

# The Profits of Growth

# Introduction

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- With the coming of independence, indigenous merchants and landowners were able to take a large part of the profits of economic growth.
- Merchants were able to use their access to the independent governments in order to obtain a larger share of the import-export trade.
- In some countries, collaboration between indigenous and foreign capitalists existed.
- Indigenous or mixed banks also were becoming important.

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# **The Situation of Agriculture**

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- In most places, too, the expansion of agriculture in the years after the war was primarily in the interest of those who owned or controlled land, and in particular of large landowners who had access to credit from banks and mortgage companies.
- The policy of the British government worked in favor of the landowners, and in particular of those of them who were tribal sheikhs and could use their authority in favor of the British and the monarchy.
- Apart from tribal sheikhs, the landowning class included families of urban notables.

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# **Other Sources of Revenue**

# Other Sources of Revenue

- Even before independence, some economic activities had been brought under state control.
- The most spectacular example of state intervention in economic processes was given not by industry but by the reform of the system of landownership.
- This had the greatest political and social importance, because most of the population of the Arab countries still lived in the countryside and also because almost everywhere the large landowners formed the most powerful class, the one which possessed most influence over the government and the most capital.

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# **Rich and Poor in the City**

# Rich and Poor in the City

- The increasing size of the population, the migration from the countryside into the city and the growing numbers and power of the national bourgeoisie landowners, merchants, owners and managers of factories, civil servants and army officers affected the nature of urban life in many ways.
- With the coming of independence, the indigenous middle class moved into quarters which formerly has been inhabited mainly by Europeans, and the rural migrants moved into quarters they had vacated, or into new ones, in each case, there was a change in custom and ways of life: the middle class took to living in a way which formerly had been typical of the foreign residents, and the rural migrants adopted the ways of the urban poor.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- In their new quarters the bourgeoisie lived much as the Europeans had done, in the same kind of houses and wearing the same kind of clothes.
- In some of the new quarters, members of different religious communities mingled more than they would have done in the *madina*; they lived in the same apartment blocks or streets, and their children went to the same schools.
- In the openness of the new quarters, wealth could show itself more freely than in the old cities, where fear of the ruler or the neighbors led people to hide evidence of their prosperity.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- Houses presented a bolder front to the street, rooms were more lavishly furnished, jewelry more openly displayed.
- One particular symbol of status became important in this period -- the private automobile.
- Comparatively rare before the Second World War, it now became more common.
- The increase in the number of cars, and also of trucks and buses, made new and wider roads necessary in city and countryside.
- To drive a wide boulevard through a quarter of the old city became almost a symbolic act of modernity and independence.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- Private automobiles, and the roads made for them changed the way in which the wealthier classes lived.
- Their lives were no longer confined to their quarter; they could possess the whole city, and they could live far from their places of work.
- The quarters which the bourgeoisie were leaving were being taken over by rural migrants.
- In a few countries, governments began programmes of building low-cost popular housing, on the outer rim of the city or near the new industrial zones.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- In most cities, however, there was a gulf between rich and poor.
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- Rural migrants tended to adopt the habits of the urban masses.
  - Polygamy, which had been practiced to some extent in certain social strata, became rarer, because of the difficulties of life in small apartments, or a different conception of family life.
  - The rate of divorce was high, but may have diminished.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- The birthrate was lower in the city than the countryside, because girls who went to school tended to marry later, and men would try to obtain a fixed employment and save some money before marrying, and also because of the spread of birth control.
- Life continued to be hard for the urban poor. A large proportion of them was unemployed.
- In the overcrowded quarters or camps where most of them lived, disease was widespread: the great epidemics of plague and cholera now more or less disappeared, but tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria and eye diseases were common.
- Infant mortality was high.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- There is some evidence, however, that conditions of life were improving among at least some of the poor.
- Social services were expanding, clinics provided health services, better water supplies lowered the incidence of some diseases; in some towns public transport was improved, a larger proportion of children went to elementary school, and anti-illiteracy campaigns were mounted.
- More women went to work, mainly as domestic workers or in factories; they were to the most part young and unmarried and living in the family home, and the fact that they worked outside it and earned money did not yet cause much of a change in the structure of family life; it increased the income of their families, but did not necessarily make the women workers themselves more prosperous or independent.
- Such changes affected some strata of the population more than others.

# Rich and Poor in the City

- Governments began to intervene more actively in industry, to regulate conditions of work.
- In most countries trade unions were now authorized.

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- The number of workers enrolled in unions increased as industry expanded.
- Most villagers in most parts of the Arab countries lived as they had always done, producing many children but seeing most of them die in infancy or youth, without medical care and with only rudimentary education, and without electricity.
- This situation remained mostly as it was until agricultural reform started to take place in many Arab states. This reform, however, did not show itself until some political movements, mostly from the poorer classes and peasants took the initiative of both the political and social change.