "An illusion that has always flirted with professional 'intellectuals,'" Charara wrote, "is to try and spare the masses any experience, or to take their place in digesting their own experience" (*TBP*, 74). The intellectuals were to become the editors/formulators that take in the word of the masses, reformulate it, and give it back to them—and not to be the originators of thought.[32]

Estranged Intellectuals

Maoism's emphasis on the logics of political practice and the relations of production cleared the path for questioning the powers of political and epistemic representation. Charara's critique of the OCAL's internal organizational structure and its relationship with the masses brought out Maoism's critique of the politics of delegation, and of expertise, premised on the distinction between those who have knowledge and those who lack it.[33] I now turn to his auto-critique of how leftist militancy articulated the relationship of theory to practice and his reflexive account of why it did so, which is driven by two fundamental ideas. The first is Charara's critique of the imputed power of theory, that is, its performative political powers. If Lenin said "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement," Charara, who spent about a decade immersed in militancy and in practices of reading, translating, and writing, particularly during the intellectually fervent years of Socialist Lebanon, came to the realization that revolutionary theory does not necessarily guarantee the coming into being of a revolutionary movement. What may seem to some today like an obvious realization is not exactly so. The theoretical and political conjuncture of the times placed a lot of weight on the political value of theory. Louis Althusser for one, whom Charara had read carefully and put to use, wanted "to guarantee an autonomy for theory that would make it capable of investing Marxism with the theoretical edge to generate political renewal."[34] The radical post-1967 conjuncture in the Arab world was characterized by a turn away from Arab nationalism to Marxism that was fueled partly by the latter's theoretical sophistication. Even today, critical scholars who warn of the ontological and epistemological violence of discourses still subscribe to a strong belief in the powers of theory that supposedly, and without much friction, will produce predictable effects in the world.

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The second is Charara's observation regarding the ruggedness of the social terrain and the complexity of practices and political events in comparison to the poverty of theoretical languages that attempt to subsume them. He came to this deduction via several routes. It was the result of his close observation of mass movements, the consequence of leftist militant practice, and his Maoist turn, which highlighted the focus on practices and the empirical idea of investigation.[35] It was also the result of his close reading of Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, the Egyptian historian who chronicled Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, for his dissertation work (1972). What al-Jabarti revealed to him was the gap between the richness, complications, and contradictory aspects of historical events and the poverty of the ideological discourses that came to dominate Arab discourses on history and politics.[36] The gap between theory and practices was now wide open in both directions: by severing the direct highway that tied theoretical virtuosity to revolutionary practice, and by highlighting the complexity of practices that cannot be adequately captured by mastering a few big concepts. Charara's political experiences, his theoretical persuasion, and his historical excavations led him away from theoretical abstractions and into much more empirically inclined sociological and ethnographic modes of analysis that he will develop fully in the wake of the Lebanese civil and regional wars. Having said that, he noticed very early on the gap separating the revolutionary ideological political line—its anti-imperial *content*—and its practices, modes of operation, and communal *forms* of mobilization. Just a few months before the founding of the OCAL, in a sequel to "The Two Resistances," he had a moment of doubt regarding the revolutionary potential of the Palestinian resistance, which he had theorized a few months earlier. Charara underscored "the rupture" between the resistance's supposed role as a detonator of Lebanese contradictions and its material fostering of "traditional political actors," whose base rises on personal, familial, and regional loyalties.[37]

He put these two ideas to work in his auto-critique of the political practice of militant intellectuals, starting from the founding of Socialist Lebanon. The cornerstone of the account given for the "disease that has infiltrated all parts of the organization" was the origins of its constitutive members, who were for the most part "marginal intellectuals" (*TBP*, 17). In this first reexamination of Socialist Lebanon—and the Organization of Lebanese Socialists—Charara remarked that the former's practice "did not coincide with work to extend militant roots in the ranks of the popular movement" (*TBP*, 17). Socialist Lebanon's work mostly grew "in the cracks of [other] political parties' positions, that is their contradictions.... What 'Socialist Lebanon' did not realize, and it is also the case for the 'Organization of Lebanese Socialists,' is that

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the correctness of political critique does not constitute a foundation to build a militant organization and to form militants" (*TBP*, 17). In other words, drawing attention to the LCP's theoretical poverty via the intertextual theoretical practice that Socialist Lebanon engaged in, as we saw all along, was no longer a guarantee for building an autonomous popular movement. To get an idea of the strength of the idea tying theoretical prowess (or the political line) to political efficacy, it is worth revisiting the interview Fawwaz Traboulsi gave to the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) in October 1977, in which he affirmed that "the correctness of our [OCAL] political line accounts for our influence on the masses and within the front [the LNM], disproportional to our numerical situation."[38] In Traboulsi's vanguardist reasoning, good theory accounts for political influence on both the masses and other leftist parties despite the organization's small size.

Charara extended his auto-critique of militant intellectuals beyond the reduction of political practice to political critique, noting that their relative privileges compared to peasants resulted in an increased *distance* between them—inhabiting the "language and culture of professional party member politicians"—and the effective everyday issues and struggles of the masses (*TBP*, 18). "The organization's ranks and before it those of Socialist Lebanon and the Organization of Lebanese Socialists," wrote the fresh PhD graduate from France in an accusatory tone, "are swarming with those pursuing a university education in order to improve their social and economic conditions of living. And this [situation] results in distancing them from the masses' ranks where they aspire to militate" (*TBP*, 17). This distance between the intellectuals and the masses resulted in the former's engagement in a "cultural" critique of the dominant political practice that "veiled itself with Leninism." "And there is no doubt," added Charara, "that our cultural critique is a result of the weak relation that linked us to the real struggles taking place in our society" (*TBP*, 18).

Charara argued that they were held captive by an "imaginary image" of workers that in fact carries "the features that are really those of intellectuals, but transposed into the factory" (*TBP*, 23). Workers were seen only as workers, that is, as a homogenous group produced by factory relations, not only because of the bookish character of these intellectuals' knowledge of workers but more importantly because of their sociological profile. These militant intellectuals broke their relations with their villages, their families, and the parliamentarians of their areas. Moreover, they accessed their jobs by passing an exam or holding a degree "independent of traditional relations," and joined a "homogenous milieu composed of employees who like them have left the countryside and their relationships with their families" (*TBP*, 23). The estranged militant intellectual

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who speaks in the name of the masses is a product of an internal migration to the city whose means of livelihood were mediated by abstract, institutional means that broke away from the regional, kinship, and sectarian forms of solidarity that mediate the Lebanese citizens' relationship with the state and the market. Yet "when these traditional relationships still play a role in the intellectuals' conditions," Charara wrote, "they [the intellectuals] make efforts to hide it so that it does not devalue them and their merits" (*TBP*, 23). Briefly put, the image of the "abstract worker" is a consequence of the intellectual's abstraction from multiple attachments and mediations, whose haunting presence is capable of generating streams of anxiety.

Charara also put his critique of the estrangement of militants from the masses into practice. He followed Mao Tse-Tung's recommendation that "since [intellectuals] are to serve the masses of workers and peasants, intellectuals must, first and foremost, know them and be familiar with their life, work and ideas."[39] He relocated in the spring of 1973 to Burj Hammud—a multiethnic, multinational, working-class suburb northeast of Beirut—and lived there until the outbreak of the fighting in 1975 made it impossible for him to stay there. Charara's établissement in Burj Hammud took the form of making connections and working with groups of rural migrant workers from ʿIrsal, a northeastern Lebanese town on the border with Syria, as well as with a number of factory workers in the surrounding area during this time. Charara's Maoist period, and his établissement, was premised on his own physical displacement into a working-class neighborhood where he engaged in everyday investigations and political practices with the people living and working there. It was an effort to learn from them and to overcome the gap between intellectual and manual labor. In contrast to Socialist Lebanon's textualist phase, when the emphasis was on the translation and transfiguration of texts to produce an adequate theory of one's political present, the militant intellectual during this last period of militancy, not the texts, traveled with the hope of both reconfiguring himself and the masses. "After all," Kristin Ross writes in her discussion of the établissement of French Maoists, "as Mao was fond of asking, how can you catch a tiger cub without entering the tiger's lair?"[40]

Revisiting Sectarianism

In the spirit of Maoist self-criticism, *The Blue Pamphlet* revisits in a postcolonial mode Socialist Lebanon's theoretical premises on which their political analysis and practice were built:

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> The political axis of analysis was, and still is, the presupposition of a European-like capitalism that eradicates all inherited relations from the precapitalist formations, such as family ones and relations of political "feudalism" . . . and this main presupposition is bolstered by another one in conjunction with it, [revolving] around a working class which as soon as it enters the factory gains a class homogeneity [and] gets rid of its clan solidarities [*al-ʿashaʾiriyya*]. (*TBP*, 19)

In the moment of auto-critique Charara irons out Socialist Lebanon's intricate theoretical work, as well as his own emphasis on the necessity of translation and transfiguration of Marxism. Nonetheless, he draws our attention to the increasing salience of the question of sectarian-regional-kinship solidarities and the Marxist metanarrative that tried to take stock of the problem of communal ties that divided the masses and hindered their practice according to their own economic interests. Charara's target at the height of his populist glorification of the masses is to show how the Marxist metanarrative, which predicated revolutionary practice on overcoming the different forms of social solidarities, was the product of estranged intellectuals. He continues:

> And the persistence of this imaginary image has transformed it into a fixed political mode that we try to transpose to all phenomena, squeezing into it all important events. So we understood the national movement, and its kernel the Palestinian Resistance, as the realization of what capitalism could not achieve in the sphere of social relations. We were under the illusion that the Resistance's main role was to eradicate the fragmentation of the popular masses by the sectarian, regional, and kinship relations, i.e., we practically put the resistance in the place of the Lebanese capitalism we dream of! (*TBP*, 19)

Charara is referring to "The Two Resistances" (1969), his key text, which was built on a series of dualities that sought to account for the blockage of revolutionary practice by noting the disjunction between the economic infrastructure and the political superstructure. Lebanon, he had argued, is characterized both by the propagation of the universal laws of capitalist expansion in the economic sphere (commensurability) and the sectarian political brakes of the political system that were devised by French imperialism, which impede the birth of the interest-based politics of citizens (incommensurability). This duality is also inscribed at the heart of Lebanon's exploitative relationship with its Arab neighbors. Lebanon is economically integrated into the Arab world, thriving on the investment of Palestinian capital after the 1948 Nakba and

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exports to the Gulf countries while being politically isolated from Palestine, via its politics of neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ruling alliance itself reproduces this duality since it is conceived as the partnership between the banking and commercial bourgeoisie of the coast and the landowning families of the mountains. The hybrid Lebanese citizen—for example, Sunni from Beirut, Maronite from the mountains—is also the outcome of this dual structure, which combines the universality of the bourgeois notion of citizenship and the particularity of sectarian and regional affiliations.

Sectarianism, in "The Two Resistances," plays a very different role whether we are talking about the Lebanese ruling alliance or the people. Sectarianism, by splitting the Lebanese citizen, is responsible for stifling class-based politics. The split needs to be overcome for a "mature," interest-based political practice to take place. If we shift our analytical gaze to the composition of the Lebanese regime, we get a different picture. The split between universality and particularity is not internalized in its "hybrid" subjects. Rather, it becomes a sociological feature of the two groups—the bourgeoisie of the coast and the landowning lords of the mountains—that constitute it. Socialist Lebanon does not attach a sectarian attribute—Christian or Muslim—to the Lebanese bourgeoisie. Sectarianism is not treated as an essential component of the Lebanese bourgeois identity but as a veil that masks its defense of its privileges. During his militant days, Charara's analysis had to provide an account of the particularity of Lebanese sectarian politics and loyalties on a Marxian ground that takes class politics and exploitation as the universal underlying realities that explain the Lebanese social formation. He was faced with a puzzle of how to square the proliferation and multiplicity of apparent infranational loyalties and political divisions with a notion of politics that is predicated on the contradiction between Labor and Capital. The differential distribution of his universal/particular binaries (economic integration, commensurability, banking-commercial bourgeoisie; and political isolation, incommensurability, political feudalism, hybrid citizens) and the different meanings sectarianism acquires are his answers to the conundrum of explaining along class lines the multiple sectarian allegiances and divisions within the frame of one exploitative system.

Sectarianism has different ontological weights and plays a variety of roles in "The Two Resistances." It is at the same time the backbone of the Lebanese political structure, one of the main sources of identification of Lebanese citizens, and a mask covering class exploitation. Sectarianism is both a form of political power that fashions hybrid citizens and paralyzes their political practice and a veil that covers up the interest-driven politics of the banking-commercial bourgeoisie. The Palestinian resistance, the anti-imperial Arab agent par excellence

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after it made its entrance into Lebanese politics, will contribute to the overcoming of the system's duality. Its intrusion into Lebanese politics unmasked the bourgeoisie's exploitation, which can no longer veil itself with sectarianism, and refashioned the sectarian subject into a revolutionary one.[41]

Two years before the war, Charara, under Mao's sign, recodes his previous theoretical and political quests to be on the lookout for the external agent that will overcome the fragmentation of the masses along nonclass lines, as an act of estranged intellectuals. Charara inverted his previous analysis, noting:

> We have neglected a key issue, which is that clan, family, neighborhood, and sectarian relations are relations of class struggle that are no less acute than exploitation relations in the factory, even if their forms veil themselves and differ. Since those who play the role of middlemen do not only receive a concrete material price for their roles, they often join the ranks of the commercial and financial bourgeoisie: since it allocates to them positions, jobs and supports their notability and their power. So that the fusion becomes complete between the "upper" middlemen (members of Parliament, important electoral keys, and high-ranking employees) and the bourgeoisie itself. . . . Working to reveal the forms of this struggle and investigate the issues it revolves around is a hard task that is awaiting our initiation, because it has long remained, and still is, on the margin of intellectuals' interests, especially those who are party-members. (*TBP*, 81–82)

Charara's widening of the definition of struggle to engulf social, institutional, and political dimensions beyond the exploitation of labor enabled what was previously seen as an obstacle to class struggle to be repositioned as part of it. Expanding the notion of class struggle to encompass the multiple communal forms of solidarity, though, is not merely a numerical addition of clan, family, neighborhood, and sectarian components to class. The forms of communal solidarity are politically *polyvalent*. They can constitute a "vital agent in curbing resistance against exploitation and oppression" (*TBP*, 81) without being

> fully geared to the advantage of the agents [between the bourgeoisie and the working class] and through them to the bourgeoisie and its power. For the masses, with their "class instinct" as Lenin says, use this weapon to their advantage. In a number of factories, the familial and local solidarity is overturned against the factory owner and the agent, and workers use it as a strong pressuring measure on the factory owner to retract a dismissal decision, a wage deduction penalty, or to consolidate a strike. . . .

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To rely on these relations of solidarity, and to work such as the masses will benefit from them against the agents, against the commercial and financial bourgeoisie and against the authorities, is a line we should not deviate from in expanding the people's struggle. (*TBP*, 82)

Two years before the war, Charara the militant, noting the growing opacity of the masses, and the growing complications lodged at the heart of the revolutionary subject, recast the scope and modality of political militancy away from its restriction to workers qua workers, seeing in the "traditional relations of solidarity" a potential to be exploited and mobilized in the struggle of the masses against both the bourgeoisie and the political authorities. "This is the revolutionary content of 'dealing with reality as it is,'" Charara wrote, "and of dealing with the exploited and the toilers first, and not from the perspective of the petite bourgeoisie only" (*TBP*, 82). This expansion of the domain of class struggle underlined the equivocal and political polyvalence of these communal forms. They are at the same time an integral part of class struggle, a form of its manifestation outside of labor exploitation, *and* a weapon that can be mobilized either by or against those who hold economic and political power. The political polyvalence of the masses-as-they-are, so to speak, complicates revolutionary teleology.

In the wake of realizing the false prophecies of his previous theoretical analyses and political lines regarding the historical *forces* that would deliver the Lebanese working class of its fragmentation, Charara revised his analyses of Lebanese capitalism, subjected the OCAL and the Lebanese Left to a scathing critique, and radicalized his political position, calling for a "people's war."[42] Before the outbreak of "real" violence, resulting in his crisis and disenchantment, Charara wallowed in the glorification of the masses' violence:

The people's war is not an armed struggle launched by an isolated or adventurous "vanguard." It is the eruption of the violence carried by the masses who throw it in the face of its enemies, in various forms inside all the spaces of the social order. It finds its unity and reaches its prime form in the direct confrontation with the imperial-classist domination and the political power that embodies it on a general level. (*TBP*, 90)

The Blue Pamphlet, a couple of years before the official beginning of the war, bears the marks of the tension between the critic's scalpel, which dissects the internal contradictions of the masses, and the remainder of the revolutionary's hope in them as the subjects of emancipation, which glorifies their violence.

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Coda: The Origins of Sectarian Lebanon— The Right-Wing's Mass Line

During his établissement in Burj Hammud, Charara pursued his investigations of the disjunction between theory and practice, the politics of representation, and the paradoxes of emancipation. In March 1975, a month before the official date of the beginning of the Lebanese civil and regional wars (April 13, 1975), he published *Origins of Sectarian Lebanon: The Right-Wing's Mass Line*.[43] This brilliant, polemical, and long-neglected book is an intervention against the theorization of sectarianism by liberal, technocratic, secular, and Marxist politicians and intellectuals. Charara develops his earlier auto-critique and confronts head on the different theories that deploy secularism as an ideological mask and an instrument that will soon be vanquished by an external agent. He writes, "Employment, science, technology . . . sectarianism dies in the same way old empires did under the hooves of barbarian invaders . . . and sectarianism's barbarians come from Europe, a new 'land between two rivers' that exports the epidemic that decimates the ancient man, making him into a colorless employee, an intellectual that has dusted off the mountain's residues, and a technician with the passions of a calculator" (*Origins of Sectarian Lebanon*, hereafter OSL, 7). All these accounts of sectarianism are premised on a historicism— the European barbarians—that Marxist accounts partake in: "This "outside," Charara writes, "shares with the modes that preceded it and follow it, the fact that it forms the necessary direction of History's movement. It also shares with them history's apparition fully armed and in full gear from Jupiter's head, the god of gods in selected quotes from Hegel and Engels" (OSL, 8). The Left iterations of these theories make sectarianism an ideological mask that falsifies the underlying "real" social conflict. Sectarianism is then conceptualized as an instrument of sedition and division by you name it—landowners, Ottoman interests, the fighting imperial powers, and the local bourgeoisie. "In the beginning was unity and innocence," Charara writes ironically about the theoretical tropes organizing the accounts of sectarianism as the weapon of choice exploited by outsiders to divide the nation's citizens, and wielded by both outsiders and insiders to weaken working-class solidarity.[44]

Charara's book does not only criticize these dominant accounts of sectarianism that see it as a top-down phenomenon that was "created" by foreigners and elites to delude and divide the masses and that will soon vanish. It revisits the nineteenth-century Maronite peasant movements in Mount Lebanon against the sheikhs and lords—*muqata'ji*—mediated through his own reading of Mao and Gramsci to propose that sectarianism was constituted from below through

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the political practice of the peasants. Charara's compressed history charts the movement of Lebanon's Maronites from the position of subalternity to dominance (*OSL*, 40) through the formation of a Maronite social and political force, a historical bloc, composed of peasants and led by traders, artisans, and clergymen (*OSL*, 74).

Amid the resistance to the lords, Charara writes,

> new relations were forged. Those relations made Europe, Capitalism, the Church, and the commoner's political and military organizational forms intertwined threads which are tied together at the juncture of the peasant's movement. This is how a deep-rooted mass line, which was tightly connected to popular struggle then, was constituted. This mass line carried the Lebanese political formation with its fixed features, namely sectarianism. This means that sectarianism is historically concomitant to the Mass Line that founded present-day Lebanon and not an incidental that can be cast off. This highlights the contradiction that can be designated as "The Right-Wing's Mass Line," which is at the heart of continuing political contradictions whose network form the superstructure of the Lebanese formation. (*OSL*, 97)

Charara's narrative charts how, in a very complex historical conjuncture characterized by capitalist penetration, European imperial interventions, Ottoman reforms, and Egyptian campaigns, the Maronite peasants' revolutionary practice against their lords fashioned Maronite political sectarian solidarities.

Charara's book is a very early constructionist argument that underscores the modernity of the phenomenon of political sectarianism against the widely circulated culturalist arguments that repeat ad nauseam the trope about essentialist, primordial loyalties that supposedly overdetermine Arab politics. The US-based historian of the Middle East Ussama Makdisi will make a similar argument about the modernity of sectarianism twenty-five years later.[45] Despite the similar conclusions Makdisi reaches about the modernity of sectarian relations of political solidarity, the character of the two interventions are very different. The post-*Orientalism* antiessentialism of Makdisi's work deploys a constructionist approach against Orientalist culturalist tropes that de-rationalize, look down on, and make an exception of Arab politics by highlighting the fatalism of "tribes" fueled by their atavistic passions. His is a culturally progressive move that marshals historical transformations and breaks to undo the imputed timelessness of a "traditional culture" that produces repetitive bloody episodes that are out of sync with an imputed civilized "modernity." In brief, Makdisi's postcolonial antiessentialist move marshals

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historical discontinuities against timeless culture—modernity against tradition—to undo a particular colonial logic that singles out Arabs to classify them according to what makes them different, in this case sectarianism.

The character of Charara's much older intervention is very different. *Origins of Sectarian Lebanon* was written on the eve of the Lebanese civil war, after a decade and a half long parenthesis of political militancy that would soon be closed off for good. "The theoretical and political urgency of these questions," he writes in the last sentence of the book, "are fostered by the harshness of defeat and the determination of struggle" (125). It is a rethinking, born out of militancy, that underscores that sectarianism is neither a mask nor a tool that is contingent on a "pure social struggle" that is imposed on it from above by powerful players. Sectarianism, Charara argues, in a remarkably counterintuitive move, is not external to revolutionary practice, nor is it an impediment to it; rather, it is the result of it. The modernity of the phenomenon in Charara's account is not all that there is to the story. Rather, what is important is the fact that sectarian solidarities are not the result of false consciousness and top-down ideological imposition. Charara's and Makdisi's work on the same historical period, which underscores the modernity of sectarianism, constitute very different interventions. Makdisi marshals history to make a theoretical point against Orientalists and Western pundits that underlines that sectarianism is not a fatality. Charara, in contrast, is not concerned with the dichotomies of essence/construction and culture/history. The deep popular roots of sectarianism are highlighted to show not only the thinness of leftist accounts but also, in the wake of political losses, the recalcitrance of sectarianism in practice in contrast to its critique in theory.

Charara's account of practice and theory in nineteenth-century Mount Lebanon is written as a mirror image of his own auto-critique of militant experience a century later in *The Blue Pamphlet*. In contrast to the top-down modalities of leftist militancy, which seek to represent the masses—epistemically and politically—and end up hijacking their initiatives and reproducing the modalities of power they sought to overcome, we are presented with an account of grassroots practice that breaks free from the old relations of subjugation to fashion new modes of practice, organization, and relationships. For instance, instead of leftist parties' practice, which is premised on gaining power through increasing its institutional share of power, we are presented with an account of the Maronite Church as reworking existing relations. The Maronite Church's historical transformation made it into an institution with deep organic roots with its peasant base, which made it the only party that fulfilled "organizational, military, ideological and economic functions" (*OSL*, 107). "The Church didn't undertake its

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political role," Charara writes in a direct echo of his critique of the Lebanese Left, "by taking over a centralized power that has fully formed and autonomous apparatuses. Rather, it worked on creating these apparatuses, or worked on readjusting the existing ones to the demands of the current tasks" (OSL, 108). The nineteenth-century Maronite Church, which was the major source for intellectuals then, looked at through the Mao-Gramsci prism is the mirror image of the twentieth-century Leninist vanguardist party. Last but not least, Charara underlines the feeble character of Lebanese nationalist ideology—in contrast, say, to Marxist theory—that was the offspring of the constitution of Maronite sectarian identity, despite the fact that the Christian bourgeoisie had long separated itself from its nineteenth-century peasant base. The theoretical thinness of this ideology, which wavers between an economic integration with the Arab world and a political isolation from it, with its dependency on Western powers, does not impede its practical effects. "To refute Lebanese ideology based on its 'incoherence,' its 'crudeness,' its 'feebleness,'" Charara writes, "does not rob it of its effective and practical source that nourishes it, even if its tongues are Michel Chiha, Sa'id Akl, Charles Malik, and Kamal al-Haj" (OSL, 121). Lebanese nationalist ideology is the mirror image of Marxist theory. A theoretically thin and incoherent ideology is much more practically effective than a thick Marxist theory and political analysis that he once thought held the key to a successful emancipatory practice. The evolution of the Lebanese formation, argued Charara, reproduces the sectarian line:

> Each time intellectuals of a certain sect (in the wide Gramscian sense), regardless of their inclinations, meet with its toilers—peasants and workers—the sectarian form plays the role of the unifying reference. This is practically always true regarding the Druze, whose peasants' conditions have not stopped deteriorating. It is also the case with the Shi'a during their last "demands movements" in 1974. The "progressive content" [of the demands] is neither an exception nor a new feature. We have seen that the Maronite movement had a content, and was based on practices, that both carried an effective revolutionary potential that surpassed, in its political practices and its organizational forms, what the other movements have achieved till today. (OSL, 114)

Charara's Maoist episode stretched his Marxist analysis to its limits by revealing the paradoxes of emancipation, the impossibility of teleology, as well as the disjuncture between theory and practice. *Origins of Sectarian Lebanon* showed how peasant emancipatory political practice in the nineteenth century that contested the dominant order managed to rework the relations

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of production, the political and military modalities of organization and ideologies, and paradoxically give rise to a right-wing sectarian political formation. Nineteenth-century Maronite peasants' practice was revolutionary, but it ended up producing a sectarian formation and a right-wing ideology and politics. The mid-1970s Left, as we will soon see, reversed the equation—revolutionary and anti-imperial ideological demands were articulated on, or did not manage to break free from, sectarian constituencies.

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