

**The 1962 Revolution In Yemen And
Its Impact On The Foreign Policies
Of The U.A.R. And Saudi Arabia**

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Abstract

The 1962 revolution in Yemen represented the attempt of trained officers in the regular army to shake off their inferior position and assume the political relevancy they felt entitled to. Externally, they were reasonably sure of Egyptian intervention on their behalf. Internally, they perceived an erosion of support for the Imamic regime which led them to anticipate massive popular following for the revolution once it broke out.

After Syria's secession in September 1961 the U.A.R. enacted a hard-line anti-reactionary role. Saudi Arabia adopted an anti-Socialist role. A situation of confrontation ensued. When the Yemeni revolution broke out relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia were worse than ever before.

President Nasser perceived the revolution as a progressive, popular pro-Egyptian movement which was threatened by a concerted Imperialist-reactionary effort. As political support proved insufficient, President Nasser dispatched arms and advisers. This in turn was not enough and combat troops were sent. In one month the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen jumped from one hundred to an estimated four thousand.

King Saud perceived the revolution as an Egyptian-engineered mutiny which would give Egypt a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula and encourage subversion. He classified it as a threat

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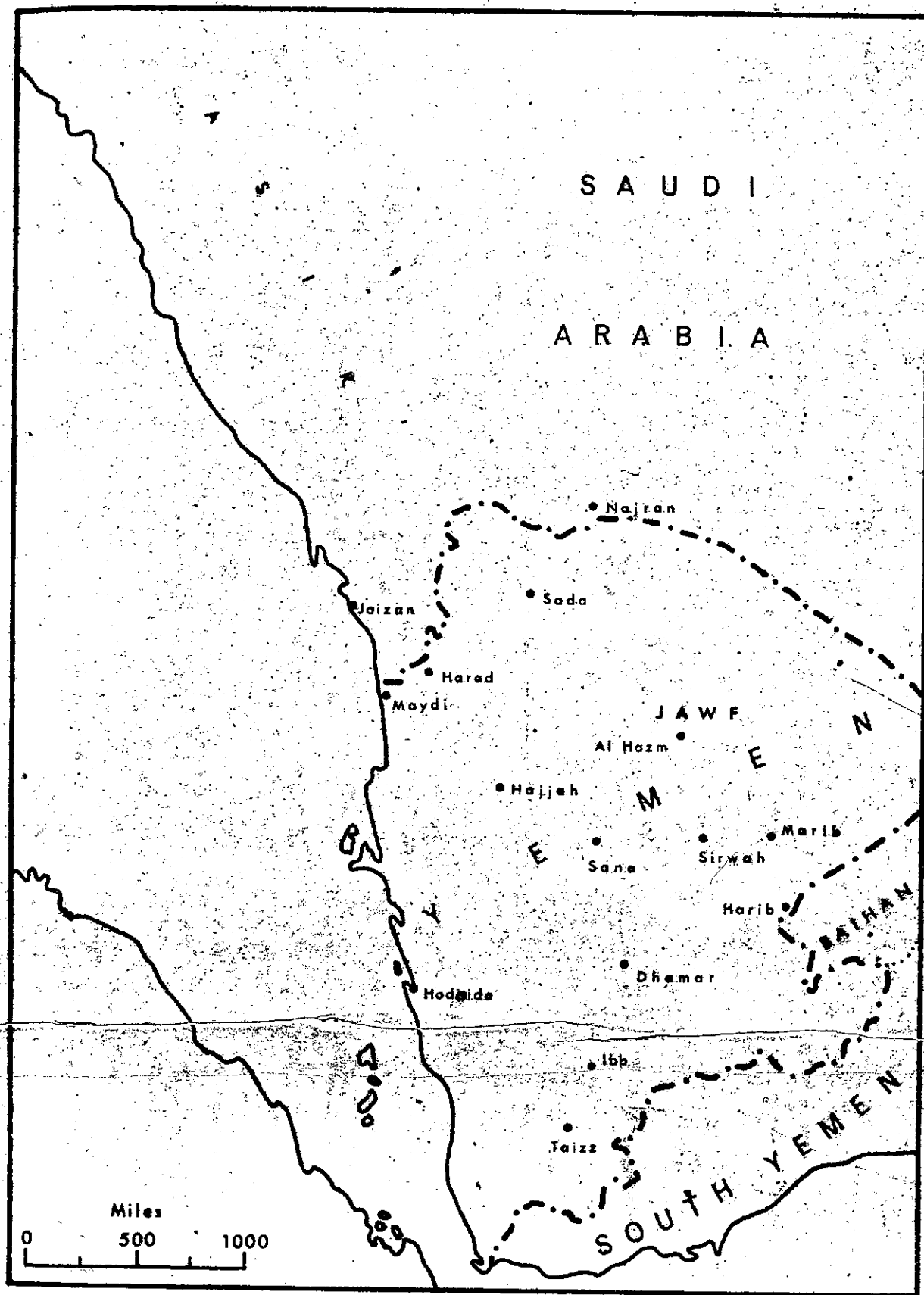
to Saudi Arabia. Political support to the Royalists was deemed insufficient. The commitment of troops was neither practicable nor desirable. Saudi Arabia intervened by subsidizing the Royalists, supplying them with arms and allowing them to use Saudi territory.

The first part of this study analyzes the Imamic regime and the revolution that destroyed it. The second part deals with past relations among Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The third and fourth parts examine, respectively, the Egyptian and Saudi interventions.

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Part I

The 1962 Revolution In Yemen

Chapter One

Historical Background

No complete and definitive history of Yemen has been written yet. The country's pre-Islamic periods - those of the fabulous Sabaen, Minaean and Himyarite kingdoms - are shrouded in legends and myths.⁽¹⁾ More knowledge is available about later periods, but systematic studies have been limited only to a few eras. This, however, is not the place to attempt to write a full history; nor, in view of the scattered and unpublished sources, is the time ripe for such an endeavour. The present chapter, therefore, will just give a brief account of the country's history, highlighting its chronic internal instability and the frequent external interventions. A more detailed treatment will be given to developments in the twentieth century.

Yemen's prevailing condition was described as "a permanent state of war, with short intervals of peace";⁽²⁾ its normal condition as "chaos".⁽³⁾ There were at least three reasons for this instability. First, the country's geography was most inconducive to unity. A strip of hot, malarial desert, the Tihama, runs inland from the Red Sea coast for twenty to fifty miles. Behind rise ranges of rugged mountains reaching

(1) See Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi, "al-Yaman al-Qadimah bain al-Ostoorah wa al-Tarikh," al-Arabi (November, 1960), pp. 52-56.

(2) Ameen Rihani, Arabian Peak and Desert (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1930), p. 109.

(3) Harold Ingrams, The Yemen (London: John Murray, 1963), p. 5.

at some points ten thousand feet. To the east of the mountains, running north and south for about two hundred miles lies a central valley which varies in width from ten to forty miles. Beyond rise more mountains that fall away gradually to the east until they are lost in the sands of the Empty Quarter.⁽¹⁾ With extremely primitive communications, it was almost impossible for any government to exercise effective control and, as a result, local communities developed on semi-autonomous lines.

Second, the geographical divisions created two political divisions: the mountaineers, those of the north and the Tihamis, those of the south. The northerners embraced the Zaidi sect whereas the southerners remained Orthodox Shafis. This religious and geographical division was further exacerbated by the competition for scarce resources, which, in the absence of national consciousness and effective government, took a violent form and led the mountaineers to attempt to dominate and exploit the south. A sociological factor made the differences between the north and the south more pronounced. The north was mostly inhabited by tribes, and the nature of their tribal society made them more war-like and aggressive than the farmers, traders and craftsmen of the southern towns.

Third, the inability of successive governments to suppress their rivals led some of them at various occasions to invite foreign intervention. Modelski's thesis that "every internal war creates a demand for foreign intervention"⁽²⁾ can easily

(1) Richard H. Sanger, The Arabian Peninsula (New York: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 236.

(2) George Modelski, "The International Relations of Internal War" in James N. Rosenau (ed), International Aspects of Civil Strife (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 20.

be demonstrated by examples from Yemen's history. The intervening powers stayed on and this was another factor contributing to instability. The total effect was that Yemen did not enjoy a unified effective rule except very briefly, and, according to some writers, only in the twentieth century under Imams Yahya and Ahmad.⁽¹⁾

Abyssinian and Persian Interventions

Dhu-Nuwas, the last of the Himyarite kings, became converted to Judaism and, with the zeal of a new convert, carried out an active campaign against the Christians, which culminated in the Najran massacre in 523. The Christian community appealed to Justin, the Byzantine Emperor, who asked Abyssinia, the Christian power nearest to Yemen, to intervene. In 525 Abyssinian forces arrived and, having defeated Dhu-Nuwas, proceeded to establish their own rule.

The Abyssinian occupation lasted until 575 when a Himyarite prince, Saif ibn dhi Yazan, who still survives as an idolized hero in Arab folklore, rose in rebellion and turned to Persia for support. Persian troops arrived, and the Abyssinians were expelled. A joint administration was set up with Saif as titular head. Soon afterwards, however, the Persians took complete charge and Yemen was turned into a Persian satrapy.⁽²⁾

(1) B.W. Seager, "The Yemen", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (July - October, 1955), p. 214; Ahmad Fakhri, "Al-Yaman wa atharoha" in al-Alam al-Arabi (Cairo: al-Jamiah al-Arabiyyah, 1949), p. 131.

(2) On the Abyssinian and Persian interventions see Philip K. Hitti, History of The Arabs (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1956), pp. 62-66.

Islam

In 628 Badhan, the Persian satrap of Yemen, embraced Islam and the country adhered to the new religion. Shortly after the death of the Prophet, however, a rebellion started in Yemen, which Moslem historians treat as an apostasy, but which had features of political resentment of Yemen's total absorption in the Moslem Empire.⁽¹⁾ The rebellion collapsed upon the death of its leader and Yemen was soon back in the Moslem fold.

The Moslem rule, however, did not effectively unite the country; some even assert that "the coming of Islam gave the people another fertile field in which to exercise their genius for dissention."⁽²⁾ The difficulty of ruling Yemen can perhaps be illustrated by the frequency with which governors were replaced. During the Prophet's period alone 21 governors were appointed to the province.⁽³⁾

Yemen supplied the Moslem armies with the bulk of their manpower. Throughout the Omayyid and the early part of the Abassid periods, Yemen remained as a province in the Empire although the Caliphs found the country exceedingly difficult to govern. During the reign of al-Mamoun, the Abassid Caliph, the authority of the Caliphate became so shaky that the stage was set for the emergence of a bewildering variety of petty states; the fragmentation, which was to persist for centuries, had

(1) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 87.

(2) Ingrams, loc. cit., p. 5.

(3) Ahmad Husain Sharaf al-Din, al-Yaman Abra al-Tarikh (Cairo: Matbat al-Sunnah al-Mohammadiyyah, 1963), pp. 174-175.

started.

Little will be gained from following the changing fortunes of the various local dynasties. From 819 to 1517 the following ruling houses came to power in a more or less chronological order: the Bani Ziyad, the Yufurids, the Karmithans, the Imams, the Njahids, the Sulhaiyds, the Zurayids, the Mahdis, the Ayybids, the Rasulids, and the Tahirids.⁽¹⁾ Some of these dynasties, like the Yufurids, were Yemeni whereas others, like the Ayybids, came from outside. The period of rule of each dynasty overlapped with that of others. More often than not, those dynasties were engaged in active hostilities. Of all these governments, the one which was most persistent and which played the most crucial part in Yemen's history was the Imamate, and it is to this that we now turn.

The Imamate

In 893 a tribal delegation from Sada in the north travelled to Madina and invited Yahya ibn al-Husain, a descendant of the Prophet, to come and take charge of Yemen. Yahya arrived, found insufficient support and returned to Madina. In 897 another delegation went and persuaded him to return to Yemen, which he did. Upon his arrival, he was proclaimed Imam. It is a matter of speculation as to why he was invited to come. It could be that the northern tribes simply wanted to use his

(1) Jane Smiley Hart, "Basic Chronology for a History of the Yemen", The Middle East Journal (Winter-Spring, 1963), pp. 146-147; Adnan Tarsisi, al-Yaman wa Hadharat al-Arab (Beirut: Maktabat al-Hayat, n.d.), pp. 92-99.

religious appeal to advance their own parochial ends. Or it could be that they genuinely hoped that the introduction of a new leader, endowed with an exalted lineage as well as personal capability, would help bring some unity to the chaotic country. Whatever their reasons were, Yahya, a Zaidi who believed that an Imam should stand forth and claim recognition, seized the opportunity to advance the cause of his sect.

The Zaidi sect was founded by Zaid ibn Ali, a grandson of Husain, the Prophet's grandson. Zaid did not adhere to the inactivist line of the Shia; he led an uprising against the Omayyids and was killed in 740. Although Zaidism is usually described as a Shia sect, this characterization is accurate only if a broad definition of Shia is adopted. Strictly speaking, the Zaidis were neither Shia, because unlike the Shia they believed that an Imam should be elected, nor Sunni since they held that only a descendant of the Prophet could qualify as Imam.⁽¹⁾ After Zaid's death, his followers started many rebellions but their success was uncertain and limited to the area of the Caspian Sea. Hence, Yahya found the opportunity of establishing the sect in Yemen irresistible.

From the time Yahya was proclaimed Imam to the present day, the Imamate has been an inseparable part of the Yemeni political scene. It has produced 67 Imams;⁽²⁾ there were

(1) Mohammad Jawad Moghniyyah, al-Shia wa al-Tashayy (Beirut: Maktabat al-Madrasah wa Dar al-Katib al-Lobnani, n.d.), pp. 35-36. A lucid discussion of the political differences among the Zaidi, Sunni, and Shia doctrines is contained in al-Mansurbillah Abdallah b. Hamza, al-Ikd al-Thamin MS British Museum OR 3976.

(2) For a list of the Imams see Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., pp. 256-259.

almost as many claimants who were not generally acknowledged as Imams. The Imams were, according to one view, "on the whole men of virtue and integrity who based their cause on encouraging good and shunning evil"⁽¹⁾ and, according to another "savage, fanatical, devoid of Arab chivalry, deaf to the charity which is the key-note of Islam".⁽²⁾ Such judgements, however, simply reflect a political predeliction. In their qualifications and achievements the Imams varied so much as to make sweeping generalizations quite misleading. Bearing this in mind, one can still advance the following observations:

1. Ever since its inception in Yemen, the Imamate became closely identified with the northern tribes. The hoped-for unity did not materialize. While some outstanding Imams brought a measure of order and unity, the rivalry between claimants, inherent in the Imamate, was frequently a factor exacerbating disunity.
2. By the nature of their sect and as a reaction to the unstable conditions of Yemen, the Imams were religion-oriented militarists. The religious orientation followed sectarian lines which made it difficult for non-Zaidis to freely accept their leadership. The emphasis on militarism meant that the Imams were better qualified as warriors than as administrators.
3. The Imams found it either expedient or necessary to play on sectarian differences. Thus, Zaidis fighting non-Zaidi Yemenis were described as mujahidin, fighters for the

(1) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, "Arḥ Tarikhi", in Abdullah al-Hasani (ed), Matamar Haradi (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1966), p. 22.

(2) Lord Belhaven, The Uneven Road (London: John Murray, 1955), p. 74.

- faith. (1) While exploiting sectarian differences may have helped in achieving the military aims of an Imam, it certainly left the Zaidis with a feeling of superiority which non-Zaidis understandably resented.
4. The Imamate achieved its greatest prestige when it became the center of resistance to the Turks. All the great uprisings against the Turkish occupation were led by Imams. During such uprisings, the Imams succeeded in uniting the Zaidis and Shafis and symbolized the national resistance. Thus, as soon as the Turkish occupation ended, first in the seventeenth and second in the twentieth centuries, the Imam who had been leading the struggle stepped in and ruled the country.

Foreign Invasions and Occupations

A conflict between two principalities in the south led one of them to appeal to Saladin for help. (2) Saladin sent an army headed by his brother in 1173. Having occupied the southern towns, the Egyptians remained and established the Ayybite dynasty which was to rule for fifty years.

A second Egyptian invasion took place in 1515. (3)

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- (1) Traditionally, if not recently, the Imams considered the non-Zaidis as koffar al-taweel, those whose misinterpretation of Islam borders infidelity; see Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi, al-Imamah wa Khataroha ala Wihdat al-Yaman (Beirut: al-Ittihad al-Yamani, n.d.), p. 12.
- (2) Husain bin Ahmad al-Arshi, Bulough al-Maram (Cairo: C.E. Albertiri, 1939), p. 18.
- (3) See Lein Obele Schuman, Political History of the Yemen at the Beginning of the 16th Century (Amsterdam: V.R.B. Kleine, 1960).

In this instance it was the Imam of the day, fighting the last Tahirid sultan, who allied himself with the Egyptians. The Egyptian troops, however, had hardly consolidated their position in Yemen when Egypt itself was occupied by the Turks. Consequently, the troops declared their loyalty to the Turks; in 1538 a Turkish Pasha was installed in Yemen.

The Turkish hold on Yemen was not very firm. Beyond the main towns, the Turkish control was extremely ineffective. Despite reinforcements, the Turkish troops did not succeed in subduing the north. In 1589 a wide-spread rebellion, led by Imam al-Qasim, ⁽¹⁾ broke out. The Turks were forced to conclude a truce which left the Imam in virtual control of the north. In 1630 they evacuated Yemen altogether.

The Imamate now emerged as the foremost authority in Yemen. For almost two centuries the country was independent and enjoyed the prosperity introduced by the coffee trade. Yet the perpetual war among rival claimants to the Imamate went on and local chiefs never lost the opportunities of asserting their autonomy. The most important of such moves took place in 1728 when the Abdali Sultan of Lahej became independent from the Imam and soon after seized Aden.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Wahhabis of Najd, in alliance with the Sharif of Abu Arish, carried raids into Yemen. When Mohammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, suppressed the Wahhabis, he entered into a treaty with the Imam which provided for the return to the Imam of territories occupied by the Sharif on condition of paying a tribute. In 1832

(1) See A. S. Tritton, The Rise of the Imams of Sana (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

one of Mohammad Ali's officers in Hijaz rebelled and fled to Yemen. On the pretext of pursuing the rebel, Egyptian forces penetrated into Yemen. They stayed till 1840. ⁽¹⁾

In 1849 the Turks returned to Yemen. The Imam invited them to Sana, but the populace of the town were so enraged that they attacked the Turks and executed the Imam. The Turks stayed in the coast and in 1872 took Sana and proceeded to complete their occupation. This second Turkish occupation, however, was no more successful than the first. The Turks faced many rebellions, the most important of which occurred in 1891 under Imam Mohammad.

Imam Yahya ⁽²⁾

In 1904 Yahya ibn Mohammad was elected Imam upon the death of his father. Yahya was a most remarkable man, perhaps the most remarkable in Yemen's history. He ruled until 1948, and during his long career he had to contend with the many problems of securing independence, ending internal fragmentation and steering Yemen's external relations. His main challenge was turning his faction-ridden country into something like a nation-state.

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- (1) See Abdel Hamid El-Batrik, "Egyptian-Yemeni Relations (1819-1840) and their Implications for British Policy in the Red Sea", in P.M. Holt (ed), Political And Social Change In Modern Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 281-290.
- (2) For the most comprehensive accounts of Imam Yahya's reign in English and Arabic respectively see: Manfred W. Wenner, Modern Yemen (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1968); and al-Sayyid Mustapha Salem, Takwīn al-Yaman al-Hadith (Cairo: Mahad al-Dirasat al-Arabiyyah al-Aliyah, 1963).

That he succeeded in achieving unity and asserting central control cannot be denied. That the unity he achieved was vulnerable and that his methods were not always commendable cannot be denied equally. Yahya certainly was old-fashioned and high-handed, but it must be remembered that he operated within the context of the Yemeni political system. Thus, it is quite plausible to argue that without being conservative he would never have been elected Imam and without ruthlessness he could never have asserted the supremacy of the central government. If he had undermined the unity he was striving for by excessive reliance on the adherents of his own sect, the explanation lies more in the historical experiences of the Imamate than in a conscious prejudice on his part. Ultimately, his failure rested in his inability to adapt the ancient Imamate to the conditions of the twentieth century. It is debatable, however, whether any man, himself a product of an institution, can successfully and radically alter the nature of that institution.

Imam Yahya was energetic, practical and resolute.⁽¹⁾
He had "a capacity for equitable and strong administration".⁽²⁾
He was a charismatic leader and until the last few years of his reign he enjoyed a great popularity, especially with the Zaidis whose reverence for him "had not been far short of worship".⁽³⁾

Upon his accession Yahya took up the fight against the Turks. In 1905 he besieged and entered Sana. Fresh Turkish reinforcements were brought in and Yahya withdrew to Shahara. The

(1) Rihani, op. cit., p. 221.

(2) Harold F. Jacob, Kings of Arabia (London: Mills & Boom Ltd., 1923), p. 247.

(3) Ingrams, op. cit., p. 28.

Turkish army pursued him and in the battle that ensued the Turks suffered a heavy defeat. The Turks then adopted a policy of reconciliation and protracted negotiations were carried on although minor skirmishes did not cease. In 1911 a compromise was arrived at and the agreement of Daan was concluded. The agreement, which was to last for ten years, recognized the Imam's right to administer Zaidi territories in accordance with Islamic Law. Thus, while the Turks continued to administer Shafi areas, the Imam was acknowledged as the undisputed head, temporal as well as spiritual, of the Zaidis.

During the First World War Imam Yahya remained inactive. He was less than enthusiastic about allying himself with the British against the Turks. With the withdrawal of the Turks at the end of the war, Yahya entered Sana and took charge of the government of Yemen. Yet his problems did not end with independence. The country was far from pacified. Al-Idrisi of Asir was holding large parts of Tihama. The frontier with the Aden Protectorate was not settled.

Al-Idrisi, the Amir of the Principality of Asir, allied himself with the British during the war. When the war was over the British turned over to him Hodaida and the surrounding territories which they had occupied after the withdrawal of the Turks. Yahya was incensed by this but he bided his time. The accession of a young and weak Idrisi ruler in 1925 and internal dissensions in the Idrisi family gave Yahya his opportunity. His forces occupied Tihama, including Hodaida, in 1925.

British-Yemeni relations were the subject of such an extensive literature that only the barest summary is called

for here. (1) The crux of the problem lay in the Imam's belief that Southern Arabia was an integral and "natural" part of Yemen and that the British were simply interlopers. The British justified their position on the basis of "treaty rights" granted by local chiefs who had been long independent of Yemen. Thus, while the Imam was hoping to convince the British of the validity of his claims the British were trying to persuade him to renounce these claims. In an effort to reconcile the irreconcilable, frontier raids, recriminations, threats, promises and negotiations were employed by both parties. Finally in 1934 the Treaty of Sana was signed. A refinement of the art of compromise, the treaty purposely "did not involve the renunciation of territorial claims by either Great Britain or the Yemen but was designed to ensure that the frontier remained, for forty years, as it was at the time of the signature". (2) After the signing of the treaty, Anglo-Yemeni relations improved although later on, as we shall see, more troubles arose.

Yahya's campaigns to bring the whole country under his control did not stop until the mid-thirties. The tribes were

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- (1) For example, see Tom Hickinbotham, Aden (London: Constable & Co., 1958); Bernard Reilly, Aden and the Yemen (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1960); Gillian King, Imperial Outpost-Aden (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Reginald Sorensen, Aden, The Protectorates, and the Yemen (London: Fabian International/^{and} Commonwealth Bureaux, 1961); Gordon Waterfield, Sultans of Aden (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Tom Little, South Arabia Arena of Conflict (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967).
- (2) Eric Macro, Yemen and the Western World (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968), p. 60.

long accustomed to being left to their own devices. They developed their own way of life including their tribal laws which were not always in accordance with Islamic laws. They resented the attempts of any central government to impose its will on them. The Turks had never succeeded in getting more than nominal allegiance from the tribes; their presence in the more inaccessible tribal areas was merely symbolic. Yahya, however, was determined to establish an effective central authority and the existence of autonomous tribal communities ran counter to his plans. He had to resort to military measures and the pattern he followed soon became clear. Loyal Zaidi troops headed by a trusted Sayyid⁽¹⁾ were dispatched. Rebellions were crushed, hostages were taken to ensure good behaviour and local administrators, responsible only to the Imam, were installed. Gradually, and very reluctantly, the tribes came to accept Yahya's control.

Yahya's extension of his authority was successful until he came up against a powerful neighbour, King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud who was also in the process of expanding his control. A clash ended in a Yemeni defeat. Yahya's expansion had to stop at the new boundaries between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, established by the Treaty of Taif in 1934.⁽²⁾

The first problem facing Yahya in his foreign policy was the regulation of his relationship with the British-protected south. Firmly convinced of the validity of his claims over the Protectorates yet unable to enforce them, Yahya had to settle for the compromise embodied in the 1934 treaty with Britain. His

(1) The terms 'Sayyid', 'Hashimite' and, less frequently, 'Sharif' were used in Yemen to designate a descendant of the Prophet.

(2) See below pp. 166-167.

other international contacts were inspired by a desire to secure international recognition as well as to obtain the arms and commodities he needed. A treaty was signed with Italy in 1926; with the Soviet Union in 1928; with Iraq in 1931; with Holland in 1933; with Saudi Arabia in 1934; with Ethiopia in 1935; with Belgium in 1936; and with the United States in 1946. Yemen also joined the Arab League and the United Nations. Yahya, however, was always on his guard against foreign influences. He never established full diplomatic relations or allowed any foreign representative to reside in Yemen.

Yahya realized the need for trained Yemenis to fill administrative posts. In the twenties he established two institutions, al-madrasah al-ilmiyyah, the school of science, and maktab al-aytam, the orphans' school. The first school had an extensive curriculum and was designed to produce senior administrators. The second provided an elementary training sufficient for lower administrative jobs. The students of the first school came from privileged families, Sayyids or Qadis,⁽¹⁾ whereas the students of the second were either orphans or came from families with no wealth or prestige. This dual system of education which tended to perpetuate privilege contained the seeds of resentment and later revolution. Many of the officers who participated in the 1948 and 1962 revolutions were graduates of the orphans' school.⁽²⁾

The 1948 Revolution

The 1948 revolution was the product of an alliance

(1) See below, pp. 85-86.

(2) Noman, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

between three groups: liberals, a few Sayyid families and army officers. The liberals provided the agitation; the Sayyid families lent their power and prestige to the movement; the officers swung sections of the army to the side of the revolution.⁽¹⁾

Liberals

The liberal movement in Yemen had a literary origin. By the late thirties, modern books, entering Yemen primarily through pilgrims, opened new worlds of ideas to young Yemenis already dissatisfied with the traditional education, mainly based on old manuscripts.⁽²⁾ A literary renaissance started. A Yemeni newspaper, al-Hikmah, was the forum from which young writers and poets advocated literary innovations. In 1940 al-Hikmah stopped publication on the pretext of the rising cost of paper. The real reason, however, was that Imam Yahya did not want to encourage the paper's modernist line.

Gradually, this purely literary movement assumed political overtones. The young intellectuals, now equipped with insights gained from modern books, compared the conditions in Yemen with those in other countries and came to the conclusion that the conservative and tyrannical nature of the Imamate was

(1) For accounts of the 1948 revolution see Majid Khadduri, "Coups And Counter-Coups In The Yemen¹⁹⁴⁸", International Affairs (January, 1952), pp. 59-68; Wenner, op. cit., pp. 97-108; Ingrams, op. cit., pp. 70-75; Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., pp. 325-330; Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Imam al-Yaman Ahmad Hamid al-Din, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1965), pp. 170-174; Noman, op. cit., pp. 57-63.

(2) Noman, op. cit., p. 48.

the cause of Yemen's backwardness. Liberal ideas translated themselves into political demands for reforming the Imamate.

The liberals did not belong to a single class or a single sect. They included Zaidis and Shafis, Sayyids and non-Sayyids. They came from families greatly varying in social status and income. The only thing they had in common was a belief in progress and modernization.

With the liberals now politically oriented, they moved to Aden where political freedom allowed them to conduct their campaign against the Yemeni regime. The liberals enjoyed the financial support of Yemeni merchants in Aden, who were resentful of Imam Yahya's near-monopoly of Yemen's foreign trade. In 1943 the liberals formed the Free Yemeni Party which was later transformed into The Grand Yemeni Association.

Through articles in their own newspaper, Sawt al-Yaman, the voice of Yemen, as well as pamphlets and leaflets, the liberals criticized Imam Yahya's regime. In a typical pamphlet they pointed out that "Yemen's budget is a closely-guarded secret that nobody is allowed to see";⁽¹⁾ that "there is no director of security or even semi-organized police";⁽²⁾ that "the equivalent of ten million Egyptian pounds was yearly collected from the poor subjects in the name of religion".⁽³⁾ Yet the liberals never advocated the abolition of the Imamate. Republicanism was considered too radical a cause to be accepted in Yemen. The liberal leaders, however, were non-Sayyids and con-

(1) Al-Yaman Zahiroha wa Batinha (Cairo: n.p., 1946), p. 19.

(2) Ibid, p. 19.

(3) Ibid, p. 30.

sequently, none of them could qualify for the Imamate.

The regime in Yemen realized the potential dangers of the agitation in Aden. In April 1946 Crown Prince Ahmad arrived in Aden to try and win the support of the liberals. He promised that the government would exchange diplomatic missions with Arab and Moslem countries, exploit the country's minerals and spread education. The liberals were not impressed. Even when Prince Ahmad went himself to seek a meeting with the liberal leaders, Ahmad Mohammad Noman and Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi, in their house, they declined to meet him.⁽¹⁾

An unexpected development occurred when Prince Ibrahim, one of Imam Yahya's sons, joined the liberals in November 1946. Ibrahim had come to the conclusion that the Royal Family must reform itself in order to survive. He had tried to persuade his brothers to arrest their father, declare him insane, and ask the people to elect a new Imam. Some of the princes initially favoured the idea but then they waived. Ibrahim, on the pretext of seeking hospitalization, left Yemen. He arrived in Aden and assumed the leadership of the liberals. Ibrahim's defection proved a turning point in the history of the liberal movement. It generated a great interest in the presses, and radios of the Arab world and provided the liberals with a leader qualified to become Imam.⁽²⁾

Sayyid Families

In 1923 Imam Yahya declared his son Ahmad Crown

(1) Noman, op. cit., p. 58.

(2) Ibid, pp. 58-59.

Prince. This was a departure from Zaidi traditions which stipulated the election of the Imam and did not recognize a hereditary Imamate. Yahya's decision meant that henceforth his own family, Hamid al-Din, would monopolize the Imamic office. Other Sayyid families with aspirations of their own resented this decision but since Yahya was in his prime and the job of unifying Yemen unfinished, nothing was done about it. Succession was considered too remote an eventuality to be actively worried about.

Of the families resentful of the decision, al-Wazir was the most prominent one. It had produced Imams in the past and during Yahya's reign it acquired great wealth and prestige. Yahya entrusted members from this family to lead his campaigns and fill senior administrative posts. Abdullah ibn Ahmad al-Wazir was, at various times, military commander in Tihama, Yahya's representative in the Yemeni-Saudi negotiations of 1934, and the viceroy of Hodaida. Ali al-Wazir was the viceroy of Taizz. Abdul Quddus al-Wazir was the governor of Dhamar.⁽¹⁾ The family emerged as the leading rival of the Hamid al-Din family.

With the consolidation completed in the late thirties, Imam Yahya, now an old man, turned his attention to the question of succession. Although Ahmad was formally acknowledged as the Crown Prince, his rivals, inside and outside his family, were numerous. Yahya set about reconciling those rivals to Ahmad's succession.⁽²⁾ He realized, however, that the greatest danger came from the al-Wazir family and he started to neutralize it. Abdullah al-Wazir was replaced in the viceroyalty of Hodaida by Abdullah, a son of the Imam, and Ahmad was appointed the viceroy of Taizz.⁽³⁾

(1) Wenner, op. cit., p. 90.

(2) See Ingrams, op. cit., p. 71.

(3) Al-Shami, Imam al-Yaman op. cit., p. 172.

Abdullah al-Wazir now became the leader of the families opposing Ahmad's succession. There was nothing either in Abdullah's personality or his record to suggest any liberal leanings. Neither he nor the families he represented were motivated by a genuine belief in reform or progress. Their reaction was simply that of an elite which felt deprived of an historical right to rule or at least share in power. That this was so is attested to by the attitude of those families to the liberal movement:

Deep inside, they welcomed the movement, without giving it any overt or covert support, because they realized that it undermined the morale of Imam Yahya and his sons, and, thus, indirectly paved their way to the throne.... They condescended to read the literature the liberals produced and considered it enough that they did not report to the authorities those persons through whom they received the literature. (1)

This passive attitude, however, changed with Prince Ibrahim's defection to the liberals. The Sayyid families were fearful of the possibility of Ibrahim becoming Imam. They contacted the liberals and suggested working together on the condition that no member of the Hamid al-Din family be allowed to be the Imam. The liberals, who lacked a base inside Yemen, accepted.

Army Officers

Whereas the liberals were inspired by a basically intellectual belief in progress and the Sayyid families were

(1) Noman, op. cit., p. 60.

motivated by a desire for power, the revolutionary officers represented the resentment of a social class of its inferior position. Those officers were on the main graduates of the orphans' school, sons of humble tradesmen. Many of them were trained in Iraq.⁽¹⁾ They were chosen to go abroad because Imam Yahya thought them politically harmless. Being of low social status, they were supposed to entertain no political ambitions.

The officers' stay in Iraq, a country relatively advanced, further deepened their sense of injustice. Upon their return, they were suspected and closely watched. In 1938 some of them were imprisoned for spreading "subversive" ideas.⁽²⁾ The fact that the regular army to which they were attached had extremely low standards and was not considered a prestigious institution did not help allay their resentment. Furthermore, the presence in the Yemeni army of a revolutionary Iraqi officer, Jamal Jamil, who was implicated in the 1936 coup in Iraq and consequently chose to stay in Yemen, provided the officers with leadership. The officers thus were ready and able to throw in their weight with the revolution.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

By 1947 the coordination between the three groups was completed. The alliance was sealed by adherence to the "Sacred National Covenant" which put forward a scheme for a constitutional Imamate. Yahya was a frail invalid now and his

(1) For a list of the army officers trained in Iraq see Wenner, op. cit., p. 58.

(2) Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., p. 248.

grip on the government became exceedingly shaky. In January 1948 an abortive attempt was made on Yahya's life. Assuming that the attempt had succeeded, the liberals in Aden published an account of Yahya's death and Abdullah al-Wazir's election as Imam. Yahya summoned Abdullah who disclaimed any responsibility for the published account, swore his allegiance, and published an article in the government's newspaper asserting his loyalty to Yahya and Ahmad. ⁽¹⁾

Yahya, however, was sufficiently alarmed to ask Ahmad to come to Sana. To forestall the consequences of Ahmad's arrival and, possibly, his assumption of power, the revolutionaries struck again in February 1948. Yahya was assassinated. Two of his sons were shot. Abdullah al-Wazir was proclaimed Imam in Sana. A new government was formed. ⁽²⁾

An ambush was prepared for Ahmad in Taizz but he managed to escape disguised as a labourer. He headed for Hajjah, a fortress town in the north, of which he was previously governor. He had briefly thought of leaving Yemen and seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia, ⁽³⁾ but then changed his mind and decided to organize a counter-revolution. Exploiting the resentment of the tribes to Yahya's assassination, as well as their traditional hostility to city-dwellers, he started gathering a tribal force.

The revolutionaries were now established in Sana, Taizz, and Hodaida. But outside these towns, the situation was not clear. Local governors decided to adopt a wait-and-see attitude.

(1) Ibid, p. 327.

(2) For details see Wenner, op. cit., pp. 97-100.

(3) See below p. 168.

Nor were the revolutionaries successful in securing international support. They appealed to the Arab League for recognition. The League decided to send a delegation to investigate the situation in Yemen and submit a first-hand report. This delegation first went to Saudi Arabia and met with King Abdul Aziz who persuaded them to stay at Riyadh. Members of the delegation were divided in their attitude toward the revolutionary regime. Before being able to either reach a conclusion or proceed to Yemen, the new regime collapsed.

The difficulties of the revolutionaries were exacerbated by internal frictions:

At first there was disagreement over which of them were to do what and where. Difficulties in travelling from Aden to Yemen meant that the rebels arrived belatedly in their assigned stations in the provinces, and fear over their colleagues gaining the upper hand in the capital motivated many of them to leave their posts soon afterwards. Within a few days, there were no members of the Free Yemeni Party in the provinces at all; the whole country except for the major cities was virtually abandoned to the counter-revolutionaries, who were free to roam without meeting any resistance. (1)

Ahmad's forces started to march toward Sana. Expeditions sent by al-Wazir to halt their progress were easily defeated. On March 14, Sana fell and Ahmad's tribal forces were allowed to loot it. The conspirators were arrested. Ahmad, the acknowledged Imam, made Taizz his capital.

(1) Wenner, op. cit., p. 107.

Chapter Two

The Imamic Regime

The Yemeni regime in the period under study - 1948-1962 - was the result of a long and turbulent history. The Imamate was transformed in 1918 from a sectional religious institution, whose temporal authority was for more than a century challenged by rival governments, to the highest authority, spiritually and temporally, in the land. Some modifications in both theory and practice were needed to cope with the new situation. Thus the Imam became also King; his duties and responsibilities were no longer limited to the Zaidi sect, of which he was head, but spread to the whole community, about half of which did not recognize his religious position. The right of primogeniture was introduced for the first time by Imam Yahya and his son Ahmad followed this precedent. The Imamate, however, failed to produce a coherent new theory. The constitution of 1948 did not survive the revolution that produced it. Our analysis of the regime⁽¹⁾ has, therefore, to proceed without the benefit of any constitutional documents and must take account not only of the original theory of the Imamate, but also of the way it operated, and was modified, in practice.

(1) "The regime as sets of constraints on political interaction in all systems may be broken down into three components: values (goals and principles), norms, and structure of authority," David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 193.

I Values and Principles⁽¹⁾

The Duties of the Imam

All the Imams ruled in the name of God and claimed support as faithful Moslems whose main goal was to follow God's laws. Consequently the main duty of the Imam was to see that these laws were carried out.⁽²⁾ As recently as 1961, a Yemeni author stated, in a semi-official publication, the major responsibility of the Imam to be the protection of the nation "against idolatry, polythesim, and other superstitious apostasy."⁽³⁾

The Imam was responsible not to his people but to God. Imam Ahmad apparently also believed that an Imam was removeable only by God. Commenting on the 1955 coup, he said that he had appealed to God to save him because of his good intentions toward the people and the country. He had also asked God to "rid the country of him" if He knew his intentions to be otherwise.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Values "serve as broad limits with regard to what can be taken for granted in the guidance of day-to-day policy without violating deep feelings of important segments of the community", Ibid. They "impose constraints on the purposes for which the energies and resources of the system may be committed." Ibid, p. 194.

(2) Gaml-Eddine Heyworth-Dunne, Al-Yemen (Cairo: The Renaissance Bookshop, 1952), p. 17.

(3) A.H. Sharafaddin, Yemen (Rome: Daily American Commercial Printing Section, 1961), p. 58.

(4) Al-Nasr, August 14, 1955, p. 8.

The closest indication of what the Imam conceived his duties to be is found in a speech by Imam Ahmad on the fourteenth anniversary of his accession. That speech, which reaffirmed Ahmad's choice of al-Badr as the future Imam, contained the principles the latter was to follow. These were:

- 1- to be of integrity;
- 2- to promote good and shun evil;
- 3- to support the Sharia at all times and to follow its straight path;
- 4- to help the oppressed against the oppressor;
- 5- to give priority to people of good character, faith and virtue;
- 6- to put everybody in their right stations and positions;
- 7- to safeguard the rights of the people: weak and strong, ruled and ruler;
- 8- to respect the rights of his family and relatives and be their father, brother, and helper. ⁽¹⁾

The first three principles, as well as the fifth, are of a general nature and directly connected with religion. The fourth and seventh principles specify justice as an important value. The sixth principle hints that some people are more equal than others, while the eighth one emphasizes the importance of keeping the Royal Family happy.

Direct accessibility of the Imam, an important norm of the regime, was an outgrowth of the principle of justice. The sixth and eighth principles meant in practice the predominance of the Sayyids. The other principles, those of upholding religion, remained loose and undefined. Consequently, it was impossible

(1) See al-Nasr, October 26, 1961, p. 16.

to determine if, and when, the Imam failed in his duties. No one had the right to point out such neglect.

In practice, Imam Ahmad's efforts to improve the lot of his people were considered the manifestation of his kindness rather than the simple execution of his duties. Whatever the poor received was not theirs by right, but the Imam's charity:

He /Imam Ahmad/ goes out himself while the poor from every direction gather around his palace. Full of humility, generosity, and compassion, he sits, surrounded by money and clothes, and gives each according to his station with his exalted hand. At times he may dress some young orphans himself. (1)

Medical treatment at the government's expense was considered a favour; many letters expressing gratitude to the Imam for such treatment were published in the Yemeni papers. (2) Even providing a hospital with the necessary supplies was considered an act of generosity on the Imam's part. (3)

The Extent of Popular Participation

The Zaidi theory of government stipulated that a candidate for the Imamate must fulfill fourteen conditions. (4) Paramount among these conditions are membership of ahl al-Bait,

(1) Al-Nasr, January 4, 1958, p. 8.

(2) See for example al-Nasr, February 2, 1957, p. 3.

(3) Al-Nasr, February 16, 1956, p. 2.

(4) Ahmad Husain Sharaf al-Din, Tarikh al-Yaman al-Thaqafi vol. 4. (Cairo: Matbat al-Kilani al-Saghir, 1967), pp. 160-162; Naji Hasan, Thawrat Zaid ibn Ali (Baghdad: al-Nahdha Bookshop, 1966), p. 167.

i.e. being a descendant of the Prophet, ability to resort to the sword and the necessary learning.⁽¹⁾ The Imam was elected by an electoral college which was composed of religious ulama and leading Sayyids. There were many instances in Yemen's history when a son of an Imam was elected Imam upon his father's death. But, prior to Imam Yahya, no Imam designated his son as his successor in his lifetime. The principle of election was generally followed, and no single Sayyid branch monopolized the Imamate.

The Zaidi theory established a limited democracy in which the Imamic office exclusively belonged to the descendants of the Prophet. The emphasis on the ability to resort to the sword imposed a further limitation. In effect, it meant that the strongest, and not necessarily the best, candidate captured the office. It also meant that an Imam lived in perpetual fear and suspicion of his rival Sayyids, any of whom if successful in deposing him would be recognized as a legal Imam.⁽²⁾ The history of the Imams was, in the hyberbolical words of a liberal Yemeni, that "of one Imam killing another, a third avenging the victim and killing the second, a fourth rising to kill the third and so on."⁽³⁾

Imam Yahya broke tradition and proclaimed his son Ahmad Crown Princē. The formality of an election was maintained, but it simply signified acquiescence in the Imam's decision. The Sayyids resented this encroachment upon their

(1) R. Strothmann, "Zaidiya", Encyclopaedia of Islam vol. IV, (London: Luzac & Co., 1929), p. 1179.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman, (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1962), p. 70.

rights⁽¹⁾ and the revolution of 1948 was in no small measure a reflection of that resentment. Imam Ahmad in turn wanted his son al-Badr to be acknowledged as his successor in his lifetime. Once more, the resentment of the decision was the prime factor in the 1955 coup.

Thus, the concept of limited democracy gave way to that of hereditary succession. Popular participation, minimal to start with, was completely eliminated. Not only were the people deprived of any say in the choice of the Imam, but they had no right to judge the way the government was run. Political parties and labour unions were not allowed. Strikes were prohibited.⁽²⁾ The principle of consultation received lip-service, but in reality the Imam monopolized power. The Imam, who according to the original theory was fallible, became in practice infallible. Any opposition was termed disobedience, a crime the punishment of which was left to the Imam's discretion.

There was a winner-take-all rule with regard to the Imamic office. Violent suppression of opponents was a time-honoured tradition. Governing Yemen was considered a dangerous

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- (1) Mohammad Noman says that every Sayyid in Yemen thought of himself as a potential Imam. A Sayyid child would challenge other Sayyid children to swear that they would not become Imams but none of them would accept the challenge. See Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 38.
- (2) Mohammad Said al-Attar, al-Takhalof al-Iqtisadi wa al-Ijtimaie fi al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah li al-Tibāah wa al-Nashr, 1965), p. 92.

task which required cruelty, including bloodshedding.⁽¹⁾ Thus, Imam Ahmad justified the execution of two brothers following the 1955 coup by saying: "I could not do otherwise. I swear that if my own son did the same I would not hesitate in executing him in accordance with Islamic Law."⁽²⁾ In his famous 1959 speech he declared:

I swear to God that if anyone, white or black, no matter who he may be, is reliably reported to me as disturbing security or intimidating the weak or disobeying orders or disregarding God's laws, I will smash his head with the

(1) This belief is best illustrated by a tale from Yemen's folklore. On his deathbed, a Himyarite king asked his heir to visit a female demon and do what she ordered. When the son saw her, the demon asked him to sit on a chair filled with snakes, to eat from a plate containing severed heads, and to drink blood - all of these things he refused to do. Then she asked him to kill the first person he saw at his father's palace. Returning, the first person he saw was his brother and he did not kill him. When he related all this to his father the latter said, "You were mistaken not to follow her commands. She tried to make you understand by similes. Don't you realize that a man who wants to rule Himyar (i.e. Yemen) must suffer snake bites, shed blood, and sequester properties? As for your brother if you don't kill him, he will kill you." See Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Qissat al-Adab fi al-Yaman (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijari, 1965), p. 23. The continuity of this tradition is demonstrated in Imam Ahmad's often-repeated complaint in private "I am sitting on snakes"; Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 4.3.1969.

(2) Al-Nasr, August 14, 1955, p. 8.

sword. I repeat: let him who disbelieves try! Here is the horse and there is the battleground." (1)

Conservatism

Imam Yahya's most consistent policy was that of isolationism. His "ruling passion" was the revival of Islam, (2) and he believed that intimate contact with outsiders was detrimental to the achievement of this objective. Furthermore, Yemen's history witnessed many outside interventions, justified by an alliance between the intervening power and a faction in the country. Yahya was determined not to allow such interventions by making it impossible for a foreign power to establish a foothold in the country and develop a direct contact with any section of his people.

Conservatism at home was a natural outcome of the isolationist policy. With modernizing influences barred, the people had no alternative but to continue their traditional way of life. Conservatism appealed to powerful forces in the Yemeni society. The dogmatic religious leaders embraced it to shield Islam against the innovations which they deemed irreligious. (3) The tribes were in favour of it, because it did not interfere with

(1) Al-Nasr, August 15, 1959, p. 8. The last sentence constitutes a challenge for a duel.

(2) Harold F. Jacob, Kings of Arabia (London: Mills & Boon Ltd., 1923), p. 136.

(3) The religious leaders at first objected to the use of a motor car by Imam Yahya; see Salvatore Aponti, Hadhi^hnia al-Yaman al-Saidah, Tarjamat Taha Fawzi, (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, n.d.), p. 108.

their "exaggerated individualism"⁽¹⁾ and fierce independence. Most important of all, the Sayyids which found themselves the most privileged class in the society, supported the conservative outlook to prevent any change in the status-quo.

What began as a policy gradually became a major value of the regime. Progress was to be cautious. Radical change was out of the question. Any departure from the conservative line had to be justified and defended:

"His Majesty /Imam Ahmad/ takes the opinion and trust of the ulama and shaikhs into consideration because he knows the Yemeni character and its attachment to traditions and customs...A person who is ignorant of the psychology of Yemen would mistakingly think it possible to change conditions with a stroke of pen.... The conservative Yemeni stood up to the Moslem Turks and fought for his traditions and customs. The fact that he opposed their plans of opening some major roads in Sana offers ample proof that he does not easily consent to development projects..." (2)

Equality: Fact and Fiction

The Imamic regime was handicapped by the fact that the Shafis, about half the population, did not acknowledge the Imam's religious position which was the foundation of his temporal power. Yet no effort was made to include the Shafis in the process of choosing the Imam. It was impossible under the Imamic regime to conceive of a Shafi occupying the highest

(1) Harold Ingrams, The Yemen (London: John Murray, 1963), p. 36.

(2) Al-Nasr, September 13, 1955, p. 4.

office in the land. The regime brushed aside the Shaif problem by simply pretending that it did not exist.

Equality of all people, regardless of sectarian differences, was proclaimed as one of the guiding principles of the regime. "One people, one race, one blood and one Koran. No power can change that.... All are Yemenis and there is no difference between Zaidi and Shafi,"⁽¹⁾ declared Imam Ahmad. "We are not building a sect, a dynasty or a family but a whole population,"⁽²⁾ said Crown Prince al-Badr. "We are in need of unity.... No north and south, no Zaidi and Shafi,"⁽³⁾ he maintained. "To the government all the people are one class and not many classes,"⁽⁴⁾ asserted an article in al-Nasr.

Equality, however, was a regime fiction. Although at the lower levels of administration the Shafis were well-represented, higher offices were mainly filled by Zaidis. Usually, there was no more than one Shafi viceroy. No Shafi was appointed a minister in the 1955 cabinet and only one in the cabinet of 1961. The Qadis, those with high religious training who occupied important posts, were mainly Zaidis. The armed forces were almost entirely composed of Zaidis. More importantly the vast majority of the Sayyids, the elite estimated to number 200,000, were Zaidis. The Sayyids "governed most provinces and districts, supervised the collection of taxes and controlled access to the beneficence of the Imam."⁽⁵⁾ "It is no exaggeration to say that

(1) Al-Nasr, September 7, 1956. P. 8⁸

(2) Al-Nasr, July 4, 1959. P. 12¹²

(3) Al-Nasr, July 30, 1959. P. 2

(4) Al-Nasr, November 10, 1955. P. 7

(5) William R. Brown, "The Yemeni Dilemma" The Middle East Journal (Autumn, 1963), p. 35.

Yemen under the Zaidi Imams was administered largely in the interest of this elite..."⁽¹⁾ Yet to say that most of the privileged were Zaidis is not to confirm the notion, common in Western writings, that the Zaidis, as a whole, were privileged. The majority of the Zaidis were treated in the same way as the Shafis.

II Norms ⁽²⁾

Direct Accessibility of the Imam

The Imam's duty to uphold religion, including administering justice, as well as the regime's structure of authority, which invested the Imam with a power unparalleled in other systems, necessitated that the Imam should be easily accessible. The most important rule of the game in the Imamic regime was that any outcome of any significance could come only from the Imam. In a system that severely limited popular participation, the one democratic feature was that any subject could directly communicate with the Imam, by telegrams, letters, or personal confrontation:

He /Imam Ahmad/ appears to the people himself, takes their letters of complaints and answers them with his own hand. Oppressor and oppressed alike stand before him, and he protects the rights of the weak. His ear may be

(1) Manfred. W. Wenner, Modern Yemen (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 33.

(2) Norms "specify the kinds of procedure that are expected and acceptable in the processing and implementation of demands"; Easton, op. cit., p. 193.

stopped by those in need, or by a widow or a child. While passing in his formal procession, he answers everyone with a need. He does not sit on a throne ornamented with jewels but... on a stone bench in front of his house. His people enter to see him without hindrance or a barrier. He smiles as they shake his hands.... (1)

Easy access to the Imam fulfilled many functions. It enabled the Imam to know the demands of his people. It gave the subjects the satisfaction of knowing that their demands reached the highest decision-maker, and partly compensated for the primitive structure of the government. It enforced the image of the Imam as a benovelent father whose doors were always open to his children. It is not surprising, therefore, that when ever this norm became inoperative the implications to the regime were far-reaching.

Absence of Parties and Organized Interest Groups

With freedom of association curtailed, every person had to put in his demands as an individual rather than a part of a larger organization. Since regime values did not acknowledge any sectarian differences, it was unthinkable to have, for example, Shafi or Zaidi demands supported respectively by Shafi and Zaidi organizations.

The regime did not recognize any organization presuming to represent its membership. Thus, farmers, labourers,

(1) Al-Nasr, January 4, 1958, p. 8.

and merchants could not claim the support of any formal lobby. The head of the state was the "Imam of all the people" and no encouragement was given to political, religious, or professional associations.

The only exception to this norm was the tribes which formed closely-knit communities and were, in a sense, nations within the nation. Yet factional feuds within the tribes, and feuds among different tribes weakened tribal unity and prevented the emergence of a single effective tribal block. The Imam could, and did, deal with each tribe on its own.

Minimum Expectations

In an age of rising expectations, the Imamic regime strove to minimize the expectations of the Yemenis. Poverty and purity were given priority over wealth and corruption. High expectations could not be met without a much greater rate of economic development which not only necessitated a radical re-organization of the government but entailed enlisting foreign aid on a large scale, with the attendant danger of foreign influences. "I would rather keep myself and my people poor subsisting on grass than allow the foreigners in the country or grant them concessions, regardless of the wealth or benefit to the country that their entry would bring,"⁽¹⁾ said Imam Yahya. More than twenty years later, the same sentiment was echoed: "Yemen will refuse aid in any form; and will always suspect the

(1) Nazih Moayyad al-Azm, Rihlah fi Bilad al-Arabiyyah al-Saidah min Misr ila Sana (Cairo: Matbat Isa al-Babi al-Halabi wa Sharakah, n.d.), p. 228.

aid and the contracts offered by the West and the agents of Colonialism; and will be content with its slow pace while maintaining its honour and independence."⁽¹⁾

Imam Ahmad promised that one day the country would be developed and its minerals exploited.⁽²⁾ He could have added that until that day came, extravagant demands were out of place. Addressing the army, Imam Ahmad told them that he would love to increase their pay and went on to say: "But how can we do that while Yemen's resources are still derived from a grain of corn or wheat and the like?"⁽³⁾ If demands for higher pay were thus dismissed, then obviously more ambitious demands related to social services and public works would go unheeded.

Minimum Results

Even with modest demands, the Yemenis approached the system with little hope of their demands being fulfilled. The government was extremely inefficient; getting things done was the exception rather than the rule. Government officials were apathetic. Wide spread corruption weakened the already inefficient machinery.

Inefficiency characterized every governmental activity. It reached a stage where even the government's own material requirements had to be supplied through a merchant.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Al-Nasr, September 13, 1955, p. 1.

(2) Al-Iman, December 15, 1955, p. 1.

(3) Al-Nasr, August 14, 1955, p. 8.

(4) Brown states that in 1961 "a merchant was called upon to establish the new Yemeni Legation in Amman"; Brown, op. cit., p. 358.

This inefficiency was aptly described by an American diplomat who was, for two years, stationed in Yemen:

In a country of 4.5 million persons, social services consisted of two orphanages, three hospitals in which appalling conditions prevailed and a few government operated schools. No sewerage systems were to be found. Only in Taizz was there a public water system and this consisted of a 3/4 inch pipe leading to central public outlets and laid above ground. Electricity was available to perhaps three per cent of the population and exorbitant rates were charged. (1)

The indifference and lethargy of government officials made things worse. Water was "mixed with mud."⁽²⁾ 45,000 sacks of wheat "were lost."⁽³⁾ Passports were forged.⁽⁴⁾ Some public projects were misused and sabotaged.⁽⁵⁾ Referring to the viceroy of Taizz Saba said that he was "one of the few who take pleasure in acting upon people's business."⁽⁶⁾

It is impossible, of course, to find a government in which no corruption exists. But in Yemen corruption was so common and taken for granted that it almost became a norm. "The Yemeni, by nature and instinct, does not trust you to solve his problems unless you take a bribe beforehand."⁽⁷⁾ Despite their

(1) Ibid, pp. 357-358.

(2) Saba, June 28, 1956, p. 8.

(3) Saba, September 10, 1959, p. 8.

(4) Saba, October 9, 1959, p. 5.

(5) Al-Nasr, March 17, 1957, p. 6.

(6) Saba, March 7, 1957, p. 1.

(7) Saba, April 8, 1960, p. 3.

limited freedom, the Yemeni newspapers were able to call attention to the spread of bribery. ⁽¹⁾ Crown Prince al-Badr expressed alarm at the extent of corruption within the government. ⁽²⁾

With extremely limited facilities, administered by indifferent and corrupt officials, it was not strange that most of the demands were in the nature of grievances against the workings of the system itself.

III Regime Structure

Formal Structure of Authority ⁽³⁾

No legal or administrative code that specified the way authority roles were organized existed in Yemen. To try to apply the principles of modern public administration to the way authority was exercised in Yemen is a hopeless endeavour. When Imam Yahya took charge he inherited some of the Turkish methods of government, utilized some of the traditional structures, and made some improvisations. This arrangement, with minor modifications, remained in force during Imam Ahmad's reign.

Administratively, the country was divided into seven

(1) See, for example, Saba, March 17, 1960, p. 2.

(2) Al-Nasr, May 21, 1959, p. 8.

(3) Structure of authority designates "the formal and informal patterns in which power is distributed and organized with regard to the authoritative making and implementing of decisions - the roles and their relationships through which authority is distributed and exercised", Easton, op. cit., p. 193.

provinces liwas each headed by a viceroy naib. A province consisted of several districts qadas and these were further divided into towns nahias and villages izlas. The administrative heads of districts were governors amils whereas villages were administered by shaikhs. In each sub-division, the most important officials, besides the administrative head, were the judge, the tax-collector, the police chief, and the store-keeper who was in charge of the local branch of the public treasury. ⁽¹⁾

At the national level the Imam was assisted by two bodies: the Cabinet and the Royal Council. Cabinet posts were merely honorific since no ministries in the real sense existed. The members of the Royal Council were the Imam's personal assistants and were not endowed with any specific authority.

Two interesting features can be observed in the authority structure. First, the structure does not accurately reflect the actual power structure. This is reflected in the fact that the tribes, despite their power and political relevance, did not have a corresponding share in the authority structure. ⁽²⁾ Second, the Imam's role was so important that any study of the government in Yemen becomes a study of the Imam's powers and how he exercised them.

The Unique Role of the Imam

It is quite difficult empirically to find a system in which one man enjoyed as much power as the Imam in the Yemeni

(1) Al-Attar, op. cit., p. 89.

(2) See below p. 148.

system. Legislative, judicial and administrative powers were concentrated in his hands. In his legislative capacity, he interpreted Islamic laws,⁽¹⁾ instructed the courts,⁽²⁾ and had the sole authority of issuing decrees and promulgating laws. In his judicial function, he appointed the judges, looked into some cases personally,⁽³⁾ and reserved for himself the right of final appeal. As the executive head, he appointed all government officials, reviewed all expenditures, and concerned himself with the minutest detail of administration.⁽⁴⁾

None of these functions were ever delegated. Imam Ahmad, like his father, insisted on exercising them to the fullest possible extent. Visitors to Yemen noted, and reported, this feature with justifiable amazement. Stores were dealt out by the Imam himself.⁽⁵⁾ "It is for the King to decide personally whether or not a school-teacher in a distant province needs ten extra ink-wells for his class."⁽⁶⁾ Prescriptions given to patients treated at the government's expense had to be signed by the Imam.⁽⁷⁾

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- (1) For example, see the Imam's ruling prohibiting marriage between foster relatives in Saba, January 5, 1961, p. 7.
 - (2) After the attempt on Imam Ahmad's life in 1961 he told the judge of Taizz, to whom the case was later referred, that the attempt was premeditated, al-Nasr, April 16, 1961, p. 1.
 - (3) For a case submitted to the Imam see Saba, August 30, 1956, p. 4.
 - (4) Mohammad Anam Ghalib, Al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1966), p. 75.
 - (5) Heather Seager, "Guests of the Imam", Blackwood's Magazine, (June, 1955), p. 484.
 - (6) Claudie Fayein, A French Doctor in the Yemen, translated by Douglas McKee, (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1957), p. 48.
 - (7) Eva Hoeck, Sanawat fi al-Yemen wa Hadramout, tarjamat Khairy Hammad (Beirut: Dar al-Talia^h, 1962), p. 115.

These statements are not exaggerated. There is enough evidence to indicate the extent of the Imam's obsession with handling details. Drilling a well,⁽¹⁾ enlarging a government building⁽²⁾ and repairing a school⁽³⁾ - all required Imamic orders. Saba once published an appeal by a male nurse requesting the Imam to accept his resignation.⁽⁴⁾

The lack of administrative codes, coupled with with undefined limits of the Imam's authority, meant in practice that the Imam's powers were not exercised according to specified methods. Demands did not travel through regular channels until they reached the Imam, nor were his orders transmitted through uniform procedures. Thus, it was not uncommon for the Imam to instruct a governor directly and ignore the latter's administrative superior, the viceroy of the province.⁽⁵⁾ It was also quite common for a member of the system to ignore lower officials and take his demand directly to the Imam.⁽⁶⁾

Cultural Expectations with Regard to Authority Roles

Historical experiences taught the members of the Yemeni political system to mistrust all authority. The endless struggles for power that took place in Yemen always ended with one elite replacing another; no beneficial results to the members

(1) Al-Nasr, October 21, 1956, p. 3.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Al-Nasr, December 20, 1956, p. 3.

(4) Saba, December 13, 1956, p. 3.

(5) See, for instance, al-Nasr, April 25, 1957, p. 6.

(6) See below pp. 59-60.

as a whole ensued. In the first two decades of the twentieth century the Imamate was preoccupied with securing the country's independence, and in the following decades with consolidating the power of the central government. The idea that the government had a positive duty, beyond the laissez-faire concept of protecting borders and maintaining internal order, did not have the time to take roots. The regime had tentatively come to grips with it when the revolution burst out.

An occupant of an authority role did not feel constrained to act toward the welfare of the people, nor did the people expect him to do so. It is not a semantic accident that the petitions the Imam received were invariably called complaints, shakawi. The maintainance of public order required money which could only be obtained through taxation; hence to the members the state appeared as no more than "a tax-imposing power."⁽¹⁾

Heyworth-Dunne classifies state officials into the following eight categories:

- 1- residents or provincial agents
- 2- judges
- 3- tax collectors
- 4- jailors
- 5- custom officials
- 6- armed forces
- 7- treasury store-keepers
- 8- teachers.

He goes on to comment:

Of the eight classes, seven are engaged in the all-important business of collecting taxes: 3 and 5 collect; 6 are

(1) Ghalib, op. cit., p. 107.

billeted on the tax-dodgers until they pay up or are handed over to 2 and 4; 1 report and hand over the tax receipts to the Imam. (1)

This statement ignores the fact that armed forces were also concerned with security and that judges had to settle other cases, but it serves to illustrate the type of cultural expectations associated with authority roles.

IV Three Main Occupants of Authority Roles

Three occupants of authority roles, at the highest decision-making level, are discussed below. They have been chosen not only because they include the two Imams in the period under study but because each of them represented a powerful systemic trend. Al-Badr symbolized the liberal attitude which aimed at modernizing the Imamate in a peaceful and gradual way. Al-Hasan was the spokesman of the conservatives who wanted to maintain the status quo in all its details. Ahmad represented the system's efforts to cope with the conflicting pressures of liberalism, conservatism and revolution without altering the nature of the regime. In short, al-Badr wanted changes in policies and in the regime; al-Hasan wanted no changes in policies or the regime; Ahmad was willing to experiment with new policies but not with new structures.

Ahmad

The eldest son of Imam Yahya, Ahmad was born in

(1) J. Heyworth-Dunne, "The Yemen", Middle Eastern Affairs, (February, 1958), p. 55.

1895. (1) His early childhood was spent with his grandfather Imam Mohammad. He received an extensive literary and religious training at the hands of Zaidi and Shafi teachers. In 1923 he was designated Crown Prince. (2)

Imam Yahya appointed Ahmad as his military commander and heavily relied on him during the consolidation period. Ahmad's campaigns took him to many rebellious tribal areas throughout the country. (3) He achieved his greatest fame in 1928 - 29 when he crushed the rebellion of the Zaraniq tribe. It was during these campaigns that he acquired the reputation for courage, cruelty and indestructibility, that was to persist till his very last days.

Ahmad's relationship with his father was not always smooth, which is not surprising in view of the dominant personalities of both. At times, such as during the Saudi-Yemeni war, violent disagreements surfaced. Yet Ahmad's admiration for, and loyalty to his father remained consistent and the latter spared no effort to secure him the succession.

Ahmad's ruthlessness in the aftermath of the 1948 revolution and the 1955 coup, together with his earlier military role, combined to produce the image of a blood-thirsty tyrant. His appearance, which was fearful and commanding, reinforced that image. Furthermore, Ahmad's eccentricities were stressed out of all proportions. The belief, held by some of the more

(1) Al-Nasr, January 4, 1958, p. 1.

(2) Al-Nasr, December 5, 1957, p. 8.

(3) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Imam al-Yaman Ahmad Hamid al-Din, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1965), pp. 64-81.

illiterate of his subjects, in his supernatural powers⁽¹⁾ surrounded him with an aura of awe and mystery. The total effect was that Ahmad became generally perceived as an Arabian Nights character, an irrational priest-king "whose favourite pastime was popularly supposed to be organising and watching public beheadings".⁽²⁾

This popular perception notwithstanding, Ahmad's personality was a most complex one in which cruelty and tenderness co-existed. His tremendous energy was wasted on trivialities. His mistrust and suspicion prevented him from devoting himself to the task of constructive leadership. Ahmad would have made a great Imam in earlier periods when leading the faithful against external and internal enemies was all that an Imam was expected to do. But as a leader of a country in the modern period he suffered from serious limitations. Nothing in his training equipped him to fully grasp concepts such as modernization, welfare or economic development. He had the benefit of neither travelling⁽³⁾ nor varied reading. His education was entirely confined to religion and literature.⁽⁴⁾ Ahmad may not

(1) See Peter Sommerville-Large, Tribes and Tribulations (London: Robert Hale, 1967), p. 27.

(2) Ingrams, op. cit., p. 1.

(3) Ahmad's first contact with modern civilization came when he visited Aden in 1946. He was so impressed with what he saw there that upon his return he became convinced of the wisdom of introducing electricity and building modern roads.

(4) Ahmad's conversations with guests and companions, as reported in the Yemeni press, invariably dealt with literary or religious matters.

have been "an exact copy of his father",⁽¹⁾ but he firmly believed that he could bring about real progress within the framework that his father built. The ghost of foreign influences that haunted his father continued to haunt him. His apathetic bewilderment is strikingly revealed in his answer to a liberal adviser who pressed him for reforms: "What do you want us to do? Bring the Christians in?"⁽²⁾

That Ahmad genuinely wanted to improve the conditions of his fellow countrymen cannot be denied. But his own limitations, and more importantly, the limitations imposed by the regime he wanted to keep intact, thwarted him at every turn. His success in perpetuating the regime was a Pyrrhic victory; not only did he have to resort to excessive coercion, but as soon as his dominant presence left the scene his son had to reap the bitter harvest.

Al-Badr

Mohammad al-Badr, the eldest of Ahmad's sons, was born in 1928. His mother was divorced when he was quite young and he spent most of his childhood away from his father. He received the traditional religious training from private tutors. When he was in his teens he developed a taste for modern books and magazines and as they were scarce and hard to get, he went to great trouble to obtain them. At that time Ahmad Noman, who later became a liberal leader, took an interest in the young prince's education and recommended reading material to him.

(1) Al-Iman, January 13, 1956, p. 2.

(2) Noman, op. cit., p. 74.

It was through his readings that al-Badr gradually began to develop liberal beliefs. In the forties he left Yemen on a prolonged tour which took him to Lebanon and Egypt. In Egypt he took a course in a military academy and upon completing it, he received further training with the Egyptian Royal Guards. At the same time he attended some classes at King Fouad University (now Cairo University) as an auditor.⁽¹⁾ These experiences reinforced his liberal outlook and made him determined to do his best to modernize Yemen.

During the 1948 revolution, al-Badr, who was in Sana, submitted to the revolutionaries. After Ahmad's succession he was appointed viceroy of Hodaida. In the early fifties his reputation as an enlightened modern-minded prince was well established and liberal elements were attracted to him.

In 1955, al-Badr became Deputy Prime Minister as well as Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs. He travelled widely and his journeys took him to various countries in the Middle East, Europe, and the Eastern Block. His contacts with President Nasser converted him to the Egyptian leader's brand of progressive Arab nationalism, a cause he energetically took up in Yemen.

Except in the field of foreign affairs, al-Badr was unable to practise his liberal doctrine. Internally, Imam Ahmad did not allow him any measure of authority, except for a brief period in 1959 when the Imam was away in Rome. During this period al-Badr instituted some reforms but the experiment came to an abrupt end when his father returned and undid his

(1) Imam Mohammad al-Badr, Interview, Taif, 18.12.1969.

reforms. It was only upon Ahmad's death that al-Badr came into power but, by then, it was too late. One week after his accession, the revolution swept the regime away.

Diffident and mild-mannered, al-Badr was overshadowed by his domineering father. Too enlightened to share his father's outlook and too loyal to rebel, al-Badr endeavoured to retain his father's support and at the same time maintain his liberal image.⁽¹⁾ In the process, he incurred the resentment of the conservatives and the mistrust of the liberals who grew more and more revolutionary. In the end he was neither radical enough to attract the revolutionaries nor conservative enough to have the full support of the conservative elements in the regime.

Al-Hasan

Al-Hasan, Yahya's third son, was born in 1902. Throughout his political career, he was "a dyed-in-the-wool conservative."⁽²⁾ Appointed Prime Minister and viceroy of Sana upon Ahmad's accession, al-Hasan used his considerable influence in opposing modernization.⁽³⁾ Although he took no part in the 1955 coup he was dismissed from his posts soon after. Until 1962, except for brief visits, al-Hasan was kept outside the country on diplomatic assignments. He spent most of his time in New York as the head of the Yemeni delegation to the United Nations.

(1) Hence the comment that "when he speaks with the liberals he curses the Imam and when he speaks with the Imam he curses the liberals"; see al-Baidani, op. cit., p. 222.

(2) B.W. Seager, "The Yemen", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (July - October, 1955), p. 224.

(3) See below pp. 101-102

Al-Hasan's importance did not stem from his personality which was conventional and colourless but from his role as the favourite of the conservatives. His consistent traditionalism attracted to him the support of the more conservative forces: the tribal leaders, the ulama and the majority of the Sayyids. Ahmad recognized the potential threat he presented as a rival to al-Badr and only by keeping him out of the country did he manage to neutralize him.

Chapter Three

Demands

Neither available data nor the scope of this study would make it possible to undertake a comprehensive analysis of demands⁽¹⁾ in the Yemeni political system; this chapter will be limited to those demands directed towards the Imam and the way he handled them. In any other system to confine the study to the highest decision-maker's handling of demands would be totally inadequate. This, however, is not the case in the Yemeni political system. As we have seen, the Imam's role was so all-encompassing that the members tended to direct to him personally demands that in other systems would take quite a different flow channel. This, of course, does not mean that all demands were transformed into binding decisions by the Imam himself. It means that the structural differentiation in Yemen had not reached the level of sophistication in which demands went through a series of regulatory mechanisms before only a small percentage of them, duly processed, reached the Imam. Many escaped all kinds of regulation and travelled directly from their enunciator to the Imam. "Articulators of demands must orient themselves toward the subsystem that produces authoritative decisions."⁽²⁾ Many Yemenis believed that the Imam constituted this subsystem.

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- (1) "A demand may be defined as an expression of opinion that an authoritative allocation with regard to a particular subject matter should or should not be made by those responsible for doing so"; David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inco., 1967), p. 38.
- (2) Ibid, p. 117.

In Yemen there were no structural checkpoints to inhibit the conversion of wants into demands.⁽¹⁾ Once demands were politicized, the members, almost instinctively, turned to the Imam in expectation of binding decisions.⁽²⁾ There were many reasons for this. Traditionally, ever since the Imamate was introduced in Yemen, the Imam enjoyed a free hand in disposing of Zakat, the returns of the religious tax, which represented the main source of the state income. Any demand involving any allocation of money for whatever purpose had to be made to the Imam. This tradition persisted into the twentieth century. The Imam had the sole responsibility of administering the public treasury which was, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from his private purse. Thus, any decision, entailing expenditure of money, had to be made by the Imam. Furthermore, the norm of direct accessibility

- (1) "Where the degree of structural differentiation between a political system and the rest of society is low, the capacity to convert wants to demands will be widely distributed throughout the system", Ibid, p. 91.
- (2) The tendency to direct towards the Imam demands that could easily be handled by lesser officials is clear in a story told by Ameen Rihani. A petitioner complained to Imam Yahya about his neighbour's donkey, which was always kicking against his wall at night. Imam Yahya personally settled the case by ordering "that the donkey be chained from the hour of the first cannon till dawn", Ameen Rihani, Arabian Peak and Desert (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1930), p. 225. Even in the Republican regime the tendency to expect the head of the state to settle everything persisted. President al-Sallal complained that "... most people still refuse to obey even the smallest order unless I sign it personally", Thomas A. Abercrombie, "Behind the Veil of Troubled Yemen", National Geographic Magazine (March, 1964), p. 421.

encouraged the members to ignore lower officials and take their demands to the Imam. Officials were considered corrupt and indifferent while the Imam was pious and just; and since a great deal of the demands involved complaints against the authorities, it was only natural to approach the man who alone could redress the complaints. The result, needless to say, placed a tremendous burden on the Imam and made a continuously vigorous performance on his part vital for the operation of the whole system. Whenever the Imam's performance was impaired, the system operated under stress.

The Effect of Cultural Norms

Although one cultural norm, the direct accessibility of the Imam, tended to encourage an increase in the number of demands, other cultural norms operated in an opposite direction. As noted in the second chapter, the regime tried to reduce demands by minimizing expectations.⁽¹⁾ The conservative outlook ruled out demands for radical change. Religion also played a vital role in inhibiting demands. Wants considered incompatible with Islam, for example wants with regard to the emancipation of women or the introduction of cinema theatres or bars, had no chance of being converted to demands. The values of the regime tended to inhibit certain demands. Thus it was impermissible to voice demands for greater representation or more freedom of association or reduction of the powers of the Imam. The fact that those demands were frowned upon does not mean that they did not exist. They were often expressed in violence and revolutionary activities.

(1) See above pp. 43-44.

The effect of Qat is also worth considering. The chewing of Qat leaves was, and still is, a universal habit indulged in by children and adults, men and women, tribesmen and town dwellers. Although medical authorities are not agreed as to the exact effect of Qat, its users alledge that it produces a state of euphoria and well-being. The chewing is a time-consuming process that starts after lunch and goes on till late into the night. The political implications of this habit have not been examined. It seems plausible, however, to argue that insofar as the indulgence took a great deal of time, part of which could have been spent in political activities, including the formulation of demands, it helped to reduce the volume of demands. Furthermore, by creating a sensation of happy euphoria, a world of make-belief in which everything was perfect, Qat tended to make Yemen's backwardness less intolerable and made radical changes, and the demands for them, appear less urgent, if not less necessary. ⁽¹⁾

(1) It is probably the unconscious realization of Qat's role in inhibiting demands, thus indirectly alleviating the stress on the regime, that led the critics of the Imamate to condemn the habit and attribute its widespread use to the encouragement of successive Imams; see, for example, Mohammad al-Sayyid Ayyoub, al-Yaman bain al-Qat wa Fasad al-Hokm Qabl al-Thawrah (Cairo: Dar al-Marif, 1963), p. 97. Although neither Imam Yahya nor Imam Ahmad tried to discourage the use of Qat, there is no evidence that they encouraged it. The uninhibited discussions for and against the use of Qat in the Yemeni press during Imam Ahmad's reign prove that the Imam had no definite Qat policy.

Inadequacy of Demand Channels

The demands reached the Imam through three channels: personal confrontation, telegrams and letters, and the press. Everyone in Yemen could approach the Imam and voice his demand to him. In theory, personal confrontation represented a channel that all demand articulators could employ. In practice, however, the channel had many deficiencies. A man wishing to see the Imam personally had to travel to the Imam's residence in Taizz or Hodaida. Travelling in Yemen was difficult and costly. Furthermore, he had to wait for a public audience to which everybody was allowed. Such public audiences were held with decreasing frequency as Imam Ahmad grew older and his health poorer. Even when those with demands succeeded in meeting the Imam, the limitations of time alone made it impossible for the Imam to give proper attention to each demand.⁽¹⁾

Letters represented another means of conveying demands to the Imam. Dispatching a letter, however, involved expenses in the form of stamps plus, in some cases, the fees of the public scribe who wrote the letter. In Yemen's postal conditions there was no guarantee of a safe, let alone swift delivery. The Yemeni government had no filing system or well-kept archives. Thus, even if the letter reached the Imam it was quite possible, even likely, that it would be mislaid or lost altogether. Telegrams assured far safer and quicker delivery. Yet they were much more expensive. If an answer from the Imam was expected, a telegram had to be accompanied by a pre-paid

(1) For a description of Imam Ahmad's public audiences see Ahmad Farid Rifai, Rihlati ila al-Yaman al-Arabiyyah al-Saidah, (Cairo: Matbat Mohammad Ali Sabih wa Awladoh, n.d.), p. 26

reply.⁽¹⁾ This requirement served the double function of supplementing the government's income and reducing the volume of demands.

The press provided another channel. The government newspaper al-Iman (Faith) started publication in 1926 and continued till 1957. Al-Hikmah (Wisdom) appeared in 1934 and stopped publication in 1940. In 1948 Imam Ahmad established another official newspaper al-Nasr (Victory) which continued to publish till the collapse of the regime. Besides, there were Saba (Sheba), a privately-owned paper which started publication in the early fifties, and al-Taliah (Vanguard) another privately-owned paper which had a brief career in 1959 - 1960.⁽²⁾ The press managed to provide a channel through which demands travelled. Thus, one finds demands for better public services,⁽³⁾ stricter municipal and medical controls,⁽⁴⁾ more efficient security measures,⁽⁵⁾ and more effective economic policies.⁽⁶⁾ Yet the press, as a channel

(1) Claudie Fayein, A French Doctor in the Yemen translated by Douglas McKee (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1957), p. 47.

(2) During the Second World War a small group of writers issued a handwritten paper, al-Barid al-Adabi (Literary Post); see Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Qissat al-Adab fi al-Yaman (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijari, 1965), p. 284.

(3) Saba, July 21, 1960, p. 3; March 8, 1956, p. 8; March 26, 1959, p. 1. Al-Nasr, May 18, 1961, p. 8; June 29, 1960, p. 6; March 24, 1960, p. 8.

(4) Saba, June 28, 1956, p. 1. Al-Nasr, January 12, 1961, p. 7; October 6, 1960, p. 8; April 14, 1960, p. 8; July 28, 1960, p. 6.

(5) Saba, October 30, 1958, p. 8; February 26, 1959, p. 12; April 16, 1959, p. 4. Al-Nasr, March 10, 1960, p. 3; August 11, 1960, p. 3.

(6) Al-Nasr, June 16, 1960, p. 6. Al-Taliah, October 25, 1959, p. 1; November 1, 1959, p. 1; November 15, 1959, p. 8.

for demands, was beset with many problems. Readership was severely limited. There were no professional journalists. Intimidation was a constant threat.⁽¹⁾ Al-Taliah, the most outspoken of the Yemeni papers,⁽²⁾ was forced to stop publication after producing only 11 issues.

It is obvious that with all these deficiencies in the channels, many demands could not reach the Imam. Al-Badr tried to improve channel capacity by establishing a "Representative Council" to assist him in 1959 and by introducing a host of reforms, including elected municipal councils in 1962. In the first instance Imam Ahmad did away with the reforms; in the second the regime itself was destroyed by the revolution.

Unprocessed Demands

Direct accessibility of the Imam led to a situation in which demands reached the Imam without sufficient processing. Ideally, "the raw demands of a number of persons will be collected, combined, and consolidated into a single set of demands and this in turn, may be modified many times before it reaches the

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- (1) The editor of Saba reported once that a government official threatened to kill him, Saba, April 8, 1960, p. 8.
 - (2) Commenting on Yemen's backward conditions, an article in al-Taliah said, "Our people cannot wait for long. Our backward conditions and past experiences do not allow us to wait....", al-Taliah, October 25, 1959, p. 1. Another article asserted, "Our independence will be negative, limited and vulnerable unless backward conditions are quickly and radically changed." al-Taliah, November 15, 1959, p. 8

output stage."⁽¹⁾ In Yemen, however, there was no provision for such processing and, consequently, it was possible for the demand of a single individual to go directly to the Imam.

The Imam had to deal with those unprocessed demands. Because every new day brought fresh demands, quick decisions had to be taken every day. Demands were handled in the following manner:

The council is composed of about fifteen men squatting on divans along the walls If the reply /to a letter or a telegram/ is favourable, the King writes it himself, then tosses the paper bearing his red seal to the council member responsible for its execution. If the reply is negative, he merely throws the paper on the floor.... This method of evaluation, accompanied by appropriate quotations from the Koran, is carried on with stupefying rapidity. It seems that the King can examine more than two hundred telegrams at a sitting.⁽²⁾

The necessity of transforming raw demands into binding outcomes in a short time led, as can be expected, to decisions that were not sufficiently considered. It is difficult to establish the authenticity of many reports of what one may call "irrational" decisions on the Imam's part.⁽³⁾ The fol-

(1) Easton, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

(2) Fayein, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

(3) See, for instance, Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1962), pp. 43-49. Al-Baidani attributes irrational decisions to Imam Ahmad's belief in geomancy, astrology and spiritualism. Although this notion about Ahmad is wide-spread, it cannot be substantiated.

lowing reports, however, by unprejudiced foreigners bear signs of credibility. A Lebanese architect was commissioned to build the first reinforced-concrete building in Taizz. The Yemeni contractor insisted on laying the foundations in mud according to local custom and putting the concrete only above the ground where "it would show". When the architect objected the matter was referred to the Imam who, totally mis-informed, sided against the architect.⁽¹⁾ Another hasty decision involved a million-dollar textile plant. In order to protect their export business, some merchants convinced the Imam that he would lose revenue if cotton were not shipped abroad and the export tax was not collected. The Imam "lost interest in the plant and the few final steps to render it operative were never taken".⁽²⁾ A German doctor reports that prescriptions submitted to the Imam for authorization were sometimes returned with the comment: "Tablets can be used instead of injections".⁽³⁾

Such decisions were not the result of stupidity. Imam Ahmad, according to all accounts, was a most intelligent person. The fault lay with his perpetuation of an administrative machinery in which "no action, however small, can be taken by any official without the Imam's explicit sanction".⁽⁴⁾ Having to settle a daily multitude of issues, Imam Ahmad could not,

(1) Fayein, op. cit., p. 64.

(2) William R. Brown, "The Yemeni Dilemma" The Middle East Journal (Autumn, 1963), p. 357.

(3) Eva Hoeck, Sanawat fi al-Yaman wa Hadramout, Tarjamat Khairy Hammad (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah, 1962), p. 115.

(4) H.B. Sharabi, Governments and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), p. 245.

at times, help rendering rash and ill-considered judgements.

Volume Stress

Volume stress occurs when "the input of information conveying demands becomes too great for the responsible members of the system to process for possible conversion to decisions."⁽¹⁾ Despite the effects of the cultural inhibitors of demands and the inadequate channels, the volume of demands that reached the Imam was too great to be effectively dealt with. Imam Ahmad received an average of a thousand letters and telegrams every day.⁽²⁾ The contents were varied. There were petitions from persons asking for financial assistance to marry, or travel or cope with sickness or unemployment. There were general and specific grievances. There were requests from lower officials for the Imam's decisions on various administrative matters. Not all these letters and telegrams could be considered as conveying demands. There were, for example, poems praising the Imam or commemorating religious or national occasions. Yet, insofar as the vast majority of them contained requests for some kind of authoritative allocation of resources, they could be properly said to contain demands.

Handling these demands took up an average of four to seven hours every day.⁽³⁾ The Imam had to attend to many other matters as well, and it is obvious that he was faced with a demand

(1) Easton, op. cit., p. 58.

(2) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 28.2.1969.

(3) Ibid.

overload. So long as the Imam's health was good, however, he could review all the demands and reach decisions with regard to them. Some of these decisions, as we saw, were rash but they were binding all the same. Real stress occurred when the Imam's health was failing. It is probably because of the realization of the stressful consequences of any decline in the Imam's performance that immense importance was attached to his health.⁽¹⁾ The press solicited information about the Imam's health from whatever sources available and went out of its way to assure the readers that he was in the best possible form.⁽²⁾

Imam Ahmad's health complaints were rarely made public. It is apparent, however, that he suffered from rheumatism and had to spend a few months every year in Hodaida seeking relief in hot-water springs. Far more serious than this or any other ailment was Ahmad's addiction to morphine. It was this addiction that most adversely affected his performance. Ahmad started using morphine in 1949 to alleviate a post-operative pain. Gradually he grew addicted to the drug and in 1955 was completely dependent on it. His brother Abdullah justified his assumption of the Imamate during the 1955 coup by saying that Ahmad's health no longer enabled him to carry out his duties.⁽³⁾ By an extreme effort of the will Ahmad bestirred himself to shake

(1) "One usually begins a conversation by asking how the King is feeling ...", ^{Fayein} ~~Op. cit.~~, p. 45.

(2) A Yemeni paper once asked the Saudi Minister in Yemen how the Imam was feeling; see al-Nasr, November 24, 1957, p. 6. In the same issue a typical comment described the Imam as "overflowing with strength, vitality and youth", p. 1.

(3) See below p. 105.

off the habit in the months that followed the coup. Yet, a year later, he relapsed. By March 1959 his addiction reached such a serious degree that he had to travel to Rome for a cure. Refreshed and cured, Ahmad upon his return displayed a vitality that lasted until he was wounded in the attempt on his life in March 1961. From that time till his death his wounds, combined with recurring addiction, rendered him almost completely incapacitated.

Thus, in 1955, 1959 and 1961-62 Imam Ahmad's performance was far short of the level required to deal with the demand overload. During these periods, letters and telegrams were left to pile up until a whole room was filled. The Imam then would ask his assistants to go through them and pick up those letters and telegrams they considered important enough for his attention. The rest were burnt.⁽¹⁾

Content-Stress

The stress engendered by the sheer volume of demands was exacerbated by the stress derived from the contents of some of the demands.

"Variations in content with respect to such properties as complexity, contentiousness, drain upon limited

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- (1) Burning petitions containing demands was apparently a practice not limited to the Imam. Saba reported a case of a man "who intercepts petitioners, takes their petitions, pretends to submit them to his Majesty the Imam and orders that the petitions be burnt", February 21, 1957, p. 8.

resources, or capacity to enlist the interest of the politically potent members means /sic/ that some demands may require far more time to process than others. (1)

The demands discussed below caused stress because their satisfaction required a reorganization if not of the whole system at least of the regime. Imam Ahmad, both by temperament and as a result of strict adherence to the traditionally conservative outlook of the Imamate, was opposed to any transformation of the existing structures. Hence, those demands could not be met. Yet they stayed very much alive and were, in the final analysis, responsible for the decline of support which encouraged the officers to stage their revolution.

Demands for a Reform of Taxation

The fact that demands for lower taxes collected in a more humane way were not satisfied was probably the most important factor contributing to discontent with the regime. Whereas demands for modernization or more political freedom were advocated by a fairly sophisticated minority, demands related to taxes were voiced by far more people. "The vast majority of the population, of course, are not interested in politics as long as they can make a living."⁽²⁾ Because taxes affected the earnings of this vast majority they assumed a special significance that abstract ideas, such as democracy, did not.

Taxes were considered oppressive in more than one

(1) Easton, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

(2) Harold Ingrams, "A Journey in the Yemen", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (January, 1946), p. 68.

respect. To start with, there were too many taxes. In theory all taxes were derived from the Islamic rules of Zakat, almsgiving. In practice the Yemeni government reduced Zakat to a fine art.⁽¹⁾ The following description of the various taxes associated with Zakat, although written in the twenties, still applied to the situation during Imam Ahmad's reign:

The Zakat has as many ramifications as an octopus. The tithes, collected in kind, cereals, coffee included; the tithes collected in cash, on perishable products, including ghat; the tithes on cattle and all domestic animals, in kind or in cash, whichever is more profitable to the state; the tithes, also on commerce and industry... But even the Zakat is multiple. For in addition to the 2½ per cent of the yearly income, there is what is called 'the Zakat of the body'... together with the 'Zakat of the jewels'... as well as that of the jihad. (2)

Besides all these religious taxes, there were also some "secular" taxes. Imam Yahya criticized the Turks for imposing taxes that had no validity in Islam. Yet when he took charge he retained those introduced by the Turks and created new ones.⁽³⁾ The total number of religious and non-religious taxes was indeed high for a poor country like Yemen.⁽⁴⁾

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- (1) B.W. Seager, "The Yemen", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (July-October, 1955), p. 217.
- (2) Rihani, op. cit., p. 125.
- (3) Ibrahim Ali al-Wazir, Bain Yaday al-Masat (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1963), p. 53.
- (4) On the various taxes see, Mohammad Said al-Attar, al-Takhalof al-Iqtisadi wa al-Ijtimaie fi al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah li al-Tibaah wa al-Nashr, 1965), pp. 239-243

The methods of assessment were deeply resented. In this respect it was the farmers who suffered most. The tax assessor was "the bane of the Yemeni farmer".⁽¹⁾ Assessment was not subject to written laws or uniform procedures. It was haphazard and left considerable room for oppression and corruption. Usually an assessor was sent accompanied by clerks and soldiers. The farmers were responsible for their food and board. The estimate, made early in the season, could hardly be accurate. Most assessors were tempted to overestimate in order to gain the approval of their superiors. The government was at liberty to accept or reject the estimate made. If the government rejected it or if the farmers complained that it was too high, a supervisor was dispatched, the farmers again providing food and board. If the government endorsed the new estimate the matter was considered settled; if it did not the highest estimate in previous years was adopted.⁽²⁾ In the end, "the average farmer paid 25 per cent or more /of the crop/, as well as substantial bribes for the assessor."⁽³⁾

The method of collection was harsh. Soldiers were dispatched to notify the farmers that payment was due at the nearest branch of the public treasury. Alternatively, tax collectors were sent with soldiers to collect on the spot. In both cases the expenses were borne by the farmers.⁽⁴⁾ "Villages that failed to pay the prescribed amounts normally were penalized by being required to quarter and provision troops until

(1) Seager, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

(2) Mohammad Anam Ghalib, al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1966), p. 111.

(3) Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

(4) Ghalib, *loc. cit.*

full payment of taxes was made."⁽¹⁾

The problem of taxation assumed further complexity because the loudest complaints about the harsh behaviour of the soldiers - who were Zaidis - came from Shafi farmers. To the critics of the Imamate, this fact proved that the Imam favoured the Zaidis and tried to sow dissention between the two sects.⁽²⁾ The supporters of the Imamate, while acknowledging the Shafi grievances, explain them differently. The Zaidis, by virtue of their long identification with the Imamate, were thoroughly reconciled to the idea of paying taxes to the Imam. Assessment and collection did not present serious problems. The Shafis, who lacked such identification, showed reluctance in paying. Consequently harsh methods were deemed necessary to extract payment.⁽³⁾

The opponents of the regime were quick to exploit the resentment to taxation. Zakat being an Islamic institution, they could not advocate its abolition. Instead they demanded voluntary payment, with each person making his own assessment. Such demands, first voiced in the forties,⁽⁴⁾ were actively put up as late as 1962.⁽⁵⁾

Imam Ahmad was undoubtedly aware of the discontent with the taxes. He tried to redress individual grievances. He made some specific exemptions. Yet these measures were at best

(1) Brown, loc. cit.

(2) See al-Attar, op. cit., p. 240.

(3) Al-Shami, Interview, London, 4.3.1969.

(4) See al-Wazir, loc. cit.

(5) Al-Baidani, op. cit., p. 165.

half-hearted. According to al-Badr, who was extremely sensitive to ~~the~~ injustice of taxation, vested interests in the existing system were to a great extent responsible for the Imam's reluctance to change it. Every time the Imam thought of making payment voluntary, those who were profiting from the system convinced him that in this case nobody would pay which would mean that a religious obligation was neglected. In 1958 after persistent efforts by al-Badr, Imam Ahmad decided to experiment with voluntary payment for that year and an announcement to this effect was made. Those who did not approve of the decision told the farmers not to take it seriously. The farmers considered the announcement too good to be true and they feared that they would have to pay twice. Consequently their voluntary payments were much less than what they should have been. Furthermore, the harvest that year was bad. The returns were low and Imam Ahmad decided to abandon the experiment. ⁽¹⁾

Other factors combined with vested interests to perpetuate the system. Imam Ahmad was reluctant to interfere with traditional institutions. ⁽²⁾ The greater part of the state's income was derived from taxes and in the absence of an alternative source the risk of decline in income could not be taken. Imam Ahmad promised that as soon as the country's minerals were exploited the burden of taxation would be lifted. ⁽³⁾ The fact that those who suffered most from taxation, the farmers, were not

(1) Imam Mohammad al-Badr, Interview, Taif, 18.12.1969.

(2) According to one writer, Imam Ahmad told some petitioners that he could not abolish any tax that was valid during his father's time, al-Wazir, op. cit., p. 90.

(3) Al-Iman, December 15, 1955, p. 1.

considered politically relevant meant that satisfaction of their demands could be postponed to some unspecified future time.

Demands for Reform of the Law and Order Apparatus

Dissatisfaction with the law enforcement machinery gave rise to demands calling for far-reaching reforms. There were, thus, demands for putting an end to the abuses of soldiers⁽¹⁾ and for more efficient control of crime.⁽²⁾ Far more important than such demands, however, were the demands for a reform of the courts. The Yemeni courts were notoriously corrupt.⁽³⁾ There were valid reasons for discontent:

Quite often it appeared to be the purpose of the courts to continue litigation endlessly without deciding in favor of either litigant. It was not uncommon for a simple dispute over water rights or the division of inherited property to be under consideration for six years while the parties to the case, or their representatives, sat daily outside the court pleading with and bribing judges to make a decision. (4)

(1) See Saba, February 26, 1959, p. 2.

(2) Saba, January 17, 1956, p. 6.

(3) See Saba, October 16, 1958, p. 8. A visitor to Yemen noted that "most of the finest houses were the property of magistrates... which goes to suggest that justice is quite a paying commodity", Ingrams, op. cit., p. 62.

(4) Brown, op. cit., p. 351. Noman states that some cases remained unsettled for more than thirty years. He attributes this to Imam Yahya's deliberate policy of keeping the people preoccupied with their personal problems, see Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi ~~al-Sabban~~ al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 30.

As was the case with the demands for a reform of taxation, nothing was done by Imam Ahmad to satisfy the demands for reforming the courts. Any effort in this direction would have incurred the opposition of the religious establishment which controlled the courts.

Prohibited Demands

As we noted earlier, the values of the regime inhibited all demands calling for greater popular participation. It was impermissible to voice demands calling for any basic changes in the regime. Yet the blockage of such demands did not obliterate them. All it did was to transform them into violent demands.

The inadequacy of channels, the stress caused by the volume and content of demands, and the suppression of certain political demands led, as one may expect, ⁽¹⁾ to the rise of a demand for the abolition of the regime. The story of the success of this demand constitutes the story of the revolution, which will be dealt with in the sixth chapter.

(1) "... if it is thought that the current incumbents of the roles... are unlikely to be responsive to the demands, the voicers of the demands may support an overriding demand which calls for the replacement of these members," Easton, op. cit., p. 39.

Chapter Four

Support

The support that enabled the Imamic regime to persist did not come from a single class, sect or section of the population. As one of the most bitter opponents of the regime admitted, "All kings... cannot stay on their thrones except on the basis of a class or racial identification with a group that shares in the spoils... except the Imams of Yemen who never felt the need for this."⁽¹⁾ It would be a mistake to say that the Imamate survived because of the support given by the Zaidis; most of those responsible for its downfall were Zaidis. To assert that tribal support alone maintained the Imamate is also not altogether correct; some tribes were indifferent to the fate of the Imamate, others were hostile. Attaching all importance to the support of the Sayyids does not offer an adequate explanation. Not only were the Sayyids without any military power, but some of them were opposed to the Imam, if not the regime. To say this, however, is not to deny that religious sentiments, tribal allegiances, and class sympathies all played a part in generating support for the Imamate. The point is that the Imam could not, in all circumstances, count on the unqualified support of any of the groups mentioned earlier. Maintaining a sufficient level of support was a delicate process which entailed the employment of various methods and tactics. It is with these methods and tactics, as well as with the politically relevant members, that this chapter

(1) Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi, al-Imamah wa Khataroha ala Wihdat al-Yaman (Beirut: al-Ittihad al-Yamani, n.d.), p. 10.

is concerned.

Politically-Relevant Groups

1. The Tribes

Unfortunately, the data on Yemeni tribes is extremely scarce.⁽¹⁾ Almost all the information available is limited to enumerating the tribes and pointing out their locations and sectarian orientations. Even such information is not up to date, the most authoritative source being a British handbook published in 1917.⁽²⁾ Any assessment of the tribes must, therefore, be tentative pending more definitive research.

With the unimportant exception of a few nomadic tribes in the east, Yemeni tribes were settled. Of the total number of the tribes, less than one fifth were Shafi.⁽³⁾ Among the Zaidi tribes two, Hashid and Bakil, were, in view of their numbers, subdivisions and fighting capabilities, the most important ones. Zaraniq was the biggest and most powerful Shafi tribe. Despite local and sectarian differences, the Yemeni tribes as a whole could be said to share the following characteristics:

(1) Low level of literacy. As most schools were located in towns, the tribes did not have an easy access to education. Even tribal

(1) Even in Yemen itself there were very few "experts" on tribal affairs. Imam Ahmad was considered one of them.

(2) The Arab Bureau, Handbook of Yemen (Cairo: Government Press, 1917).

(3) The reason for this disparity was that most Shafi tribes lost their tribal organization and became divided into houses, i.e. extended families.

leaders had the most rudimentary education. The few whose education exceeded this level acquired their training while being held as hostages.

(2) Conservatism. Primitive communications, low rates of literacy, and lack of contact with the outside world combined to orient the tribes to a conservative outlook.

(3) Contempt for city dwellers. This was a characteristic not only of Yemeni tribes but of tribes elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula. Tribesmen conceived of their way of life, with its emphasis on toughness, freedom and manliness, as infinitely superior to that of townfolk. The perception of town dwellers as enjoying fabulous wealths only tended to re-enforce the contempt.

(4) Independence. Tribal acceptance of central authority was always reluctant and uncertain. Centuries of virtual autonomy disposed the tribes to develop as self sufficient communities with little need or desire for interactions with, let alone control by, the world outside the tribal society.

(5) Lack of national consciousness. Again as with tribes elsewhere, Yemeni tribesmen's first loyalty was to the tribe. The idea of being citizens of a state which was entitled to loyalty from everyone within its boundaries was too novel to be internalized. Hence, in reaching political decisions considerations of a public or national interest were rarely, if ever, entertained by tribal chiefs. This is perhaps how the popular notion of the tribes being "unprincipled" or "motivated by profit only" grew.

In addition to these traits, the northern Zaidi tribes felt some identification with the Imamate. Historically, the north was the cradle and stronghold of the Imamate. Reli-

giously, the Zaidi tribes were the followers of the Imam's sect. Politically, it was easier for tribal shaikhs to acknowledge the authority of an Imam, whose lineage goes back to the Prophet, than that of a fellow shaikh with a lineage no more or less exalted than their own. Yet the relationship that existed between the Zaidi tribes and the Imam can be best described as one of love-hate. Despite their identification with the Imamate, the surrender of their authority was difficult to accept. Tribal shaikhs were not given important roles in the structure of authority. The system of hostages was deeply resented. The Zaidi tribes thus were subject to opposing pressures. Religious sentiment as well as the realization that whatever privileges they enjoyed were bound up with the Imamate made them favourably disposed towards the Imam. Hence, they rallied to his side in 1948 and again in 1955. On the other hand, various grievances, together with the instinctive urge to assert their independence, led to a strained relationship with the Imam. Hence the tribal rebellions of 1959-60.

Imam Ahmad resorted to many techniques to ensure the flow of support from the tribes. By far the most important method was the taking of hostages. The hostages were young members of a tribal shaikh's family, preferably his sons, who were kept by the Imam to ensure the good behaviour of their tribe. At any time, there was an average of 500 hostages. The greater the Imam's distrust of a tribe the greater was the number of hostages demanded from that tribe. The tribes of whose loyalty the Imam was absolutely sure, as well as the tribes which lived near the towns and thus could be easily reached, and if need be, subdued, were not required to give hostages. This system, inhumane as one may regard it, and deeply resented as it was, worked quite effectively. The hostages themselves were

not subject to any cruelties or maltreatment. There is no evidence that they were harmed even on the few occasions when the deterrence broke down and a tribe rebelled.

Another method the Imam employed was playing one tribe against another. As a Yemeni proverb put it, "keep tribesmen preoccupied with each other before they preoccupy you."⁽¹⁾ Typical of this method was al-khitat system: an offending tribe was required to feed and accommodate all the members of another tribe billeted on it by the Imam. This forced hospitality would go on until the recalcitrant tribe complied with the Imam's orders. When the Imam had trouble with the Hashid tribe he, as a counter-measure, ordered the distribution of arms to the Zaraniq tribe.⁽²⁾

Not only coercion was employed, however. Some important shaikhs were appointed to governmental posts, although not in their own tribal areas. Gifts of arms from the Imam were given to loyal shaikhs. Specific exemptions from taxes were at occasions granted. Yet Imam Ahmad did not encourage outright subsidies. When al-Badr distributed money among northern tribes during his absence, Imam Ahmad asked the tribes to return the money. This was not inspired by miserliness, nor because he found the treasury empty. He simply realized how expensive it would be if the tribes were led to expect regular subsidies in return for their support.

Imam Ahmad knew that militarily the tribes, especially the Zaidi tribes, were the only effective power in

(1) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, Al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi [redacted] al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 33.

(2) See Saba, September 10, 1959, p. 1.

the country and he strove to ensure their loyalty. Zaidi tribes were treated with more consideration than Shafi tribes. Members of the armed forces were almost entirely drawn from the Zaidi tribes. But the Imam realized the danger of complete reliance on Zaidi tribes and he made sure that the Shafi tribes could be called upon to counter-balance their influence. He was also aware that, whether Zaidi or Shafi, the tribes accepted central authority with utmost reluctance. He, therefore, was careful to keep them under control and not to allow them to turn their military advantage into a political preponderance that would endanger his own role.

2. The Armed Forces

Although ultimately the balance of power was held by the tribes, the armed forces were the standing bodies the Imam could employ as the need arose. The tribes were held in reserve and were not called upon except in emergencies. Police forces did not figure prominently as a politically-relevant group. Not only were they ill-organized and badly armed, but responsibilities usually given to the police, such as maintaining internal security, were given to the soldiers of the irregular army.

In discussing the role of the armed forces nothing could be more misleading than to refer to "the army". In reality, there were three "armies" with three separate organizations and leaderships. (1) Only the Imam was in a position

(1) See Mohammad Hasan, Qalb al-Yaman (Baghdad: Matbat al-Marif, 1947), pp. 136-141.

to know what was going on in each army and to coordinate their activities. These armies were:

The Regular Army

This was Yemen's standing army. It numbered about 15,000. It was the only army with properly trained officers and a semblance of hierarchical organization. Imam Ahmad, however, did not trust the trained officers and the involvement of a number of them in the 1948 revolution and the 1955 coup, reinforced his distrust. Consequently he was most reluctant to strengthen the regular army. Yet he was practically forced by his confrontation with the British in Aden to supply it with modern equipment. Even then he was extremely cautious. Aeroplanes were allowed to become inoperative through lack of maintenance and only the unobtrusive attention of revolutionary officers kept some tanks and armoured cars in good repair.

Unlike the officers in many developing countries, the officers of the regular Yemeni army did not belong to the power elite.⁽¹⁾ They were not given important duties and no serious attempts were made to "buy them off". Thus, no understanding of the 1962 revolution could be complete without considering

(1) "In the 1950's upheaval and coup d' etat in the Arab world heightened the dependence of the monarchical regimes on their military establishments; the officer corps gained special privileges as well as new status in society," Hisham Sharabi, Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World (Princeton: D. van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1966), p. 50. No such development took place in Yemen.

the resentment the trained officers felt, both because of their unprivileged positions and because of the low status of their army.

The Defence Army

This was more of a training institution than a standing army. Theoretically it was supposed to give basic training to all adults, but in fact most of the recruits came from Zaidi tribes. After a six-month training course, the tribesmen would rejoin their respective tribes. No specific duties were given to this army and the number of trainees at any time was about 10,000.

The Irregular Army ⁽¹⁾

This little-known army was, as far as the Imam was concerned, the most important of the three. It had no barracks, no officers and no ranks. Trusted Zaidi tribal leaders were asked to send members of their tribes for service in this army which was under the direct control of the Imam. Numbering around 5,000, this army enjoyed the complete confidence of the Imam. The Imam relied on the irregular army for collecting taxes, manning forts, maintaining internal security and staffing prisons. ⁽²⁾ Yet because this army had no proper discipline or a clear chain of command it could not operate as a single

(1) The Arabic term, al-Jaish al-Barrani, literally means the External Army.

(2) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London. 4.3.1969.

unit. Hence it was in no position to oppose the revolution. (1)

3. The Religious Establishment

~~The~~^A group, termed the Religious Establishment for lack of a better name, furnished candidates for high posts in the government ranging from ministers and viceroys down to the upper and middle echelons of civil service. It was the members of this group who kept the government machinery running, and their various duties included supervising education, collecting taxes and rendering justice. All that the members of this group had in common was a high religious training. In a country like Yemen where religious influence permeated all aspects of social life religious training was the key to advancement and prominence. The turban was the symbol of this group and as a sign of privilege it became the object of resentment by the opponents of the regime. (2)

In numerical terms, as well as in influence, the Sayyids were predominant in this group. (3) Their importance did

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- (1) In 1960 Imam Ahmad thought of forming a national army in which the three separate institutions would be merged, but nothing came of the idea. See below pp. 111-112.
 - (2) After the revolution Premier Abdullah al-Sallal contemptuously referred to "the government of the turban", Summary of World Broadcasts Part 4, (London: B.B.C.) 10.10.1962, p. 3.
 - (3) Between 1955 and 1962, with the exception of the viceroy of Hodaida, all the viceroys were Sayyids. In 36 appointments announced between 1955-1957, ranging from district governors to court clerks, 30 of the appointees were Sayyids, al-Nasr, July 29, 1955, p. 3; January 3, 1956, p. 18; February 17, 1957, p. 6; September 22, 1957, p. 8.

not stem from wealth or military power, but from the religious significance of their lineage. Theoretically, every Sayyid, provided he fulfilled the other conditions, was eligible to become Imam. Thus, in a sense, the Imam was, as far as other Sayyids were concerned, "a first among equals". It was only natural then that fellow-Sayyids were treated with special consideration. Another factor, however, must not be overlooked. Traditionally, the Sayyid families took care to prepare their children for their privileged positions and special attention was given to their proper education. Armed with training as well as prestige, the Sayyids found it easy to dominate the religious establishment.

The Qadis constituted the other element of the religious establishment. The term Qadi referred to a commoner, i.e. non-Sayyid, who was highly trained and who came from a family traditionally reknown for learning. The Qadis had a significant function of balancing the eminence of Sayyids. Imam Yahya, for example, appointed a Qadi to the important post of Prime Minister. Imam Ahmad continued to appoint Qadis to high posts.⁽¹⁾ As in the case of the Sayyids, the vast majority of the Qadis were Zaidi.

Responses for the Stimulation of Support

There are "three broad classes of responses open to a system.... These responses are outputs, coercion, and the

(1) Of 12 ministerial posts in the 1955 Cabinet, 5 were occupied by Qadis, see al-Iman, September 16, 1955, p. 1.

stimulation of good will."⁽¹⁾ The following discussion will show how these responses were applied in Yemen.

1 Outputs

When a regime is facing discontent, "the first, easiest, and most direct response which may be taken to cope with the situation is to make some effort to improve the adequacy of the outputs."⁽²⁾ Direct satisfaction of demands would at least generate specific support.⁽³⁾ Imam Ahmad often resorted to this method. Various acts of charity may be viewed in this light. Money and clothes were distributed to the poor on annual occasions, and sometimes more frequently.⁽⁴⁾ Specific favours granted to some politically relevant members were other examples. Imam Ahmad, for instance, made aeroplanes available to transport important patients to the hospital and, sometimes, ordered his private physicians to attend to them.⁽⁵⁾ Exemptions of taxes,⁽⁶⁾ as well as gifts in arms or money, fall under the same category. Lunches given by the Imam to entertain high officials can also be included in the efforts to stimulate specific support.

The preceding examples were attempts to attract

(1) David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 275.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) See, for example, al-Iman, November 15, 1955, p. 4; December 15, 1955, p. 4; January 13, 1956, p. 5.

(5) See al-Nasr, February 16, 1956, p. 7; December 8, 1956, p. 8.

(6) See al-Iman, December 15, 1955, p. 1.

the support of individuals. More important were the outcomes designed to stimulate the support of larger groups. Some foreign policy decisions can be seen in this light. Imam Ahmad's decision in 1958 to join the United Arab Republic in a loose confederation can be interpreted as a move to generate the support of the liberals who were disenchanted with his regime. Various limitations made it difficult to produce in the domestic sphere outcomes that would satisfy the liberals. No such limitations existed in the foreign sphere. As the Imam probably expected, the response of the liberals was initial surprise followed by expressions of support: "We support this step on the part of the government and sincerely bless it.... We consider the execution of this treaty the full realization of the aims of the sincere liberals...."(1)

Another example of outcomes designed to influence a group was Imam Ahmad's decision in 1960 to establish "Committees of Encouraging Good and Shunning Evil." (2) These committees which in effect amounted to religious police were given a free hand in dealing with violators of Islamic Law. The decision to set them up was taken to attract the support of the religious leaders.

2. Coercion

"Although it may not be customary to do so, we may view coercion as another possible kind of response to a decline in support." (3) Specific support can be generated by

(1) A statement by the Yemeni Union quoted in Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, al-Yaman, (Cairo: Dar al-Marif, n.d.), p. 177.

(2) Al-Nasr, June 29, 1960, p. 1.

(3) Easton, op. cit., p. 276.

offering specific negative rewards.⁽¹⁾ Coercion in the Yemeni political system played a greater part than can be observed in most other political systems. Two factors were responsible for this: the violent political climate of Yemen and the cruelty of Imam Ahmad.

Mention has already been made of the Yemeni tradition of violence and repression.⁽²⁾ Coercion was not regarded as a necessary evil to be employed with utmost economy, but was almost elevated into an acceptable norm.⁽³⁾ Tax-collecting methods and the system of hostages offer striking examples of the way coercion was institutionalized and consistently applied to generate support in the Yemeni political system.

Imam Ahmad's personality provides another explanation for the importance attached to coercion. Although compassionate and kind in some respects,⁽⁴⁾ Ahmad had a clear streak of cruelty. The story that he deliberately tried to develop fearful protruberant eyes as a boy by sleeping with cords tied tightly around his neck⁽⁵⁾ is almost certainly apocryphal, but there is enough evidence to point out that he placed

(1) Ibid.

(2) See above pp. 37-39.

(3) The fact that the revolutionaries neither expected nor faced any general moral indignation over the numerous executions following the 1962 revolution indicates the extent to which coercion had become accepted, and expected, in Yemen.

(4) Ahmad was well known for his fondness of children and animals; see D. van Der Meulen, Faces in Shem (London: John Murray, 1961), p. 145.

(5) Harold Ingrams, The Yemen (London: John Murray, 1963), p. 14.

great value on intimidation. Even during his father's lifetime he was known for harshness. A writer states that he saw a telegram in which Imam Yahya told Ahmad that the people were tired of his cruelty.⁽¹⁾

It is quite difficult to separate fact from fiction with regard to Imam Ahmad's "massacres".⁽²⁾ The well-documented evidence, however, is sufficient to illustrate Ahmad's predilection for cruel suppression. Following the 1948 revolution, 30 persons were executed,⁽³⁾ and more than 40 incarcerated.⁽⁴⁾ After the collapse of the 1955 coup there were 16 executions;⁽⁵⁾ two of those executed were the Imam's brothers. In 1960 three major tribal shaikhs were beheaded.⁽⁶⁾ That the attempt on Imam Ahmad's life in 1961 met with the relatively mild punishment of two executions was probably the result of al-Badr's handling of the case while his father was incapacitated. Thousands of prisoners were found and released after the revolution.⁽⁷⁾

(1) Ibid, p. 72.

(2) Al-Baidani, for example, tells a fantastic story about 1100 people being executed in one night on a prince's orders. See Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1962), pp. 29-30.

(3) "Al-Yaman fi Tariq al-Thawrah", al-Yaman al-Jadidah, (September, 1963), p. 7.

(4) Ahmad Husain Sharaf al-Din, al-Yaman Abr al-Tarikh (Cairo: Matbat al-Sunnah al-Mohammadiyyah, 1963), p. 330.

(5) "Al-Yaman fi Tariq al-Thawrah", op. cit., pp. 7-8.

(6) Ibid, p. 8.

(7) The Times, October 9, 1962.

3 Good Will

Unlike outputs and coercion, the stimulation of good will aims at creating diffuse support. This support can be generated through responses of three types:

First, those that seek to instill a deep sense of legitimacy in the members for the regime as a whole and for individuals who act on behalf of it; second, those that invoke symbols of the common interest; and third, those that promote and strengthen the degree to which members identify with the political community. (1)

The following discussion will center around the forms that these types of responses took in the Yemeni political system.

The Belief in Legitimacy (2)

The Imamate itself being a religious institution, it was only natural that it turned to religion as a source of legitimacy. In Islam sovereignty is not a trust bestowed by the subjects upon the sovereign but a right delegated by God and sanctioned by the law. (3) From this premise stems another: rebellion against the state is viewed not merely as an act of civil disobedience but also as an infringement of the manifest will of God. (4) The Yemeni regime made full use of both premises.

(1) Easton, op. cit., p. 277.

(2) "The inculcation of a sense of legitimacy is probably the single most effective device for regulating the flow of diffuse support in favor both of the authorities and of the regime", Ibid, p. 278.

(3) Sharabi, op. cit., p. 16.

(4) Ibid, pp. 16-17.

The word "Imam" itself in Arabic primarily means leader of prayer. As if this were not enough, the Imams assumed titles that emphasized the basically religious nature of their office. Imam Yahya was al-Mutawakil ala Allah,⁽¹⁾ "He who relies on God"; Ahmad al-Nasir li din Allah, "The Supporter of God's religion"; al-Badr al-Mansour bi Allah, "The Victorious by [the will of] God". Although, contrary to propagandistic assertions, the Imam never claimed to be a holy being, he was nevertheless the guardian of God's laws and the "commander of the faithful"; as such he was entitled to the complete loyalty of his subjects.

To enforce the legitimacy derived from religion, Imam Ahmad endeavoured to create the impression that his sole motivation, in whatever he did, was the application of God's laws or the advancement of His religion. In a directive to the 1955 Cabinet the Imam instructed his ministers to "follow in every act the guides of the Moslem religion and the dictates of the glorious Koran and the exalted practice of the Prophet."⁽²⁾ Commenting on the Jeddah treaty of 1956 which allied Yemen to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, he said that the treaty was concluded "to safeguard the Moslem religion and Moslem countries so that when we meet God we shall have done some of our duty."⁽³⁾ The federation between Yemen and the U.A.R. was a step in accordance with "the duty incumbent upon us to make the eternal Arab mission, the mission of the noble Arab Prophet Mohammad ... a reality in this age...."⁽⁴⁾ His trip to Italy in 1959 was decided upon after

(1) Hence, Yemen's official name was the Mutawakilite Kingdom of Yemen.

(2) Al-Iman, September 16, 1955, p. 1.

(3) Al-Nasr, September 7, 1956, p. 8.

(4) Al-Nasr, March 19, 1959, p. 8.

"seeking the guidance of Almighty God".⁽¹⁾ His decision to confirm al-Badr as Crown Prince was inspired by his great love for the Moslems in general and the Yemenis in particular.⁽²⁾

If the Imam was guided by his desire to uphold religion then, naturally, all those opposing him were aiming at destroying religion. Any hostile act was interpreted as being more against Islam than his person. Had the 1955 coup succeeded, the Imam said, Yemen would have suffered a great evil similar to what happened in the Protectorates "where honours are defiled and religion is persecuted."⁽³⁾ In 1959 he warned his audience against "the Christians and their stooges and the servants of the non-believers who do their best to sow dissension ... and disobey the Imam and disobey God's laws."⁽⁴⁾ The conspirators who tried to kill him in 1961 were performing "a service to the enemies of Islam."⁽⁵⁾ Anyone who did not heed his appeal to close ranks behind al-Badr was "contravening the dictates of God."⁽⁶⁾

Islam, as a legitimating influence, worked in many directions. The regime itself was a religious institution and, as such, endowed with legitimacy. The occupant of the Imamic office held the trust from God and hence was legitimate. The policies were in compliance with Islamic teachings and had, therefore, to be supported. And, finally, the opponents of the Imam, by defying a legitimacy derived from God, posed as the personal enemies of

(1) Al-Nasr, April, 1959, p. 8.

(2) Al-Nasr, October 26, 1961, p. 16.

(3) Al-Nasr, August 14, 1955, p. 8.

(4) Al-Nasr, August 15, 1959, p. 8.

(5) Al-Nasr, May 18, 1961, p. 8.

(6) Al-Nasr, October 26, 1961, p. 16.

God, who should be ruthlessly destroyed.

Closely associated with Islam, yet distinct from it, tradition provided another legitimating influence. The very term "traditional" that is used to describe some political systems, including Imamic Yemen, testifies to the central role of tradition in these systems. The Imamate was about a thousand years old. The passage of time could not help investing it with a certain legitimacy independent of the merits and performances of individual Imams. To this was added the fact that the great uprisings were led by Imams. The Imams could thus claim to be not only the traditional rulers of Yemen but also the traditional guardians of its independence. The Yemeni people, declared Crown Prince al-Badr, "accept nothing but independence under the leadership of the Imams whom it chose to lead it and safeguard this eternal heritage...."(1)

Besides stressing the legitimacy of the Imamate, derived from religion and tradition, Imam Ahmad tried to develop a personal legitimacy based on his own qualities. Encouraging poems composed in his praise, a custom common among Arab leaders, especially monarchs, was an effort to create a favourable image that would contribute to his legitimacy. In his speeches he emphasized his love for his people: "I reciprocate your affection, devotion, compassion and kindness." (2) He was there to protect them: "My brothers and children ... do not fear or worry for I am intent on safeguarding your security and comfort even if I have to sacrifice myself." (3) The press played its part in furthering

(1) Al-Iman, October 17, 1955, p. 8.

(2) Al-Nasr, May 18, 1961, p. 8.

(3) Al-Nasr, August 15, 1959, p. 8.

the personal legitimacy of the Imam, flying, at times, to extremes of exaggeration. Imam Ahmad was described as "history's legend";⁽¹⁾ "the greatest strong Moslem Arab personality";⁽²⁾ "among the leading ulama of Islam";⁽³⁾ "a kind angel in whose heart flow springs of mercy, sympathy and charity";⁽⁴⁾ "one of the most prominent of the twentieth century learned men, in literature, politics and science."⁽⁵⁾

The Belief in a Common Interest

The invocation of a public or common interest, with the authorities represented as its major spokesmen, is another source of diffuse support, although it is not a universal one.⁽⁶⁾ In Yemen it was not emphasized. While the Imam tried hard to instill a sense of legitimacy for both his regime and himself, he did not belabour the idea of a common interest. There were reasons for this de-emphasis. Yemen was hardly one integrated nation with one common interest. The conditions that conduce to the development of a common interest, such as the existence of independent press and publicists,⁽⁷⁾ were lacking in Yemen. Furthermore, the acceptance of an ideology of common interest would have imposed limitations on the Imam, a prospect he did not cherish. As a result, one finds only fleeting reference to

(1) Al-Nasr, December 5, 1957, p. 8.

(2) Al-Nasr, December 2, 1960, p. 1.

(3) Ibid, p. 8.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Al-Nasr, November 17, 1960, p. 2.

(6) Easton, op. cit., pp. 311-312.

(7) Ibid, p. 319.

the public interest⁽¹⁾ and then without explanation or elaboration.

Diffuse Support for the Political Community

Responses to generate support for the political community take "the form of regime alterations and stimulation of a sense of community."⁽²⁾ The problem of the political community of Yemen lay in the existence of the two sects: the Zaidi and the Shafi. Hence, the success of the effort to create diffuse support for the political community depended on instilling in the adherents of both sects the feeling that they belonged to a single group sharing a division of political labour, rather than being two separate groups held, temporarily and artificially, together. In this respect the success of Imam Ahmad was quite limited.

While the Zaidis had no reasons to be dissatisfied with the political community, the Shafis resented their unequal position. At times some liberal leaders entertained the possibility of a future separate Shafi state, i.e. a separate political community.⁽³⁾ The Imam, however, did not alter his regime in a

(1) See, for example, Imam Ahmad's decree in al-Iman, September 16, 1955, p. 1.

(2) Easton, op. cit., p. 320.

(3) See Abdullah al-Sallal and others, Min Wara al-Aswar (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, n.d.), p. 67. This book is a reproduction of political discussions that took place among a group of liberals and officers in a prison in Yemen in 1953. Most of those participating became leading figures in the 1962 revolution. The book provides valuable insights, unavailable elsewhere, into their thoughts and plans at that time and explains some of their future moves.

way that may have strengthened the attachment of the Shafis to the political community.⁽¹⁾ Not only the Imamic office but the vast majority of the higher positions were, forever it seemed, beyond the reach of the Shafis. This could have hardly led to a "perception of an equitable balance of rewards."⁽²⁾ The Imam's efforts to instill a sense of community merely took the form of verbal declarations.⁽³⁾ Coercion was the immediate and ultimate resort to hold the community together. This attitude is typified by an article in al-Nasr, which told the readers that if they saw a person "who is partial to one group and hates the other or who issues sinister statements" they should "smash his dirty mouth, rid our society and religion of him and report him to our beloved Monarch."⁽⁴⁾

Interestingly enough, instead of concentrating on the existing political community Imam Ahmad tried to foster the belief in a larger one that would include the Protectorates. If this larger community came into being, it would have meant a substantial increase in the Shafi population. The prime motive of advocating the idea of a larger community was undoubtedly the Imam's genuine conviction that the Protectorates were an integral part of Yemen. Yet one wonders if another motive was not the attempt to enforce the loyalty of the Shafis to the existing

(1) We are concerned here with the responses undertaken by the regime. If we adopt the wider perspective of the political system, the revolution itself may be viewed as an alteration in the regime aiming, among other things, at creating deeper support for the political community.

(2) Easton, op. cit., p. 321.

(3) See above p. 40.

(4) Al-Nasr, December 23, 1957, p. 13.

community in the hope that, one day, they would have a larger share in a bigger community. Be that as it may, the idea was not feasible and its advocacy did not lead to a perceptible increase in the attachment of the Shafis to the existing community.

Chapter Five

The Regime In Action

Starting with the assumption that at any moment in time a regime will be "the product of the accommodation among the pressures for new goals, rules or structures stimulated by social change and the limitations imposed by existing conventions and practices",⁽¹⁾ this chapter will attempt to trace the most relevant pressures encountered by the Yemeni regime and the way it responded in both domestic and foreign spheres.

I. Domestic Affairs

1948 - 1954: Conservative Years

Although Ahmad held important posts during his father's time, the nature of the regime did not allow him to have any real authority. As early back as 1931, he gave the impression of a man "who had good ideas and great plans and who saw time passing without his being able to fulfil them."⁽²⁾ Many things had to be done in Yemen and he intended to do them once he became Imam. But his opportunity did not come until 1948, and even then he did not assume power peacefully as the universally beloved Crown Prince but violently as the man who

(1) David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 194.

(2) D. Van Der Meulen, Faces In Shem (London: John Murray, 1961), p. 141

proved himself stronger than his rivals.

The forties witnessed the emergence of the liberals who, as opponents of the regime, became Ahmad's enemies. Ahmad thus was cut off from the only elements who were willing and, to some extent, able to introduce and carry out reforms in Yemen. Some of the leading liberals had in the past been Ahmad's companions and personal friends and he must have found their new enmity both puzzling and traitorous. The liberals, however, were willing to accept Ahmad as Imam if he would agree to constitutional limits to his authority. This he rejected out of hand.⁽¹⁾ Introducing reforms was something Ahmad might consider; limiting his authority was simply unthinkable.

By 1948 the political forces in Yemen were polarized: liberals sided with the revolution whereas conservatives supported Ahmad. The chance of an alliance between Ahmad and the liberals was lost. With those who played major roles in the revolution executed, and those with minor parts imprisoned, Ahmad's reign inauspiciously started.

Ahmad's brothers had stood by his side during the revolution and now was the time to reward them and present a solid family front. Hence, Ahmad's first Cabinet was almost entirely a family affair. His brother, al-Hasan, was Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and, later, also the viceroy of Sana. His brothers Ali, Ismail, Yahya, Abdullah, and al-Qasim - all occupied ministerial posts. Yet Ahmad did not have full confidence in his brothers. Forced to rely on persons he did not completely trust Ahmad proceeded to tackle his job almost single-handedly.

(1) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 4.3.1969.

Ahmad realized that there was some discontent in the country but to him the revolution was more the product of treason than genuine popular grievances. As Imam, he considered it his duty to decide what was good for the people but he felt he owed them no debts. He came to power by God's grace and by virtue of his own prowess not as a representative of the people. Thus, he felt no need to generate support through far-reaching reforms. Furthermore, those most interested in reforms, who would have exerted pressure on him to introduce them, were imprisoned. The tribal forces that carried him to victory were anything but reform-minded. His brothers, with the exception of Abdullah, were conservatively oriented. Add to all this Ahmad's reluctance to delegate authority and his refusal to alter the structure of the regime and it becomes obvious why no radical reforms materialized.

Yet there were changes. Diplomatic representatives were allowed to reside in Yemen and Yemeni missions abroad were established. International contacts were gradually ~~intensified~~^{extended}. A small fleet of civilian aeroplanes was purchased. Expenditure on health and education increased. Approaches were made to the United Nations requesting technical aid. Serious thinking about exploiting the country's resources was followed by actual concessions to Western firms.

These changes, which Imam Yahya would have considered startling, hardly made a dent in Yemen's backwardness and they passed almost unnoticed. The conservative outlook was not altered. Tentative steps towards modernization were counter-balanced by steps in the opposite direction. While Imam Ahmad was very cautiously experimenting with new ideas conservative forces, led by al-Hasan, were thwarting him. Al-Hasan introduced new regulations restricting the freedom of foreigners living in Sana and, as a

result, their number dwindled to four.⁽¹⁾ In 1955 he instructed the Yemeni Legation in Cairo to withdraw the Yemeni students from the Faculty of Commerce and explained that Yemen was in no need of such training.⁽²⁾ According to Wendell Phillips, who led an archaeological team to excavate the ruins of Marib, al-Hasan was responsible for the failure of the project.⁽³⁾

During the early fifties there was no active opposition within Yemen and no more than minor activities of agitation abroad. The only danger to Ahmad's rule emanated from his brothers, two of whom, Abdullah and al-Hasan, had definite ambitions, if not to replace the Imam at least to succeed him. Ahmad, however, was thinking of appointing his son as Crown Prince. It was probably his desire to recruit supporters for al-Badr as well as his realization that the conservatives under al-Hasan were growing too strong that led the Imam to effect a reconciliation with the imprisoned liberals.

Ahmad's contacts with the liberal leader Ahmad Noman had already started in 1948. Ahmad cabled Noman asking for his memoirs covering the period of the revolution to add them to his own notes. Noman answered indicating his consent and proceeded to complain of the harsh conditions prevailing in the prison. The dialogue went on and Noman tried to persuade the Imam to issue a general amnesty and make the prisoners "the

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- (1) Eva Hoeck, Sanawat fi al-Yaman wa Hadramout, Tarjamat Khairy Hammad (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah, 1962), p. 114.
 - (2) Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1962), p. 130.
 - (3) See Wendell Phillips, Qataban and Sheba (London: Victor Gollancz, 1955).

soldiers of al-Badr who should be the Crown Prince."⁽¹⁾ Despite the opposition of his brothers, Imam Ahmad freed most of the imprisoned liberals in 1954. Upon gaining their freedom, two liberal leaders, Noman and Abdul Rahman al-Iryani, immediately set out to generate popular support for a demand to make al-Badr Crown Prince.

In later years the liberals justified their reconciliation with the Imam by hinting that it was a plot to divide the Royal Family.⁽²⁾ Whether this was their real motive or, as seems more likely, they attached real hopes to al-Badr at that time, is still debatable. At any rate, the liberals provided the greatest source of support for al-Badr. Noman and al-Iryani became close associates and advisers of Imam Ahmad.

The 1955 Coup

There were two leading figures behind the 1955 coup: Major Ahmad al-Thalaya and Prince Abdullah. Al-Thalaya was implicated in the 1948 revolution, imprisoned for two years, then was freed and put in charge of training the regular army. His revolutionary zeal was augmented by the resentment felt by the regular army officers of their inferior position. Prince Abdullah was the most liberal of Ahmad's brothers. He was his father's favourite son and it was probably the influence he had on his father that led him to entertain Imamic ambitions.

(1) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi ~~al-Sabban~~ al-Yaman, (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 65.

(2) Ibid, p. 66.

When it became generally known that al-Badr would be designated Crown Prince Abdullah saw this as a threat to his ambitions and was determined to oppose it. He was quite ready to join al-Thalaya when the latter started the rebellion.

The coup was neither well-planned nor carefully executed. It was triggered by a minor clash between the inhabitants of a village near Taizz and four soldiers of the regular army on March 25, 1955. Seizing this opportunity, al-Thalaya led the Taizz garrison, numbering about five hundred, in a punitive mission against the villagers. Returning to Taizz, he persuaded his soldiers, who were by now fearful of the Imam's reaction to their unauthorized mission, to lay siege to the Imam's palace. He got in touch with Abdullah by telephone and the two agreed on the next steps. Abdullah telephoned the Imam seeking permission to meet the rebels and discuss their demands. Ahmad gave his consent and Abdullah went to the army headquarters. Religious dignitaries and government officials were summoned and told by Abdullah and al-Thalaya that in view of the Imam's declining health he should abdicate in favour of Abdullah.⁽¹⁾

A delegation was sent to the Imam with this demand. The Imam suggested handing all his executive powers to Abdullah but retaining the Imamic office. This offer was rejected and Ahmad was forced to sign an abdication document which stated:

After what happened, God has now guided us all to do what is best. We have transferred the trust to our brother Saif al-Islam⁽²⁾ Abdullah and abdicated on condi-

(1) Ahmad Husain Sharaf al-Din, Al-Yaman Abr al-Tarikh (Cairo: Matbat al-Sunna al-Mohammadiyah, 1963), pp. 374-377.

(2) Saif al-Islam, Sword of Islam, was a peculiarly Yemeni title given to all the sons of an Imam.

tion that he takes over and runs things in accordance with God's law. There is nothing further to discuss. This abdication took place in the presence of the ulama. Let everyone return to his station and carry on with his work. All must comply with his /Abdullah's/ orders.... (1)

After securing Ahmad's abdication, both Abdullah and al-Thalaya issued statements. Abdullah's statement, addressed to the Yemeni people, said:

We declare to the public that in view of the well-known and continued ill-health of our lord the Imam - may God cure him - and his inability to see people and carry out his duties which led to negligence and the accumulation of unfinished business causing difficulties to petitioners and those with complaints and others and creating widespread discontent, the army, ulama and notables have requested His Majesty to abdicate in our favour, which he did, and we received the allegiance of all. We saw fit to accede to the common desire and take over in order to ward off foreign intervention and avoid disunity, bloodshed and anarchy. (2)

Al-Thalaya's statement was directed to the armed forces. It contained a rare insight into the regular army officers' perception of their status:

We, your brothers the officers and soldiers of the army in Taizz, have suffered the negligence, humiliation

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- (1) This document is reproduced in al-Ittihad al-Yamani, Liyaqif al-Nazif fi al-Yaman (n.p., n.d.), p. 8.
- (2) Ahmad Mohammad Zain al-Saqqaf, Ana Aid min al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1962), p. 37.

and complete neglect that are felt by the Yemeni army in every post with regard to insignificant salaries and maltreatment in many ways until we became despised and suffering agonies in life. We have done our duty to our religion, tribe and Arabism and have reached an agreement with His Majesty Imam Ahmad and, praise be to God, he actually abdicated in favour of his brother Saif al-Islam Abdullah, may God save him. Everybody was satisfied with this. (1)

Paying no further attention to Ahmad, the rebels got busy establishing themselves. Copies of the abdication document were distributed throughout the country. Foreign governments were notified of the change in the regime. Abdullah asked his brother al-Abbas to form a new Cabinet. Ahmad, however, was far from resigned to his fate. Secretly, he managed to dispatch messengers to the troops surrounding his palace and succeeded in winning a number of them to his side. He sent other messengers to loyal soldiers in charge of artillery positions in the outskirts of Taizz and instructed them to open fire on the army barracks at a given signal.

Meanwhile, al-Badr in Hodaida lost no time in trying to rescue his father. He was joined and helped by Noman who left Taizz with the permission of the rebels on the pretext of advising al-Badr to accept the new situation. Al-Badr travelled to Hajjah, recruited a tribal force of a few thousand and advanced towards Taizz. The news of the approaching force together with the artillery attacks and the defection of some rebels to the Imam combined to spread panic among the remaining insurgents, who started

(1) Ibid, p. 38.

fleeing. By the fifth of April order was restored and Imam Ahmad was in full control.⁽¹⁾

1955 - 1962: Conservatism at Home and Liberalism Abroad

The most important result following the coup was the elimination of opposition to the Imam within the Royal Family. Abdullah and al-Abbas were executed. Although al-Hasan was in Cairo during the coup and no complicity on his part was proved, the Imam, who had been wary of his growing influence, relieved him of his posts and assigned him to diplomatic missions abroad. The new Cabinet was headed by the Imam himself with al-Badr as Deputy Prime Minister. Al-Badr was officially proclaimed Crown Prince.

The liberals soon became disenchanted with the regime. With no active opposition against al-Badr and with al-Hasan neutralized, the Imam had no further need to cultivate their support. Their hopes of vast reforms undertaken by al-Badr proved illusory; al-Badr was in no position to implement any ideas without his father's approval. The final break came when Noman left Yemen to perform the pilgrimage and from Saudi Arabia fled to Egypt and joined the opposition to the regime.

(1) For more details of the coup and comments on it see Ibid, pp. 30-42; Ibrahim Ali al-Wazir, Likai la Namq^h fi al-Zalam (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1963), pp. 34-37; Manfred W. Wenner, Modern Yemen (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 114-120; Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., pp. 373-379; Amin Said, al-Yaman (Cairo: Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1959), pp. 259-265; Noman, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

Imam Ahmad was now in a position to experiment with his version of modernization unhampered by either arch-conservatives, who opposed any new policies, or liberals, who wanted to go too far. It soon transpired that Imam Ahmad's innovations were limited to foreign policy. In the years following 1955, Yemen's traditional isolation came to an end. For the first time Yemen actively participated in inter-Arab affairs. Series of agreements were concluded with countries in the Eastern Block. Arms were purchased from Russia. Foreign missions in Yemen multiplied. Large scale aid from both East and West was accepted. In 1959 The Economist estimated that there were 700 Chinese and 200 European Communists in Yemen.⁽¹⁾ The new active foreign policy had a beneficial impact on Yemen's economic development. A few major projects were undertaken with foreign assistance. By 1960, the Communist Chinese were building a road between Sana and Hodaida, the Americans were working on a Sana-Taizz road and the Russians were constructing a new harbour in Hodaida.

Imam Ahmad, however, was unwilling to go beyond approving such projects. The structure of the regime was kept intact. No reorganization of the government machinery was attempted. Even basic reforms, such as introducing paper currency and establishing a central bank, were not implemented. The recommendations of numerous experts were ignored. The Imam, it seemed, was satisfied with the governmental system over which he presided. Thus, the new liberal foreign policy was not matched by a liberal domestic policy. Al-Badr, who was anxious to initiate internal reforms, found his plans frustrated. Loyal to his father, yet unable to influence him towards liberalization, al-Badr

(1) The Economist, July 25, 1959, p. 227.

maintained an uneasy acquiescence. (1)

In his role as the royal spokesman for the reformists, al-Badr was hindered not only by his father, who believed that no reforms should interfere with the structure of the regime, but also by the members of the Royal Family, who saw in his ideas a threat to their privileges, and the traditionally conservative tribal and religious leaders, who thought of him as a Westernized young man lacking the piety and dignity necessary for an Imam. Al-Badr's old friend, Ahmad Noman, was now in Egypt campaigning against the regime. In these circumstances al-Badr thought his best course was to attract to himself a group of loyal fellow-liberals. The officers imprisoned after 1948 and freed in 1955 were part of this group. Abdullah al-Sallal was one of them.

With the Imam's departure to Rome in April 1959, al-Badr as Regent, believed the time was ripe to implement some of his plans. He set up a "Representative Council" to assist him. He ordered a 25% increase in the pay of all the members of the armed forces. He asked for various teams of Egyptian experts. His speeches gave the impression that there was a radical break with the past:

I would like to tell you about the goals I vowed to achieve. Fate has

(1) Later on, al-Badr was to say: "My father's reign was a hard and fruitless one.... Throughout my father's reign I was known for my opposition to my father's method of government...."; quoted in Arab Political Document 1965, (Beirut: The Political Studies and Public Administration Department of the American University of Beirut, n.d.), p. 113.

not allowed me to start implementing them till now. We are left with corrupt residues of the past. I myself was the victim of this corruption; the residues of the past were a stumbling block. (1)

In another speech he said:

The first thing I did upon assuming responsibility was to bring an economic mission from the U.A.R.... I approved most of the recommendations. I am now waiting for more missions from the U.A.R. to start the job of organizing the governmental machinery. This year we must bring many teachers and experts of various kinds from the U.A.R. I have also decided to set up three schools for agricultural, commercial and industrial training. (2)

Al-Badr, however, was not left in peace to carry out his programmes. Coercion had kept many grievances in check. The absence of the feared Imam lifted the lid and various troubles arose. The northern tribes showed signs of restlessness and al-Badr had to ensure their support by subsidies. Minor incidents in Sana and Taizz involving soldiers from the regular army developed into large-scale disturbances. (3) Al-Badr felt compelled to resort to coercive methods and a wave of arrests followed.

In August Imam Ahmad returned. Convinced that al-Badr's weakness was responsible for the disturbances, the Imam upon arrival gave a stern warning that any act of rebellion would be harshly dealt with. Some of those responsible for the

(1) Al-Nasr, July 4, 1959, p. 9.

(2) Ibid, p. 4.

(3) For details see Saba, July 9, 1959, pp. 1-2.

disturbances, he said, would be executed and others would lose their hands and feet.⁽¹⁾ In the event, one man was executed and another had his hand cut off.⁽²⁾ The Imam demanded, and received, from the tribes the money they had obtained from al-Badr. The tentative signs of rebellion among northern tribes were brought to an end by the treacherous execution of Husain bin Nasir al-Ahmar, the paramount shaikh of Hashid, his son Hamid and a third shaikh. Order was restored for the moment. Al-Badr's liberal measures were abolished. Al-Badr himself was briefly in disgrace.

The calm Ahmad imposed was uneasy. ^{Some} ~~the~~ northern tribes were seething with resentment. Bombs were thrown at the houses of senior officials.⁽³⁾ There was unrest in the schools and the Minister of Education warned the teachers to mind their own business.⁽⁴⁾ The Imam apparently had reached the conclusion that not only the loyalty of the regular army but also that of the northern tribes could not be relied upon, and he was thinking of setting up a new, completely loyal army. Saba reported that after the "bloody and shameful acts" of some army soldiers in Taizz, most of the Yemeni tribes requested the Imam to allow their members to be recruited in a new special Imamic army and that he accepted provided none of the recruits had previously served in the army.⁽⁵⁾ Later, mention was made of a new "national army".⁽⁶⁾ Prince Abdul Rahman, the Imam's brother, declared in

(1) Al-Nasr, August 15, 1959, p. 8.

(2) Al-Nasr, September 17, 1959, p. 8.

(3) See Saba, July 7, 1960, p. 1.

(4) See Saba, October 9, 1959, p. 5.

(5) Saba, September 10, 1959, p. 6.

(6) Al-Nasr, May 26, 1960, p. 3.

Cairo that the Imam was very interested in reorganizing the army. ⁽¹⁾

Until March 1961, the Imam was in good health and energetically coping with the troubled situation. In that month there was a serious attempt on his life while he was visiting the hospital in Hodaida. The assassination plot was carried out by three lieutenants in the regular army: Abdullah al-Alfi, Abdullah al-Laqqiyyah and Mohsin al-Hindwanah. Taking advantage of his position as the security officer in the hospital, al-Alfi prevented most of the Imam's bodyguards from entering the hospital with the Imam. The three conspirators then cornered the Imam in a hospital hall and fired at him. The Imam fell down. Thinking he was dead, the assailants fled. Although badly wounded, the Imam escaped death. Soon afterwards, al-Alfi, surrounded by the royal bodyguards, shot himself; his two accomplices were arrested. ⁽²⁾

The initial interrogation of al-Hindwana and al-Laqqiyyah revealed that Abdullah al-Sallal knew of the plot. However, al-Badr who hastily returned from a trip abroad formed another investigation committee, with al-Sallal as a member, and instructed it to limit its investigation to the role of the three assailants and not probe further. ⁽³⁾ Al-Badr apparently had complete confidence in al-Sallal and was convinced that exclusive responsibility for the assassination attempt rested with the three individuals. In May al-Hindwanah and al-Laqqiyyah were executed. ⁽⁴⁾

(1) Al-Nasr, July 28, 1960, p. 1.

(2) For more details see Saba, April 13, 1961, pp. 1 and 8.

(3) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 28.2.1969. Al-Shami was in charge of the initial investigation.

(4) Saba, April 27, 1961, p. 1.

Despite repeated assurances in the Yemeni press to the contrary, Imam Ahmad never fully recovered. From the time he was wounded till his death in September 1962, he was in no shape to deal with the rigours of his office. In any governmental system the disability of the chief executive leads to grave consequences. In the Yemeni system the consequences were disastrous. The workings of the system were tuned to the performance of the Imam and with this performance impaired, the system as a whole functioned under stress. Not only was it difficult to carry on the day-to-day work of the government, but, more importantly, demands went unheeded and unexamined and there was no vigorous response to a declining level of support.

Imam Ahmad repeated his father's mistake of clinging to office despite obvious incapacitation. He was advised to abdicate in favour of al-Badr but to no avail. Probably the explanation of this behaviour is that when a system endows one man with such all-encompassing power it leads him to an unshakeable conviction of his indispensability.

In the days following the assassination attempt al-Badr assumed larger responsibilities and was said to be "running the departments of the government."⁽¹⁾ The Imam, however, soon sufficiently recovered to tell everybody in a speech that he was in good health,⁽²⁾ and, by implication, in full control. Thus, although al-Badr was "holding daily public audiences to examine the complaints of the people,"⁽³⁾ the Imam continued to "review internal and external state affairs."⁽⁴⁾ Al-Badr's depar-

(1) Al-Nasr, May 4, 1961, p. 1.

(2) Al-Nasr, May 18, 1961, p. 8.

(3) Al-Nasr, June 22, 1961, p. 6.

(4) Al-Nasr, July 6, 1961, p. 1.

ture for Europe in August clearly indicated that the Imam felt no compelling need for his presence in Yemen. The Imam's decision neither to abdicate in favour of al-Badr nor to delegate authority to him led to speculation that perhaps the Imam had changed his mind about the succession. Some thought al-Hasan might replace al-Badr as heir. In October the Imam found it necessary to dispel doubts and he clearly reaffirmed his choice of al-Badr as successor.

The break-up of the union between the U.A.R. and Yemen in December 1961 was followed by propaganda campaigns directed at the regime from Cairo. This new pressure added to internal difficulties in the form of alienated tribes, student riots and general unrest. Neither the Imam, ill and almost totally inaccessible, nor al-Badr, still with no full authority, was capable of producing concerted responses to cope with signs of declining support. Some responses bore the print of al-Badr's liberalism while other reflected the Imam's predilection for coercion. Thus, in the summer of 1962 a hurried programme of reforms was announced.⁽¹⁾ In the same summer tribal unrest was harshly dealt with; one village was destroyed for instance,⁽²⁾ and demonstrators were fired at in Sana and Taizz. With the Imam incapacitated, yet still in control, the system, it seems, was unable ~~to~~ consistently^{to} apply either coercion or reconciliation and the final responses were a haphazard compromise between the two. This situation lasted till the Imam's death on September 19 and al-Badr's assumption of full power.

(1) Wenner, op. cit., p. 133.

(2) Ibid.

Al-Badr's Accession

As Imam, al-Badr finally found himself in a position to introduce the long-awaited reforms. In his first speech upon acceding to the throne he declared:

I pledge to be loyal to the people and support the oppressed and uphold justice.... We shall introduce new regulations to secure for the citizens their rights in conformity with those of the modern world. We shall introduce constructive plans in order to raise the standards of the citizens. We are determined to lay bases which will fix the rights and duties of the citizens so that all citizens shall be equal as far as their rights and duties are concerned. (1)

The new measures came at a rapid succession. A general and full amnesty for all past political violations was issued. (2) The system of hostages was abolished. (3) A 40-member Advisory Council, with half the members elected, was decreed. (4) Municipal councils, with elected memberships, were to be established. (5) An expatriates' department was set up in the Foreign Ministry to look after the affairs of Yemeni expatriates. (6)

(1) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: B.B.C.) (Hereafter SWB), 21.9.1962, pp. 1-2.

(2) SWB, 24.9.1962, p. 9.

(3) Ibid, p. 10.

(4) SWB, 25.9.1962, p. 5.

(5) SWB, 25.9.1962, p. 6.

(6) SWB, 26.9.1962, p. 10.

The only uncharacteristic thing al-Badr said during the week in which he enjoyed the power was his statement that he intended to follow his father's "wise policy".⁽¹⁾ As he demonstrably had no such intention, the statement was meant to reconcile the more conservative elements in Yemen. Al-Badr thought that he had such a well-established liberal reputation that the liberal elements would readily accept him and that he could afford this verbal concession to the conservatives.

II. Foreign Affairs

The Concept of Role

In discussing Yemen's foreign policy, and later on the foreign policies of the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia, the concept of role will be employed. Role is "the behaviour expected of a State, the predictable behaviour to which others adjust and respond...."⁽²⁾ While it is acknowledged that generally a state's role is "determined by the static elements of the environment in which it exists: location, resources, population, culture and traditional relationships",⁽³⁾ it is argued that the frequency of role-changing in Arab politics can be attributed only to the influence of certain events and situations perceived by the decision-makers to be of special importance and consequently to warrant role-enactment or role-changing. Such events and situations

(1) See SWB, 22.9.1962, p. 2; see also Wenner, op. cit., p. 136.

(2) J. W. Burton, Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 103.

(3) Ibid.

are usually referred to as "turning points". Here, however, more precise terms will be used. An event, national or international, that, because of the way it is perceived by decision-makers, has some bearing on the adoption or changing of a role will be termed a role-influencing event; a continuing series of such events will be termed a role-influencing situation. If the influence of an event or of a situation constitutes the single most important factor in role-enactment or role-changing such an event will be termed a role-determining event and such a situation a role-determining situation.

Confrontation with the British in Aden as a Role-Determining Situation

Although critics of Imam Ahmad often accused him of softness on the British in Aden,⁽¹⁾ this charge, except for the last two years of his reign, is totally unfounded. Imam Ahmad had an intense hatred of the British who, he believed, not only usurped a part of his country but gave aid and comfort to the conspirators against his father and were furthermore taking steps to consolidate and perpetuate their position in the usurped part. The hatred was reciprocated by the British officials in Aden. An

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- (1) According to one critic, "Imam Ahmad helped establish colonial footholds... since his first year on the throne"; Sharaf al-Din op. cit., p. 361. According to another, Yemen's policy vis-a-vis the Protectorates was "mere protest in the beginning then skirmishes on the so-called borders, then an agreement with the Colonialist interloper containing implicit recognition of the borders between south and north, then ~~an~~ irregular and insignificant help to isolated and unplanned tribal uprisings...."

Qahtan Mohammad al-Shabi, Al-Istimar al-Britani wa Marakatona al-Arabbiyah fi Jānoub al-Yaman (Cairo: Dar al-Nasr, 1962), p. 190.

ex-Governor of Aden said that it was a "sad day for Anglo-Yemeni relations when Ahmad came to his father's throne."⁽¹⁾ Ahmad in his view was not nearly as honourable as his father and was "completely untrustworthy".⁽²⁾

Imam Ahmad shared his father's conviction that the Protectorates were part of Yemen. Yet while his father resigned himself to the fact of the British presence, Ahmad believed that by continually harassing the British he could, at best, regain the Protectorates and, at worst, prevent the consolidation of the British position that would make an eventual return of the Protectorates to Yemen more difficult. To achieve this consolidation, the British in the forties adopted a "forward policy" designed to give them more control of the internal affairs of the Protectorates; in the fifties they sponsored federation plans. Ahmad spared no effort to frustrate both attempts. The British resented Ahmad's interference and while they were willing to negotiate a border settlement they had no intention of acknowledging, for the present or the future, Yemen's claims. This divergence of views persisted and numerous talks, formal and informal at various levels, reached no satisfactory conclusions.

The pattern of the confrontation took shape in the fifties. Yemen gave arms and money to dissident tribes in the Protectorates and at times sent raiding parties. The British retaliated, mostly by air attacks on Yemeni border positions and villages. Meanwhile a propaganda campaign of recrimination and counter-recrimination was waged by both sides. The pattern was interrupted by lulls (during which inconclusive talks took place),

(1) Sir Tom Hickinbotham, Aden (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 75.

(2) Ibid, pp. 70-71.

to be resumed upon the break-down of the talks. Only by 1960 did Imam Ahmad realize that his aims were unrealistic and, like his father before him, he settled down to a grudging acceptance of the British presence.

The confrontation with the British had such an impact on Yemen's foreign policy that it can justifiably be termed a role-determining situation. It was this confrontation, more than any other factor, that led Yemen to develop anti-Imperialist and Unionist roles in its inter-Arab policy and a non-aligned role in the wider international context.

1948 - 1955: Search for a Role

Roles are neither inevitable nor ready-made. A country can conduct its foreign policy without an over-riding general pattern of behaviour. During Imam Yahya's reign Yemen did not have an easily identifiable role unless isolationism can be described as a role. Yemen was the supreme example of isolationism; international contacts were kept at an absolute minimum; no foreign representatives were allowed to reside in the country; foreign aid in all forms was suspect; offers for exploiting mineral resources were rejected. Although Ahmad was willing to have a more active foreign policy he shared his father's fear of foreign influences. The years between 1948 and 1955 witnessed Ahmad's careful attempts to intensify international contacts without completely destroying Yemen's long-established isolationist tradition.

Initially, Ahmad was as cautious as his father and "no promises of gold, dollars, yachts, cars, or refrigerators

have been able to persuade him to admit foreigners...."(1) Gradually, however, his attitude relaxed. He came to realize that acceptance of foreign aid did not automatically mean a surrender of independence. In 1951 the first foreign legation was opened in Yemen. In the same year the Director of Press and Publicity declared that Yemen had applied for technical assistance from the UN and approached the U.S. for Point Four aid.(2) In 1953 a concession for the exploration of minerals was given to a West German firm.

It was only in 1955, however, that isolationism came to an end. Yemen was actively involved in the confrontation with the British in Aden and there was the need for moral and material help. The 1955 coup convinced Ahmad of the necessity for more action to achieve tangible benefits for Yemen, even at the risk of ending isolation. The inter-Arab political system was dominated by the struggle between the anti-Imperialist block led by Egypt and the pro-Western block led by Iraq, and both sides were looking for allies. The U.S. was engaged in a world-wide pact strategy offering arms and money to recruits while Russia had entered the Middle Eastern scene offering aid with "no strings". The time for choice had come.

Development of Inter-Arab Roles

1955 - 1958: Anti-Imperialist Role

The need for allies in the campaign against the

(1) Clare Hollingworth, The Arabs and the West (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952), p. 118.

(2) Middle East Journal (Spring, 1951), p. 213.

British, the rising popularity of the anti-Imperialist stands of Egypt everywhere in the Arab World and the friendly attitude adopted by Egypt and Saudi Arabia toward Ahmad during the 1955 coup soon led Ahmad to adopt an anti-Imperialist, i.e. anti-British role. This meant closer relations with Arab countries adopting the same role; cool relations with pro-Western Arab countries; and an uncompromising hostility to the British not only in the Protectorates but elsewhere in the Arab World.

The close relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, both enacting anti-Imperialist roles, culminated in the tripartite Jeddah pact in April 1956. In a speech later that year Imam Ahmad emphasized Yemen's anti-Imperialist role. He condemned British actions toward Egypt and in Buraimi and Oman. "The problem of any Arab is the problem of all Arabs," he declared. He concluded by stating, "We must be ready to protect our country and face with all our strength the aggressors against any Arab country...." (1) Throughout the Suez crisis Yemen showed firm solidarity with Egypt.

Throughout 1957 the anti-Imperialist line was followed. Taking advantage of Britain's damaged prestige after Suez, Yemen stepped up its activities and the frontier incidents were on a larger scale and "accompanied by a full-blooded propaganda campaign." (2) As part of this campaign Imam Ahmad in January took the unprecedented step of inviting a group of Western journalists to Yemen to see the border and attend a press conference held by him. In November al-Badr visited London for talks

(1) Al-Nasr, September 7, 1956, p. 8.

(2) Eric Macro, Yemen and the Western World (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968), p. 105.

which proved inconclusive. Commenting on these talks later he said, "It became clear that the English do not want us to be free or independent. They wish to enlarge the area of their colonization by chopping off new parts of our country."⁽¹⁾ During the year relations with other anti-Imperialist Arab countries, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, continued to be close.

1958 - 1961: Unionist Role

The union between Syria and Egypt in February 1958 resulted in the birth of the U.A.R. Yemen took the unexpected step of applying for confederation with the new entity, thus adopting a unionist role. This decision on the Imam's part is usually characterized as a master-stroke of Machiavellian politics, a cynical move mainly inspired by the Imam's desire to forestall Egyptian propaganda attacks on his regime. This explanation is inadequate. Egypt at that time had no interest in attacking the Imam who had been faithfully enacting an anti-Imperialist role similar to that adopted by Egypt. Regardless of the degree of opportunism involved, the Imam's behaviour can be better explained by reference to two considerations. First, the confrontation with the British was at its height; the need for allies was undiminished. Saudi Arabia was opting out of its anti-Imperialist role and the U.A.R. was now the only Arab country the Imam could turn to for support. The closer the relationship with the U.A.R., the greater would be the support. Second, the move would be an effective device of attracting the support of liberal Yemeni elements both inside and outside Yemen.⁽²⁾

(1) Saba, February 20, 1958, p. 4.

(2) See above p.88.

However, the Imam considered the union with the U.A.R. as purely a foreign policy move not intended to alter Yemen's political system. The agreement which established the union carefully preserved the independence of each country. Thus limited, the confederation served the Imam's purposes. The U.A.R. continued to back Yemen's stand against the British while even the liberals opposing the regime could not help applauding the Imam's move.

1961 - 1962: Anti-Socialist Role

Yemen's enactment of a unionist role lasted till Imam Ahmad in December 1961 came up with another "surprise" in the form of a poem calling for adherence to Islamic principles and attacking Socialism.⁽¹⁾ As the Imam must have expected, the U.A.R. quickly answered by terminating the union and attacking him.

The secession of Syria from the U.A.R. was followed by the adoption of an anti-reactionary role by Egypt. It must have become obvious to the Imam that Egypt, with its internal

(1) The part of the poem dealing with Socialism stated, "Let us start a unity based on principles we approve, adopting as its law the Moslem Sharia... with no trace of innovations that allow, in contravention of Islam's prohibition, taking people's possessions and their legitimate earnings on the pretext of nationalization and equality between rich and poor. This has no support in Islam nor is it accepted by common sense. Forceful appropriation of people's possessions is a crime in Islam...." See Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., p. 358.

Socialist orientation and its new hard-line foreign policy, would not tolerate the union with Yemen for long. As far as Yemen was concerned, the considerations that led to the union with Egypt no longer applied. The confrontation with the British was over. The federation in the south, which Imam Ahmad tirelessly opposed, was now a reality. Furthermore, the union lost its value as a support-generating device and was no longer considered a genuine move toward Arab unity. The trouble in 1959, the tribal rebellion and the assassination attempt convinced the Imam that formal union with Egypt ceased to have a beneficial impact on Yemen's internal situation.

The Imam's genuine hatred for Socialism, which he perceived as a dangerous anti-Islamic creed, and his fear that Egypt now might use the confederation to justify intervention in Yemen's internal affairs led him to publish his poem. The poem symbolized the adoption of an anti-Socialist role. The new role immediately put Yemen in conflict with Egypt and at the same time placed it in the camp of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan, which were all pursuing anti-Socialist roles.

The Development of International Role

1955 - 1962: Non-Alignment

Once Yemen decided to adopt an active foreign policy it turned to both West and East in search of arms and economic assistance,⁽¹⁾ The United States was reluctant to supply

(1) For details on American-Yemeni relations see, Wenner, op. cit., pp. 177-182; for details on Russian-Yemeni relations see, Macro, op. cit., pp. 111-120.

Yemen with arms that might be used to harass the British. Furthermore, Yemen's refusal to commit itself to the Western alliance did not encourage large-scale American economic aid. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was willing to give both economic aid and arms. The friendship treaty signed with the Soviet Union in November 1955 heralded a series of similar treaties with Eastern Block countries. As a result of these treaties, diplomatic representation was established with a number of Communist countries and Yemen received arms as well as economic aid. Without conscious articulation, Yemen thus was adopting a non-aligned role.

The United States did not look favourably toward Yemen's "drift" to the Soviet Block. Matters were not helped by Yemen's rejection of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Consequently, there was a certain coolness in American-Yemeni relations and no substantial American aid was forthcoming.⁽¹⁾ By 1960, however, partly because the United States outgrew the neutralism-is-immoral phase and partly as a reaction to the increasing Communist presence in Yemen, relations improved and American assistance, on a larger scale than ever before, was offered and accepted.

(1) In 1960 Imam Ahmad told an American diplomat that he was "disappointed" with earlier American promises of aid. He said that obstacles, real and artificial, prevented the implementation of American aid projects; see al-Nasr, May 12, 1960, p. 4.

Chapter Six

Revolution

The activities of two groups, liberal agitators and trained officers in the regular army, made the 1962 revolution possible. The liberals publicized Yemen's unhappy lot and their efforts greatly helped in generating internal and external sympathy for the anti-Imam cause. The officers were responsible for the actual take-over of the government. This chapter discusses these two groups and then gives a narrative, and an analysis of the revolution.

The Liberals

The collapse of the 1948 revolution and the executions and imprisonments that followed brought all liberal opposition in Yemen to a complete stop. Only a few liberal leaders were outside Yemen. The most prominent of these was Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi who was in Saudi Arabia, as a member of the delegation Abdullah al-Wazir sent to King Abdul Aziz, when the revolution was crushed. Al-Zobairi could not find asylum in the Arab world and had to land in Pakistan. Even there he was imprisoned and maltreated until an intervention with the Imam on his behalf by a Pakistani religious leader led the Imam to send him a letter of pardon.⁽¹⁾ The only liberal activities outside Yemen centered on two period-

(1) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Harakah al-Wataniyyah fi al-Yaman (Aden: al-Ittihad al-Yamani, n.d.), p. 18.

icals, al-Salam in Cardiff and al-Fudoul in Aden. These two periodicals, however, concentrated less on attacking the Imam than on appealing to him to free the prisoners.

Gradually, liberal opposition started to re-group and re-organize. In 1952 al-Ittihad al-Yamani, the Yemeni Union, was established in Aden by a group of Yemenis who broke away from another organization, the Association of the Sons of the Arab South, which had Yemeni as well as South Arabian members. Abdullah al-Hakimi who was editing al-Salam in Cardiff was asked to return and head the Union. Soon after the Egyptian revolution of 1952 al-Zobairi was allowed to come to Egypt. There he formed the second branch of the Yemeni Union.⁽¹⁾ The next important development occurred in August 1955 when Ahmad Noman fled to Cairo and joined al-Zobairi. His son Mohammad Noman fled to Aden. The Yemeni Union in Cairo was re-organized with the joint leadership of al-Zobairi and Noman. Co-ordination was established with the Yemeni Union in Aden and contacts were made with liberal elements inside Yemen.⁽²⁾

The extent of the activities of the liberals in Egypt was greatly influenced by the relationship between the governments of Egypt and Yemen. In 1955 the liberals were allowed to start their own newspaper Sawt al-Yaman and to give addresses from Cairo Radio.⁽³⁾ By the end of 1955 when Imam Ahmad adopted an anti-Imperialist role and developed close relations with Egypt the liberals were curbed; they were not allowed to attack the

(1) Ibid, p. 26.

(2) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, Interview, Beirut, 27.10.1969.

(3) See Ahmad Mohammad Noman, Kaif Nafham Qadiyyat al-Yaman (Cairo: Dar al-Neel li al-Tibaah, 1957), p. 17.

Imam. It was not until 1961 that the liberals were given a free hand in agitating against the Imam.

The liberals faced other difficulties. Some dissident elements broke away from the Yemeni Union. Finding enough money was a problem and while the liberals were hard pressed to finance their activities they were often branded as profit-seekers. In the past their leaders had adopted positions inspired more by expediency than principles, such as Noman's support of Imam Ahmad during the 1955 coup, and this left them open to charges of opportunism. In view of these criticisms it was not surprising that the liberal leaders were continuously defending themselves and answering the arguments of their critics.

The Yemeni Union conceived its task in terms of two goals: "mobilizing Yemeni public opinion against the backward conditions in Yemen; and persuading public opinion outside Yemen to exert pressure on Yemen's rulers so that they would change their policies and end the country's isolation".⁽¹⁾ Toward these ends, the Yemeni Union produced a steady stream of articles, leaflets, and booklets.⁽²⁾

(1) Al-Ittihad al-Yamani, al-Tagrir al-Amm (Aden: 1961), p. 16.

(2) For a list of the Union's publications see Ibid, pp. 17-18.

Beside political writings, the liberals employed poetry to attack the Imam. Educated Yemenis are very fond of poetry. Al-Zobairi, the liberal leader, was undoubtedly Yemen's greatest contemporary poet and his stinging political poems were avidly read in Yemen. In a poem addressed to the Yemenis written after the Imam's return from Rome, al-Zobairi says:

It is the speech of death so listen
and joyfully dance to the tune of
doom. You are welcoming a butcher;
offer your necks in greeting!

See Anis Mansour, al-Yaman Dhalik al-Majhoul (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyyah li al-Tibaah wa al-Nashr, n.d.), p. 105.

The ideological position of the liberals was not always clear. In the words of a report by the Yemeni Union, "fumbling can almost be said to have been the main characteristic of the nationalist movement since it started".⁽¹⁾ In the forties the liberals had thought that their best course was an alliance with an enlightened Imam who would cooperate with them in introducing reforms; hence their acceptance of al-Wazir's leadership. The failure of the 1948 revolution created disillusionment and despondency among the liberals both outside and inside Yemen. The liberals inside the Imam's prisons were concerned with survival; those outside Yemen were badly disorganized. Back at the political stage, the liberals once more decided to throw their lot with an enlightened individual eligible for the Imamic office; hence their support of al-Badr. Again they were disillusioned. By this time they reached the conclusion that supporting one royal contender against another would not bring about the desired reforms.

The liberals underwent some soul-searching. The course left open for them, in the words of a pamphlet dated November 1955, was:

to direct all our energy to the people...
to tell them the truth as regards the
corruption of the regime and the sources
of the corruption.... We must make it
clear in their minds that the only solution
is in the formation of a Representative
House composed of enlightened
Shaikhs and dignitaries which will take
charge according to general agreement
embodied in a written constitution. (2)

In 1956 the liberals elaborated their goals further.

(1) Al-Ittihad al-Yamani, op. cit., p. 26.

(2) "Al-Ahrar wa al-Badr", anonymous pamphlet, 1955, pp. 10-11.

A manifesto signed by Noman and al-Zobairi announced ten points as the guiding principles of the liberal movement.⁽¹⁾ Repetitive and at times rhetorical, these points were vague and general. There was no direct mention of the Imamate nor was there an open advocacy of a Republican regime. The way through which the points could be implemented was not discussed. In formulating their ideology the liberals were influenced by many factors. Their goals had to be somewhat general so as not to antagonize the more radical or the more conservative of their followers. In 1956 Egypt had close relations with Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, all Monarchical states, and this may have convinced the liberals that little would be gained by an open attack on Monarchical government. The liberals also seem to have been torn between the belief that no progress could be made under the Imamate and the realization that no regime that could replace it had any chance of success in the foreseeable future.

Armed with their flexible ideology, which was further condensed into two principles - popular sovereignty and national unity⁽²⁾ - the liberals adopted positions that grew progressively more radical. In 1957 they demanded that Yemen must participate in any unity scheme among Arab countries. "If His Majesty the Imam undertakes such a step," said a memorandum from the Yemeni Union to the Arab League in August 1957, "he would be considered a great hero of Arabism and our lives would be put at his disposal."⁽³⁾ In January 1958 the liberals addressed an open letter to al-Badr urging Yemen's immediate joining of the union

(1) See Ahmad/Mohammad Zain al-Saqqaf, Ana Aid min al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1962), pp. 166-168.

(2) Al-Ittihad al-Yamani, op. cit., p. 18.

(3) Quoted in Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, al-Yaman (Cairo: Dar al-Marif, n.d.), p. 179.

between Syria and Egypt.⁽¹⁾ When Yemen and the U.A.R. formed the United Arab States the liberals expressed first surprise then support for the confederation.⁽²⁾ It was not until 1959 when it became clear that Imam Ahmad had no intention of allowing the confederation charter to be implemented that the liberals, for the first time, advocated a Republican regime.⁽³⁾ Yet because the union still existed the liberals in Egypt were not allowed as much freedom as they would have wanted in attacking the Imam. It was only after December 23, 1961 when President Nasser publicly attacked Imam Ahmad that the liberals enjoyed Egypt's full sympathy and were given access to Egypt's radio station and press. The liberals naturally welcomed Egypt's new hard-line policy since it gave them a freedom they never enjoyed before.⁽⁴⁾ Their activities perceptibly increased.

Early in 1962 the near-monopoly of the leadership of the liberals, enjoyed for about twenty years by Noman and al-

(1) Ibid.

(2) See above p. 88.

(3) See Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Harakah al-Wataniyyah fi al-Yaman, op. cit., pp. 28-29. The Yemeni Union's advocacy of a Republic did not change their agitation methods which continued to be more concerned with pointing out the shortcomings of the Imamate than with elaborating the possible alternatives. Because of this and in view of their generally moderate and flexible outlook, they were branded later on as mere reformers with no genuine revolutionary ideals. See Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Abad al-Thawrah al-Yamaniyyah (Beirut: 1967, n.p.), pp. 8-10; and Mohammad Ali al-Shihari, Tariq al-Thawrah al-Yamaniyyah (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, n.d.), p. 101.

(4) See below pp. 240-241.

Zobairi, came to an end. An aggressive new leader, Dr. Abdul Rahman al-Baidani appeared on the scene. Al-Baidani held various posts, mostly in the diplomatic service, under Imam Ahmad. In 1959 he resigned and started agitating against the regime. However, he did not acknowledge the leadership of Noman and al-Zobairi. "The old liberals," wrote al-Baidani, "offered nothing new except to professionalize opposition."⁽¹⁾ He called those old liberals "politicians" and accused them of wanting "a compromise with the enemies of the people".⁽²⁾ Al-Baidani was much more radical in his approach than the leaders of the Yemeni Union ever were. He was an effective propagandist, and his style, in turn sarcastic, violent, and appealing, was eminently suitable to his campaigns against the Imamate.

As a young man who gave up an important position for the sake of a principle, al-Baidani could not be accused of opportunism. As a graduate of Egyptian and German universities, al-Baidani was educationally better equipped than those liberals with a traditional, mostly literary, training. The detailed programme he suggested was more impressive than any programme the Yemeni Union ever produced.⁽³⁾ Another thing in his favour was that as a man who had spent most of his life in Egypt and who spoke perfect Egyptian dialect, al-Baidani was able to get along with the Egyptians better than either Noman or al-Zobairi. For all these reasons, al-Baidani's broadcasts and articles were given prominence in the Egyptian mass media. The fact that he got a very important job after the revolution suggests that he

(1) Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutab Qawmiyyah, 1962), p. 25.

(2) Ibid, p. 249.

(3) Ibid, pp. 164-168.

made a strong impact on the officers who carried out the revolution.

The liberal movement of the fifties and early sixties was a continuation of the movement of the forties. Hence the similarities. Noman and al-Zobairi assumed, for the most part, the leadership of both. The aim, introducing reforms into Yemen, remained basically the same. Yet as circumstances changed, the new movement was transformed. The most striking change was the absence of Sayyids. Although some Sayyids still opposed the Imam, Sayyids were not as prominent in the new movement as they were in the old. Another change was the dissensions of which the earlier movement was free.⁽¹⁾ The new movement, especially from 1959 on, was more unyielding in its stands than the old one. As Egypt adopted its anti-reactionary role, the liberals were allowed to use the Egyptian mass media, a tremendous advantage the older movement did not enjoy.

The liberals inside Yemen were understandably much less active than their colleagues abroad. Almost all of the liberals imprisoned in 1948 were freed in 1954 and 1955. Some of them fled and joined the Yemeni Union. Others stayed and became genuinely loyal to Imam Ahmad. Others maintained their liberal beliefs while continuing to serve under Imam Ahmad. A notable example of this group was Abdul Rahman al-Iryani who managed to stay quite close to both Ahmad and al-Badr.

(1) Both the Union of Popular Forces and the Grand Yemeni Association were established by some liberals who broke away from the Yemeni Union. See Fouad Matar, al-Yaman Jomhuriyyah wa Wahid wa Khamsoon Imaman (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar li al-Nashr, 1968), p. 30.

There was also a younger generation of liberals. As more graduates returned to Yemen the number of liberals increased. Yet little is known about the exact activities of the liberals inside Yemen, whether old or young. Some participated in the 1955 coup. Others were responsible for the leaflets which sporadically appeared in the cities. Some exchanged news and views with the liberals abroad. However, there was no organized liberal movement in Yemen and, with the exception of al-Iryani, there were no outstanding liberal leaders. Most of the liberals who later occupied leadership positions returned to Yemen after the revolution.

The Officers

By generating discontent with the Imamate inside Yemen and creating external sympathy for its opponents, the liberals undoubtedly played a part in preparing for the revolution; but a far more important part was that of the officers who actually executed the revolution. However, there has been a great deal of confusion about the revolution: who was its leader, what kind of preparation preceded it, and to what extent it was engineered from outside Yemen. To the majority of authors, al-Sallal was the man who planned and led the revolution. To some, a little-known officer, Lieutenant Ali Abdul Moghni was the real leader.⁽¹⁾ Others regard the revolution as an Egyptian plot, the Yemeni

(1) See Dana Adams Schmidt, Yemen: The Unknown War (London: The Bodely Head, 1968), p. 43.

officers being simply stooges. (1) The accounts of the participants were, with rare exceptions, inspired by the desire to create an impression of the revolution as being a carefully-planned operation, carried out by an effective, dedicated and highly organized revolutionary apparatus, rather than by the desire to write history objectively. Furthermore, in the civil war that engulfed Yemen, interest in the facts of the revolution was overshadowed by interest in the changing fortunes of the warring camps. Add to this the fact that revolutionary activities are by nature difficult to document, and it becomes clear why all the accounts of the revolution, including the one in this study, should be considered provisional. Only when the participants decide to disclose all they know about the revolution could one be in a position to speak of the real story.

It is misleading to say that the revolution was carried out by the Yemeni "army"; as we saw earlier, there were

(1) See Neil McLean, "The War In The Yemen", Royal Central Asian Journal (April, 1964), p. 104; D. Smiley "The War In The Yemen", The Journal Of The Royal United Service Institution (November, 1963), p. 328; Nihad al-Ghadri, An al-Yaman wa al-Thawrah (n.d., n.p.), p. 40. Even some Republicans assert that Egypt had a hand in the revolution. Allegations of this sort are difficult to prove or disprove. However, Egypt maintained an interest in revolutionary movements throughout the Arab world and it is quite possible, even likely, that Egyptian intelligence had some kind of contact with some revolutionary officers. Whether this was true or not, three things are certain. First, the revolutionary movement had a purely Yemeni genesis. Second, no Egyptians actually participated in the military take-over. Third, no one, including Egyptian intelligence, could have accurately predicted the success of the attempt.

three armies in Yemen.⁽¹⁾ It is just as misleading to attribute the revolution to Yemeni "officers"; of more than two hundred officers in Yemen only about twenty were actively involved in the revolution. The officers responsible for the revolution belonged to one category: they were trained, i.e. graduates of military academies, and they were associated with the regular army.⁽²⁾

Contrary to later assertions, there was no secret army organization preparing for the revolution over the years. Until the revolution actually took place, there was no single acknowledged leader. There were no blue-prints. The revolution was a daring act triggered by the younger officers who were joined, almost reluctantly, by their more senior colleagues. Even the most staunch of Republicans admit that the success of the revolution was a "miracle".⁽³⁾

It is not accidental that the revolutionary officers were all trained. While some of the officers who were not trained, i.e. who became officers through seniority, later supported the revolution, none of them took an active part in instigating it. Those non-trained officers lacked many prerequisites of the revolutionaries. Hardly educated, they could not aspire to rule Yemen. With no first-hand contacts with the outside world, they were not as sharply aware of Yemen's backwardness as the trained officers. Furthermore, because they

(1) See above pp. 82-85.

(2) Although al-Sallal at the time of the revolution was the Commander of al-Badr's guards, he was originally associated with the regular army.

(3) See, for example, Mohammad Said al-Attar, al-Takhalof al-Iqtisadi wa al-Ijtimaie fi al-Yaman, (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah li al-Tibaah wa al-Nashr 1965). p. 289.

lacked proper training, they did not occupy important positions that could enable them to stage a revolution with any hope of success.

The revolutionary activities of trained officers go back to the forties when a group of them joined the 1948 revolution.⁽¹⁾ When Imam Ahmad crushed the revolution one officer was executed, the rest were imprisoned. The next attempt came with the 1955 coup in which Major Ahmad al-Thalaya played an important part. Among those executed later were al-Thalaya and two other officers. Most of the imprisoned officers, including Abdullah al-Sallal, were freed during the 1955 coup. While in Hajjah gathering tribal support, al-Badr freed them. He appealed to Imam Ahmad to approve of his action and the Imam did.⁽²⁾

In 1948 the officers were not the leaders of the revolution; the leadership was civilian. Again in 1955, although al-Thalaya had an important role, the man who took charge was Abdullah, Imam Ahmad's brother. In both these rebellions the institution of the Imamate was maintained. The 1962 revolution was different from the earlier attempts in two respects: civilians played no role in it, and it was directed against the Imamate as well as the person of the Imam.

As members of poor, humble families who were treated with indifference if not contempt, the officers in the forties seem simply to have reacted to the social oppression they felt. They did not entertain ambitions of governing Yemen and

(1) See above pp. 27-28.

(2) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, Interview, Beirut, 27.10.1969.

they easily accepted the leadership of others. The officers who participated in the 1955 coup seem to have been similarly motivated. In the 1962 revolution, unlike its predecessors, the officers were not only motivated by personal or class resentments: they came to save Yemen.

It is important to remember that the 1948 revolution was the first modern experiment in revolutionary change in the Arab world. The experiments that followed, various Syrian coups and the Egyptian and Iraqi revolutions, were all different in that army officers were the leaders both of the military takeover and of the new governments that emerged. A change gradually took place in the ideology of revolutionary officers in Yemen and elsewhere in the Arab world: they are not only rebels, they are the country's saviours and future leaders.

As it became increasingly clear that the army was the only force capable of overthrowing a government, the new attitude hardened. The Egyptian revolution of 1952, and later the Iraqi revolution of 1958, were popular with Arab masses. The army was looked upon as the only remaining hope for progress and glory. A revolutionary officer now may well be a future Nasser. In Yemen and elsewhere, the new self-image of the revolutionary officer as the man best suited to represent and lead the people began to prevail.

However, as this new sense of mission was being gradually developed, there were factors pulling the officers toward caution if not inactivity. As late back as 1953, al-Sallal warned against abortive revolutionary action.⁽¹⁾ When the officers

(1) Abdullah al-Sallal and others, Min Wara al-Aswar (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, n.d.), p. 93.

were released in 1955 they were extremely discouraged. The lessons of 1948 and 1955 were vivid in their minds. The situation, both internally and externally, was far from conducive to revolutionary activities. Internally, Imam Ahmad appeared in full control. The events of the 1955 coup proved that he was still able to rely on the loyalty of Zaidi tribes. His system of intelligence was very effective. ⁽¹⁾ Externally, with the Imam pursuing a liberal foreign policy it seemed doubtful that a new revolutionary regime could enlist external support.

From 1955 on al-Badr started taking interest in the released officers. Al-Badr had his own reasons. Not only did he consider them fellow-liberals, but, and perhaps more importantly, he wanted to have the loyalty of the regular army. al-Badr was always fearful of the possibility of his uncle, al-Hasan, making a bid for power, once Imam Ahmad died. As neither tribal nor religious leaders approved of him, ⁽²⁾ al-Badr thought that a loyal army was his best guarantee. Therefore, and as a part of a general campaign to enlist the support of the regular army, al-

(1) Imam Ahmad employed large numbers of individuals, known only to himself, in every city, town and village in Yemen. They had direct access to him and they reported every activity, sometimes including even verbal utterances, against the government. Ahmad's illiterate subjects believed that spirits brought such news to him. As an example of the effectiveness of these informal intelligence networks see the story in Wendell Phillips, Qataban and Sheba (London: Victor Gollancz, 1955), p. 188. Phillips comments: "... I was lost in admiration of his /Ahmad's/ intelligence system, wishing that Washington might have one like it".

(2) See above p. 109.

Badr began to cultivate the loyalty of the trained officers. Of these officers, al-Sallal was closest to him. Al-Sallal, at al-Badr's suggestion, became at various times Commander of al-Badr's guards,⁽¹⁾ Military Adjutant of al-Badr,⁽²⁾ Director of Military Aviation,⁽³⁾ and Director of Hodaida Harbour.⁽⁴⁾ Upon his accession al-Badr appointed al-Sallal as Commander of the Royal Guards.

As part of his modernization plans al-Badr wanted to turn the regular army into an effective well-equipped, well trained force. As Minister of Defence, al-Badr was responsible for the arms deal from the Eastern Block as well as for the establishment of the Military Academy in Sana. However, al-Badr never had the free hand he needed. Imam Ahmad kept thwarting him. The Imam was not enthusiastic about modernizing the army and he had deep-rooted suspicions of the trained officers. Al-Badr thus did not succeed in modernizing the army nor in giving the trained officers the prestige they - along with their army - lacked. Despite al-Badr's interest in them the trained officers were not close to the source of power, the Imam, and the standards of the army, in pay, equipment, training and discipline, were as low as ever.

Between 1955 and 1961 the trained officers were not involved in any activities against the regime. They did not try to take advantage of the army riots in 1959 or of the tribal rebellion of 1960. In March 1961 there was an attempt on Ahmad's life.⁽⁵⁾ Although al-Sallal later claimed that the assassination

(1) See al-Nasr, December 10, 1955, p. 5.

(2) See al-Nasr, June 12, 1958, p. 1.

(3) See al-Nasr, August 15, 1959, p. 2.

(4) See al-Nasr, May 18, 1961, p. 3.

(5) See above p. 112.

was meant to be the first stage in a revolutionary scheme,⁽¹⁾ it is doubtful that it was more than a desperate move undertaken by three individuals with the knowledge, but not the active involvement, of al-Sallal. It cannot be regarded as a bid to take over the government.

The break-up of the union with the U.A.R. in December 1961 was probably a turning point in Yemen's history. Following this break-up the Egyptian mass media started waging violent propaganda campaigns against the Imam. The Yemeni liberals were regularly denouncing the Imamate and calling for revolution. The Imam was incapacitated and al-Badr was not yet in power. There was general unrest in the country. With the internal situation deteriorating and with a fairly good chance of outside help, it looked as if the time was ripe for a new attempt.

There were, nevertheless, severe handicaps. There was no revolutionary leadership that could plan and lead. The number of the officers that could be counted upon was small. The command of the regular army was conservative and loyal to the Imam. Ammunition was not easily available. There was little hope that the Zaidi tribes would support the revolution. The revolutionary officers were torn between their growing sense of mission and the realization that the circumstances were ideal for a move, on the one hand, and the fear that an abortive action would be disastrous, on the other. Thus they decided to wait.

However, besides the revolutionary officers who participated in the 1948 revolution, there was a new breed of

(1) Al-Hayat, November 6, 1962, p. 2.

revolutionary officers entering the scene. These officers were in their twenties. They were trained either in Cairo or in Yemen. They did not participate in either of the early rebellions. They had a sharper conviction of their role as their country's liberators than their senior colleagues. The ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity meant much more to them than to the older group. Being younger and more idealistic than the senior officers, they had a greater capacity for sacrifice and taking risks.

The Revolution

In 1962 the revolutionary officers belonged to one of two groups, that of the senior officers and that of the younger ones.⁽¹⁾ The two groups had in common the belief in the necessity of the revolution. The older group, however, tended to think of the revolution as a long-term project which was still too risky for the present whereas the young officers believed that a revolution would always be risky and that present circumstances were the best that could be hoped for.

There was no revolutionary command co-ordinating the two groups. There were no cells in either group. The members of each group had known each other well since their student days. They naturally exchanged ideas and views and had long discussions

(1) The group of senior officers numbered about six. Those known include Abdullah al-Sallal, Hasan al-Amri, Hamoud al-Jaifi, and Abdullah al-Dabbi. The group of younger officers were about fifteen. Prominent among them were Abdullah Juzailan, Abdul Latif Daif Allah, Ali Abdul Moghni, and Ali Saif al-Kholani.

about their future plans. Some members of each group knew members from the other; each group knew it could count on the support of the other. Yet the contacts inside and between the groups were of an informal nature and did not lead to a merging of efforts or to an over-all plan.

Among the group of older officers Brigadier Abdullah al-Sallal, a man with a pleasant extrovert personality, acquired prominence as a result of his high rank and his close association with al-Badr. Among the younger group the most prominent officer was Abdullah Juzailan, a major. As the Director of the Military Academy, Juzailan had intimate contacts with students and young graduates and was in a position to obtain and store ammunition. Another officer who was to play an important part was Lieutenant Ali Abdul Moghni. These three officers were the leading figures behind the 1962 revolution. Juzailan planned the take-over of Sana; Abdul Moghni led the attack on the Royal Palace; al-Sallal, belatedly but firmly, assumed the leadership of the revolution.

The primary target of the revolution was naturally Imam Ahmad. All the accounts agree that the revolution was intended to take place while Ahmad was alive.⁽¹⁾ Ahmad's death came as a surprise. Whatever plans were conceived earlier they were now upset. Al-Badr's accession had many implications. Al-Badr was well-known for his liberal outlook and reforms were certain to come. Many aims of the revolutionaries could be peacefully fulfilled. The leaders of the Yemeni Union in Cairo apparently still had some

(1) See, for example, The Times, October 9, 1962; Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi Qadiyyat al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 76; al-Attar, op. cit., p. 288.

hopes in al-Badr. They sent him a telegram in which they urged him "to erect a decisive barrier between one era and another".⁽¹⁾ Once Imam, however, al-Badr might yet revert to his father's ways. Furthermore, al-Badr was generally regarded as a weak man and a conservative coup against him, staged by al-Hasan, was quite likely. Al-Hasan was a much more formidable opponent. There were strong arguments for both acting and waiting. The senior officers who were not quite sure whether to wait or to act even before Imam Ahmad died were now more uncertain than ever. It was the group of younger officers who forced their hands by plunging into action.

The plan for the take-over of Sana, conceived by Major Abdullah Juzailan, set the evening of Thursday, September 26th, as the decisive time. At eleven o'clock that evening an officer in the Royal Guards would fire upon al-Badr who would be on his way to his living quarters in the palace after a Cabinet meeting. Immediately afterwards tanks would surround and shell the palace. At the same time a force would occupy the broadcasting station and inform the country of the revolution.⁽²⁾ Revolutionary officers in the other cities and towns would then assume control in their districts.

Strangely enough, however, until the very eve of the revolution, there was no leader. Juzailan wanted a senior

(1) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: B.B.C.), (Hereafter SWB), 24.9. 1962, p. 10.

(2) For more details see al-Yaman al-Jadidah, (September, 1963), p. 16. The plan for the capture of the palace, drawn up by Juzailan, is reproduced on p. 14 of the same issue.

officer to head the movement.⁽¹⁾ On the evening of the revolution Juzailan rode on a motor cycle from Sana to Hodaida, where Brigadier Hamoud al-Jaifi was stationed. Al-Jaifi was a highly respected senior officer whom younger officers liked and admired. Juzailan told al-Jaifi of his plans and asked him to be the leader of the revolution. Al-Jaifi agreed to take part in the revolution by assuming control in Hodaida but declined to be the leader. Back in Sana, Juzailan got in touch with al-Sallal who agreed to join, and to head, the movement. He immediately took control.⁽²⁾

Things did not go according to the plan. Because of a mechanical failure in his sub-machine-gun the officer assigned to kill al-Badr was unable to fire. He was seen attempting to shoot and was arrested by the guards. The force which surrounded the palace was supposed to start shelling upon hearing the shots. As time passed with no shots heard and no information received, the force did not know what to do. At this critical stage the leader

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- (1) Juzailan probably thought that being only a major, he could not summon enough respect in the army ranks. Furthermore, he was a Shafi, and there was the fear that the predominantly Zaidi army would not willingly accept his leadership.
 - (2) The time at which al-Sallal took command cannot be established with accuracy. One author states that the revolution was well under way when al-Sallal was contacted. This author claims that at first al-Sallal thought he was going to be shot by the revolutionaries and was quite surprised when he was acknowledged as leader; see Abdul Ilah bin Abdullah, Naksat al-Thawrah fi al-Yaman (n.p., n.d.), p. 111. It is more likely, however, that al-Sallal was contacted before the shelling of the palace. At any rate, when al-Sallal took charge the fate of the revolution was far from clear.

of the force, Lieutenant Ali Abdul Moghni, decided to go ahead. Abdul Moghni had four tanks, three of which had three shells each while the fourth one had no shells at all. Nevertheless, at about midnight Abdul Moghni started to shell the palace. Ammunition soon ran out. It was hours later before more ammunition was available. (1)

Inside the palace al-Badr was still puzzled over the assassination attempt when shells suddenly exploded. The palace was surrounded by other houses and the shells could hit only the top floor, which became partially damaged. Descending to a lower floor, al-Badr decided to resist, called his guards, and asked them to bring more arms from the stores. Along with the guards he started to fire at the tanks. Out of shells, the tanks stopped firing. At this point the fate of the revolution hung in balance. Both sides had no arms heavier than sub-machine-guns and both were quickly running out of ammunition. Yet each side over-estimated the other. Thus, al-Badr did not lead his guards in a concerted assault on the rebels and the rebels did not attempt to storm the palace.

Time, however, was on the side of the revolutionaries. As the palace was being shelled a force occupied the broadcasting station. Another force dragged al-Badr's main aides out of their houses and shot them. By the morning Sana Radio was announcing the birth of the Republic. At noon al-Badr left the palace through an unguarded back lane to a neighbouring house where he disguised himself as a soldier. Walking cautiously in back streets, al-Badr went to another house and stayed there until sunset. Then he moved

(1) For more details see Mohammad Mohammad Abdul Rahman, Ardhal-Botoulat wa al-Amjad (Cairo: Matbat al-Tahrir, n.d.), p. 21.

out of Sana and proceeded to a tribal locality in the mountains.⁽¹⁾

The Republicans set about consolidating their rule. They claimed that al-Badr was "buried under the debris of the palace";⁽²⁾ they were to persist in their claim that al-Badr was dead for more than two weeks. A Council of Revolutionary Command was set up under the chairmanship of al-Sallal.⁽³⁾ A Higher Council for the Presidency was established.⁽⁴⁾ A Cabinet of Ministers was formed with al-Sallal as Premier.⁽⁵⁾ Seventeen executions were announced.⁽⁶⁾ Yet before the features of the new regime could clearly develop, the counter-revolution, in effect launched the minute al-Badr escaped from Sana, began. It was followed quiddly by civil war and intervention.

The 1962 revolution represented the attempt of the trained officers to assume the political relevancy which they believed was their due and to lead Yemen to progress. Yemen was described as "without doubt the most backward country in the world".⁽⁷⁾ Along with other liberal elements in Yemen, the officers attributed Yemen's backwardness to its system of government. Gradually they came to feel that the Imamate itself must be destroyed with a totally different regime, dominated by themselves, replacing it.

(1) For a detailed account of al-Badr's activities from the time the shelling started to the time he left Sana see Scott Gibbons, The Conspirators (London: Howard Baker, 1967), pp. 1-17.

(2) SWB, 29.9.1962, p. 7.

(3) SWB, 1.10.1962, p. 3.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Al-Ahram, September 29, p. 1.

(6) See SWB, 2.10.1962, p. 2.

(7) G.H. Jansen, "The problems of South-West Arabia", The World Today, (August, 1963), p. 342.

On September 26th younger officers started the first spark and the others joined in.

The Imamic regime had a major built-in weakness. There was a striking disparity between formal authority and actual power in the treatment of the politically-relevant groups. The tribal leaders who were in control of the most effective military force were deprived of any political power. The officers of the regular army felt that they were relegated into positions of insignificance. Members of the religious establishment, who had no military importance whatsoever, monopolized the formal structure of authority. In a non-democratic country where the sword was the final arbitrator this situation was a source of instability. The tribes expressed resentment through various un-coordinated rebellions. The officers, who besides resentment possessed a strong sense of mission, resorted to revolution.

However, the revolutionary officers, senior and young alike, would not have made their move had they not felt that they had a chance to succeed. Externally, they could count on Egyptian help. At best they could expect active intervention; at worst, moral and political support. Internally, they perceived an erosion of support for the Imamic regime which led them to anticipate massive popular following for the revolution once it broke out.

Imam Ahmad's efforts to stimulate support fell short of their goal. As far as outputs were concerned, the material resources at his disposal were so limited that, no matter what he did, outputs alone could scarcely have had a significant impact. The freely-employed coercion was a double-edged weapon. While it

succeeded in extracting support, it left deep resentment. Thus, for example, the Hashid tribe, which was intimidated into inactivity by the execution of its paramount shaikh and his son in 1960, maintained an attitude of hostility to the regime. This was one of the factors encouraging the officers to go ahead with the revolution. The Imam's attempt to enlist religion and tradition as legitimating influences was probably the most successful aspect of his drive to generate support. Yet even here, the success was not complete. While the average Zaidi may have considered the Imam, in a way, the personal representative of God, the Shafis as a whole, the officers and the liberals were not similarly impressed. The Imam's interpretation of Islam was neither broad enough to win the loyalty of the Shafis nor modernistic enough to be accepted by the liberals and the officers. Nor was tradition strong enough in an age, and area, where regimes were increasingly deriving their legitimacy from revolutionism and an anti-tradition outlook.

Thus, ambitious revolutionaries in an extremely backward country with a repressive regime perceived a chance of gaining control; the revolution took place. It was immediately apparent that in Sana, Taizz, and Hodaida, as well as in Shafi areas generally, the revolution enjoyed support. A few Zaidi tribal leaders with grievances against the Imamic regime, declared loyalty to the Republic. Yet the majority of Northern tribes were undecided. It was the general feeling, a feeling shared by the Republicans themselves, that most Northern tribes would rally to the Imamic cause. Yet before purely Yemeni forces could determine the winning side, intervention brought non-Yemenis into the picture and both sides in the civil war were receiving external support.

Part II

Yemen, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia: Past Relations

Chapter 7

Yemen and Egypt

This chapter discusses in detail Yemen's relations with Egypt between the years 1948 - 1962. A quick reference is made to past events which are thought to have left memories affecting the relations between the two countries in the period under study.

Memories of the Past

The first Egyptian expedition to Yemen arrived in 1173; the second in 1515; the third in 1832.⁽¹⁾ The first expedition led to the establishment of the Ayybite dynasty which ruled Yemen for half a century. The second expedition became part of the Turkish occupation forces. The third expedition was followed by an Egyptian presence in Yemen lasting for eight years. These three expeditions were undertaken for different reasons and the impact they left on Yemen varied in every case. Yet they all had one thing in common: they were prompted, or at least greatly encouraged, by internal strife in Yemen. In the case of the first expedition a war between two Yemeni principalities led one of them to seek Egyptian support. In the case of the second, it was an Imam who invited Egyptian intervention. The success of the third expedition was greatly facilitated by a conflict between the Imam of the day and his nephew.

What significance, if any, those memories of the past

(1) See above pp. 14-17.

carried in the period under study is difficult to determine.⁽¹⁾ It is quite likely, however, that Imam Ahmad, a man well-versed in Yemeni history, interpreted them as a warning of the external dangers attending internal conflicts. They might have also contributed to his suspicion of Egypt, a suspicion tempered only by his need for Egyptian support.

1948 - 1957 Contacts Intensify

During Imam Yahya's reign his isolationist policy allowed no more than the bare minimum of contacts with other countries. Egypt was no exception. There were no official exchanges and very few cultural contacts. A few Yemenis studied in Cairo's religious university, al-Azhar. The books and magazines that inspired the literary revival in Yemen were Egyptian. In the forties the Egyptian Moslem Brotherhood Party supported the liberals. Some Egyptian journalists sympathized with the liberal movement and publicized its activities. The first treaty between the two countries, a treaty of friendship and mutual recognition, was signed in 1946.⁽²⁾ During the 1948 revolution in Yemen the sympathy of

(1) Dr. Hasan Sabri al-Kholi, who as President Nasser's personal representative participated in many negotiations relating to the Yemeni problem, believes that it was significant that almost a century and a quarter after their last evacuation in 1840 Egyptian troops were in Yemen again; Interview, Cairo, 18.1.1970. During the civil war the Royalists used these memories to engender resentment against the Egyptians; see for instance the way past Egyptian expeditions are described in Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Qissat al-Adab fi al-Yaman (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijari, 1965), pp. 155-160.

(2) Amin Said, al-Yaman (Cairo: Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1959), p. 268.

the Egyptian government was with Imam Ahmad although he did not ask for, nor receive, any help from Egypt.

Relations with Egypt took a step forward when diplomatic representation was established. In June 1951 the Egyptian Minister presented his credentials to Imam Ahmad. The Egyptian Legation was the first foreign legation in Yemen.⁽¹⁾ In the same year the Yemeni Minister in Cairo expressed Yemen's support for Egypt in the conflict with the British.⁽²⁾

One author claims that after the outbreak of the 1952 revolution in Egypt Imam Ahmad ordered the confiscation of radio sets in public places to prevent the population from being "contaminated" by Egypt.⁽³⁾ Another says that Ahmad's brothers were extremely hostile to the Egyptian revolution.⁽⁴⁾ Ahmad certainly looked with distaste upon the new Egyptian government's decision to allow al-Zobairi to reside in Egypt and form the Yemeni Union. The Imam, however, did nothing to disturb the correct and formal relations between the two countries. Far more important than the personal feelings of the Imam or his brothers were the hopes the Egyptian revolution revived in Yemeni liberals. The liberals greeted the revolution with jubilation.⁽⁵⁾ Even before Egypt adopted an active Arab policy Yemeni liberals thought of Egypt

(1) Middle East Journal (Spring, 1952), p. 220.

(2) Eric Macro, Yemen and the Western World (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968), p. 94.

(3) Harold Ingrams, The Yemen (London: John Murray, 1963), pp. 83-84.

(4) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Atraf al-Maniyyah fi Qadiyat al-Yaman (Beirut: Moassassat al-Sabban wa Shorakah, 1965), p. 66.

(5) See for example Abdullah al-Sallal and others, Min Wara al-Aswar (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, n.d.), pp. 67-68 and p. 93.

as their ally. From 1952 on, all liberals opposing the Imam turned to Egypt for support.

Early in 1954 the first proposals for federating Southern Arabia were suggested to the rulers by Britain. Imam Ahmad's reaction was to intensify his campaign and to look for additional support. In 1954 Egypt was already adopting an active Arab policy and it was well on its way to developing an anti-Imperialist role. Closer co-ordination between the two countries followed. In July 1954 Egypt signed an agreement with Yemen undertaking to send a military training mission.⁽¹⁾ Later in the year the mission, composed of fourteen officers, arrived in Yemen. It stayed for a year.

During the 1955 coup Egypt, together with Saudi Arabia, took the side of Imam Ahmad,⁽²⁾ but the Imam regained control with no need for external help. Ahmad's brother Abdullah was widely considered pro-Western;⁽³⁾ Egypt feared that he would swing Yemen to the pro-Western Arab camp of Iraq and Jordan. Although the Imam was suspicious of the Egyptian military mission,⁽⁴⁾ he appreciated Egypt's sympathy during the coup and sent al-Badr to thank Premier Nasser.⁽⁵⁾ Toward the end of the year both Egypt and Yemen were adopting anti-Imperialist roles. In deference to the Imam's wishes Egypt curtailed the activities of the liberals and told them to discontinue publishing their newspaper. Al-Iman

(1) Mohammad Sadiq Aql and Hiyam Abu Afiyah, Adhwa ala Thawrat al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, n.d.), p. 98.

(2) See Ahmad/Mohammad al-Saqqaf, Ana Aid min al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi), p. 51.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Mohammad Ahmad Noman, al-Harakah al-Wataniyyah fi al-Yaman (Aden: al-Ittihad al-Yamani, n.d.), p. 24.

(5) Ibid., p. 25.

hailed the decision as a new proof of the Egyptian government's keen desire to maintain Egyptian-Yemeni friendship.⁽¹⁾

In April 1956 Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia signed the tripartite Jeddah pact.⁽²⁾ Throughout the Suez crisis Yemen gave Egypt its full support. During the Suez war Imam Ahmad issued a proclamation calling for volunteers to join the Egyptian forces and ordered the opening of recruitment centers.⁽³⁾ According to al-Nasr there were 15,000 volunteers.⁽⁴⁾ After the war President Nasser thanked the Imam for his "noble stand".⁽⁵⁾ Later in the year, the Imam cancelled the celebrations commemorating his accession and ordered that money assigned to this purpose be given to Egypt.⁽⁶⁾ In December of every following year Yemen officially celebrated Egypt's victory day. Throughout 1957 Yemeni foreign policy lines followed those of Egypt and relations remained close.

Yemen's close association with Egypt had proved fruitful. Egypt gave Yemen light arms and ammunitions. The Egyptian government and mass media supported Yemen in the confrontation with the British. Egypt was willing to supply experts on request. The Arab League, in which Egypt was very influential, sent two missions of investigation to Yemen and consistently condemned the British. By following Egypt's example, Yemen received arms and economic aid from the Eastern Block. Despite all this, however, the Imam suspected Egypt of having designs on Yemen. He disliked President Nasser and

(1) Al-Iman, December 15, 1955, p. 3.

(2) See below p. 171.

(3) Al-Nasr, November 8, 1956, p. 1.

(4) Ibid, p. 6.

(5) Al-Nasr, November 24, 1956, p. 4.

(6) Al-Nasr, December 8, 1956, p. 1.

was fully aware of his appeal to liberals and revolutionaries. It pained the Imam to see "the Colonel" apparently enjoying more popularity than he, the descendant of the Prophet, did in his own country. But so long as there was a confrontation with the British, he realized that he needed Egypt. He was confident that he could contain Egyptian influence in Yemen while continuing to enjoy Egyptian support. It was with this confidence that he applied for a confederation with the new entity comprising Syria and Egypt, the United Arab Republic.

1958 - 1961 Confederation

According to Mohammad Hasanain Haikal, the editor of al-Ahram, after the U.A.R. Charter was signed and as President al-Quwatly of Syria was about to return to Damascus, President Nasser received a telegram from Imam Ahmad asking to join the U.A.R. Having read the telegram Nasser, puzzled, handed it over to al-Quwatly who commented, "Fine, fine, we can let him join us." Laughing, Nasser asked, "Let the Imam of Yemen join the U.A.R.? Does this make sense?" Haikal says that it was al-Quwatly who finally persuaded Nasser to agree to unite with Yemen. Al-Quwatly argued that first, as a step toward Arab unity, the union with Yemen could not be rejected; second, the union might introduce civilization into Yemen; third, the union might ease the pressure on liberal elements in Yemen; fourth, a rebuff to the Imam would deliver him to the hands of King Saud. ⁽¹⁾

These arguments may have influenced Nasser's decision, but the state of the Middle Eastern political system was also taken into consideration. Although the U.A.R. was greeted

(1) Al-Ahram, December 29, 1961, p. 9.

enthusiastically by Arab masses, most Arab governments did not react as favourably. Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan were hostile. King Saud tried to frustrate the Union; Iraq and Jordan were planning a union between them as a counter-move. Yemen was the first, and as it turned out the only, Arab country to ask to join. President Nasser at the time had no shortage of enemies and was in no position to turn away a friend, though the friendship might prove embarrassing.

Imam Ahmad wanted a loose confederation in which he enjoyed a veto over all matters affecting Yemen. This suited President Nasser who was already aware of the problems the complete merger with Syria created and was not anxious to have similar ones with Yemen. Short negotiations were followed on March 8th by the signing of the charter of the United Arab States, as the new entity was named. President Nasser publicly hailed the Imam as the man who "took the initiative and asked for the union". "The Arab people everywhere," said Nasser, "will always remember this initiative with admiration and respect."⁽¹⁾

The charter stated that each constituent state would preserve its system of government and its international status. The governmental functions to be unified were foreign policy, diplomatic and consular representation, and armed forces. Education was to be co-ordinated. The principles of freedom of movement and the equal rights of all citizens to work and hold public office throughout the confederation were established. The charter left to subsequent laws the precise measure of unification to be brought to the economic life.⁽²⁾ The confederation

(1) Quoted in Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, al-Yaman wa al-Muttahidah (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1962), p. 18.

(2) Fayez A. Sayegh, Arab Unity (New York: The Devin-Addir Co., 1958), p. 192.

would be managed by the Supreme Council composed of heads of the constituent states. Unanimity was required in the decisions of the Council. The Supreme Council was assisted by the Union Council in which each state was represented by an equal number of members.

On March 13th the Supreme Council promulgated six laws. The first dealt with the composition of the Union Council. The second specified each state's contribution to the budget of the confederation.⁽¹⁾ The third established a Yemeni monetary agency and the fourth regulated the issue of a new Yemeni currency. The fifth and sixth respectively dealt with the unification of the armed forces and the co-ordination of cultural activities.⁽²⁾ In September 1958 the first meeting of the Union Council opened in Cairo. President Nasser attended the meeting and gave a major address in which he expressed his thanks to Imam Ahmad "for his continuing work to achieve Arabs' hopes for unity".⁽³⁾

Despite these steps it soon became clear that the Imam did not intend to implement the charter. No unification of any governmental functions took place and the articles dealing with co-ordination were ignored. As far as Yemen's internal institutions were concerned, the confederation might have never existed. The Imam maintained constant vigilance and Egyptians, contrary to the provisions of the charter, were required to obtain prior permission before entering Yemen. The confederation was reduced to a purely formal existence.

During the Imam's absence in Rome in 1959 al-Badr tried to make the confederation function. He requested about a

(1) Yemen paid 3% of the budget, the U.A.R. the rest.

(2) See Said, op. cit., pp. 290-295.

(3) Ibid, p. 301.

hundred experts in various fields from the U.A.R. In July, more than fifty arrived.⁽¹⁾ There is little doubt that had he been able to, al-Badr would have implemented the charter.

The Imam in Rome was furious over al-Badr's dealings with the U.A.R. Some members of the Royal Family insisted that al-Badr was conspiring with the Egyptians to dethrone him. During the sea trip back the Imam's yacht passed through the Suez Canal. In Port Said President Nasser came on board to greet the Imam and a stormy meeting ensued. The Imam accused the Egyptians in Yemen of plotting against him and demanded their immediate withdrawal. He said that dire consequences would follow if he arrived in Yemen and found them still there. President Nasser said that the experts were sent at the request of the Yemeni government. He said that he would not object to any measures taken against any Egyptians found plotting. Nasser invited the Imam to disembark at Port Said where arrangements had been made for an official welcome but the Imam, claiming ill-health, refused to leave the yacht. Soon after the meeting an angry Nasser dispatched a special plane to bring the Egyptians back. No more than a handful of Egyptians remained in Yemen.⁽²⁾

From this time on, Yemen was in the curious position of being in confederation with Egypt, yet having worse relations with it than at any time in the three years preceding the confederation. The Imam, however, wanted to maintain the formal association and as long as the U.A.R. was pursuing a unionist role it was difficult for President Nasser to break the ties.

(1) See al-Nasr, July 4, 1959, p. 4.

(2) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 4.3.1969.

1961 - 1962 Confrontation

By December 1961 both Yemen and Egypt regarded the confederation as a definite liability. To Egypt, with its new Socialist economic system and the emphasis on social revolution, the confederation with Yemen became a glaring incongruity. Furthermore, the Imam belonged to the camp of "reactionaries" with whom peaceful co-existence appeared impossible. To the Imam, Egypt's adoption of Socialist measures was another proof of its potential danger. He feared that Egypt might use the confederation to justify an intervention in case of internal troubles in Yemen. ⁽¹⁾

The Imam, however, did not want to take the initiative in breaking the Union and his poem attacking Socialism, published in December, was probably calculated to provoke Egypt into doing that. President Nasser's reaction was not slow in coming. On December 23rd Nasser said in the course of a long address:

Of course, I am talking about Socialism. Those around us do not like this talk. Some nervously pull at their beards. Some compose poems.... King Saud says that Socialism is against Islam. The Imam of Yemen comes up with a poem attacking Socialism. Why? Because, of course, the Saudi-Yemeni reaction which appropriates the money of the people does not want the people to have their rights back. ⁽²⁾

On December 26th, Egypt issued a statement terminating the union.

(1) See above pp. 123-124.

(2) Al-Jomhuriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Mottahidah, Majmouat Khutab wa Tasrihat wa Bayanat al-Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser Part 3 (Cairo: Wizarat al-Irshad al-Qawmi, n.d.), p. 652.

The statement referred to basic differences of outlook, emphasized that compatibility of ideologies was vital to the success of any union and went on to say that "the experience of the last three years had proved beyond doubt that the Yemeni people did not benefit from the experiment".⁽¹⁾

With the termination of the union the Egyptian mass media's campaign against the Imam began in earnest. Ahmad knew that he could not match the Egyptian campaign with one of his own and he decided not to answer back. In a statement on the 27th, Ahmad regretted the unjustified "war of words against the Yemen, its people and its Imam". "Although we hear the attacks and insults levelled against us," said the Imam, "We shall not stoop to retaliate."⁽²⁾ Imam Ahmad maintained this posture of silence until he died.

The campaign was carried out by Yemeni liberals and Egyptian commentators through articles in the papers and talks from the radio station. The Imam was accused of being in alliance with Imperialism.⁽³⁾ There were reports of arrests⁽⁴⁾ and revolts.⁽⁵⁾ Yemen was said to be at the brink of revolution.⁽⁶⁾ More damaging perhaps than such allegations were the open calls to rebellion. The following extract, from a talk addressed to the Yemeni people, is an example:

(1) Al-Ahram, December 27, 1961, p. 1.

(2) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: B.B.C.) (Hereafter SWB), 6.1.1962, p. 1.

(3) SWB, 20.4.1962, p. 5; 30.4.1962, p. 7.

(4) SWB, 1.1.1962, p. 4.

(5) SWB, 17.5.1962, p. 7.

(6) Al-Jomho^rriyyah, May 12, 1962, p. 1.

You are people and you are human;
rise against the despotic rule of
the Imam Ahmad who is the cause of
your misery and sufferings. Des-
troy his palaces and hang him as
he hanged your brothers. (1)

Al-Badr's Accession

Unlike his father, al-Badr genuinely admired President Nasser; he played an important role in bringing about the confederation. According to al-Badr, during the confederation Nasser complained about the obstacles Imam Ahmad put in the way of Egyptian-Yemeni co-operation and said that it would be much easier to deal with al-Badr.⁽²⁾ In 1959 al-Badr unsuccessfully tried to revive the confederation. In 1962, despite Egypt's Socialist orientation and the Egyptian war on "reaction" al-Badr still considered himself Nasser's friend and hoped that Nasser felt the same way about him. When he assumed the Imamate he expected an immediate improvement in Egyptian-Yemeni relations.

Al-Badr was soon disillusioned. During a meeting with the Egyptian Charge D'Affaires the latter asked if al-Badr intended to send a delegation to President Nasser. Surprised, al-Badr said that it was Nasser who was supposed to send a delegation to him. The Charge D'Affaires said that Nasser would not do that but if al-Badr sent an official invitation Vice-President Amir would come. Al-Badr refused to send an invitation and the meeting came to an end.⁽³⁾ Nasser's telegram of condolence arrived late.

(1) SWB, 17.4.1962, p. 4.

(2) Imam Mohammad al-Badr, Interview, Taif, 18.12.1969.

(3) Ibid.

The telegram wished al-Badr success in accomplishing the aspirations of the Yemenis "for a great future which would realise the dignity that God has given to man".⁽¹⁾ More ominous was the fact that al-Badr's assumption of the Imamate did not lead to any change in the Egyptian campaign. Two days after he became Imam, Cairo Radio attacked him together with his deceased father:

His /Ahmad's/motto had been "after me the deluge"... There was a proverb "the pup is the son of his father" and the deluge would not spare the Imam al-Badr, whose only consolation could be that he had a counterpart in Saudi Arabia, the Amir Faysal, heir to another tottering throne. (2)

The Yemeni revolutionary officers were thus left in no doubt as to Egypt's attitude towards al-Badr and to its possible reaction to a revolution against him.

(1) SWB, 24.9.1962, p. 10.

(2) SWB, 22.9.1962, p. 1.

Chapter Eight

Yemen and Saudi Arabia

This chapter briefly discusses Yemeni-Saudi contacts in the nineteenth century; deals with the Yemeni-Saudi war of 1934 and its aftermath; and concludes with studying Yemen's relations with Saudi Arabia between the years 1948 - 1962.

Memories of the Past

Although the present Saudi Arabia was created in the twentieth century, the al-Saud dynasty had enjoyed prominence in Najd since the seventeenth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Wahhabis, led by the al-Saud family, overran Hijaz and made incursions into Yemen. Sharif Hamoud of Abu Arish allied himself with the Wahhabis and together they dominated Tihama and posed a real threat to the Imam in Sana.⁽¹⁾ The Wahhabis regarded Zaidism as a heretical creed. They sent letters to the Imam asking him to adhere to their interpretation of Islam. As was their custom, the Wahhabis destroyed domes and other constructions over graves in the areas they controlled in Yemen.⁽²⁾ Only after the Egyptians defeated the Wahhabis in Najd was their influence removed from Yemen.

The significance of these nineteenth century contacts persisted through the twentieth. The spread of Saudi authority to Yemen gave validity to later territorial claims by Saudi Arabia.

(1) Harold Ingrams, The Yemen (London: John Murray, 1963), pp. 50-51.

(2) See Mohammad Ali al-Shawkani, al-Badr al-Tali (Cairo: Matbat al-Saadah, 1929), pp. 262-263.

The clashes also showed the antagonism between Zaidism and Wahhabism, an antagonism that even when the relations between the two countries were at their best never altogether disappeared. Furthermore, since these nineteenth century contacts the Imams of Yemen maintained a measure of suspicion of Saudi Arabia and Saudi rulers took an interest in what was happening in Yemen.

The 1934 Yemeni-Saudi War

The origins of the Yemeni-Saudi war are to be found in a dispute over Asir and Najran. Neither during the early Arab empires nor during the Turkish domination was there any need for an exact delimitation of boundaries. In traditional political Moslem thought the concept of a national state was unknown; and so was the corollary concept of national frontiers. In Arabia where tribes roamed and moved at will no ^{precise} ~~precise~~ boundaries existed. Only when Yemen and Saudi Arabia emerged as independent political units did the hazy frontiers lead to conflict. The dispute started over Asir and later spread to Najran. Both sides cited as proof of ownership past association, present occupation, and agreements with local rulers. From a purely historical perspective Yemen had a better claim but legally both were able to muster strong arguments.

The developments that led to the 1934 war have been studied in detail elsewhere ⁽¹⁾ and there is no need to go through

(1) See for example Manfred W. Wenner, Modern Yemen (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 142-147; H.St.J.B. Philby, Arabian Jubilee (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1952), pp. 184-188; Ahmad Husain Sharaf al-Din, al-Yaman Abra al-Tarikh (Cairo: Matbat al-Sunnah al-Mohammadiyyah, 1963), pp. 276-288; Amin Said, Tarikh al-Dawlah al-Soudiyyah Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1964), pp. 362-389; Mohammad Ali al-Shihari, Tariq al-Tawrah al-Yamaniyyah (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, n.d.), pp. 32-42.

them here. It is interesting, however, to note that both sides strenuously tried to resolve the conflict amicably. Between 1926 and 1934 persistent efforts were made to reach a settlement. There were at least six formal meetings between the representatives of both sides and scores of letters and telegrams were exchanged between King Abdul Aziz and Imam Yahya.⁽¹⁾

In April 1934 King Abdul Aziz concluded that the Imam was prevaricating and decided to settle the issue through war. A Saudi army under the command of Crown Prince Saud crossed from Najran while another army led by Prince Faisal penetrated Tihama. Saud's army encountered stiff resistance and advanced slowly but Faisal's forces swept through Tihama and were in possession of Hodaida in three weeks. The Imam asked for a truce and King Abdul Aziz accepted.

A Yemeni team led by Abdullah al-Wazir arrived in Taif and the negotiations to end the war began. Although he occupied large areas in Yemen and his forces had proved superior to those of the Imam, King Abdul Aziz took a moderate stand. He was satisfied with the incorporation of Asir and Najran in Saudi Arabia and made no further territorial demands. The treaty defining the new frontiers, and an arbitration covenant, were signed in May 1934. Soon after the treaty was signed a boundary commission, with representatives of both sides, started the demarcation of the frontiers. A year later the task was completed.

The Imam regarded Asir and Najran as integral parts

(1) On these meetings and exchanges see: Al-Mamlakah al-Arabiyyah al-Soudiyyah, Bayan an al-Alaqat bain al-Mamlakah al-Arabiyyah al-Soudiyyah wa al-Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din (Mecca: Matbat Omm al-Qura, 1934).

of Yemen and he hated to see them annexed by Saudi Arabia. However, considering the military situation, King Abdul Aziz's offer was generous indeed and the Imam appreciated it. Both Yahya and Ahmad reconciled themselves to the situation and none of them ever again lay claim to either Najran or Asir. Later, the liberals opposing Ahmad looked back at the treaty as an abject surrender to Saudi aggression.⁽¹⁾

With the boundaries defined and the territorial dispute settled, relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia steadily improved. Not even the attempt of three Yemenis to assassinate King Abdul Aziz in the pilgrimage of 1935 disturbed the post-war understanding. The investigation showed no organized plot and the incident was forgotten. One or another of Yahya's sons made frequent visits to Saudi Arabia and from time to time Saudi missions visited Sana. Minor incidents on the frontiers continued but they were settled on the spot by local officials.⁽²⁾

The 1948 Revolution

According to Yemeni liberals, Saudi Arabia's intervention on Ahmad's side during the 1948 revolution was vital to his victory.⁽³⁾ This is an exaggerated allegation for while King Abdul Aziz definitely supported Ahmad it was thanks to Yemeni

(1) For example, see Sharaf al-Din, op. cit., p. 288; and Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Abad al-Thawrah al-Yamaniyyah (Beirut: n.p., 1967), p. 13.

(2) Philby, op. cit., p. 189.

(3) See for example Ahmad Mohammad Noman, Ila al-Monadhilin fi al-Yaman (Dar al-Baath, n.d.), p. 14; and Mohammad Said al-Attar, al-Takhalof al-Iqtisadi wa al-Ijtimaie fi al-Yaman (Beirut: Dar al-Taliah li al-Tibbah wa al-Nashr, 1965), p. 290.

forces, and not external intervention, that the revolution collapsed.

Soon after the revolution Imam Ahmad thought of seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia. He cabled King Abdul Aziz asking for permission to enter Saudi territory. After the telegram was sent and before the reply arrived Ahmad changed his mind and decided to stay in Yemen and lead the counter-revolution. He sent another telegram informing the King of his new decision and asking for moral support.

Abdullah al-Wazir was a personal friend of King Abdul Aziz and it was generally assumed in Yemen that his regime would be recognized by Saudi Arabia. However, King Abdul Aziz was shocked by the assassination of Imam Yahya. He also feared that this example of a violent overthrow of an established regime would be followed in other Arab countries, including his own. He, therefore, opposed al-Wazir's regime and sympathized with Ahmad. Yet he was not willing to actively intervene. When Imam Ahmad's first cable arrived he answered welcoming him to Saudi Arabia but asking him to enter with only a small number of people and with no heavy arms. The King apparently did not want Saudi Arabian territory to become a staging post for Ahmad's operations.

Abdullah al-Wazir sent a telegram to King Abdul Aziz asking for recognition but the King ignored it. When the Arab League mission arrived in Jeddah the King invited the members to visit him in Riyadh.⁽¹⁾ Arguing that it was not safe for them to proceed to Yemen, the King persuaded the commission to stay at

(1) See above p. 30.

Riyadh. Al-Wazir sent a delegation to plead his case before the commission and to ask for King Abdul Aziz's help. The meeting between the King and the delegation was described by Philby:

Its members were politely allowed to say their say in public assembly; and, when they had done, the king turned to them, saying: "How can you come to me, asking for my support and goodwill for your master? You people," he continued, pointing at them with his finger, "are murderers. You have come here as my guests; and having heard what you have to say, I can only ask you to leave my country." (1)

Imam Ahmad was quickly gaining control in Yemen. He asked for, and received, wireless apparatus from Saudi Arabia. But it seems that just as King Abdul Aziz was not willing to be actively involved, Imam Ahmad, partly because of his fear of the consequences of external intervention and partly because he saw no need for extensive aid, did not seek active Saudi involvement. King Abdul Aziz's action in detaining the Arab League commission hurt the revolutionaries who were desperate for international recognition but it did not radically interfere with the internal situation. Had Imam Ahmad asked for more extensive aid from Saudi Arabia it is an open question whether or not King Abdul Aziz would have been willing to provide it.

1948 - 1962 Good Neighbours

Although the Saudi intervention was by no means decisive it led to important results. Imam Ahmad felt gratitude

(1) Philby, op. cit., p. 191.

and this helped in shaping the friendly relations which obtained throughout most of his reign. The Saudi stand in support of legitimacy in Yemen established a precedent for Saudi Arabia's Yemen policy. The Yemeni liberals and revolutionaries henceforth regarded Saudi Arabia with fear and hostility.

In the fifties two factors strengthened the ties between the two countries. As Saudi Arabia's oil royalties swelled, work opportunities multiplied and large numbers of Yemenis, estimated at about two hundred thousand, moved to work in Saudi Arabia. To the Saudi economy, short of labour, this meant a welcome addition of manpower while Yemen's economy greatly benefited from the remittances the Yemenis sent back. A sizeable Yemeni community developed in Saudi Arabia, and exchanges between the two countries greatly increased. Both sides were careful to encourage this economic arrangement. The second factor was King Saud's adoption of an active Arab policy which soon started to revolve around an anti-Imperialist role. Yemen was enacting a similar role and between 1955 and 1957 the Arab policies of the two countries moved along similar lines.

During the 1955 coup, al-Badr sent a delegation to King Saud asking for Saudi help. Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia were enacting anti-Imperialist roles and they wanted Yemen to continue in the anti-Imperialist Arab camp. Thus, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were hostile to Abdullah's regime, which was perceived as pro-Western, and they wanted Ahmad restored. King Saud, motivated by the desire to support anti-Imperialist Ahmad and fortified by Egyptian encouragement, decided to answer al-Badr's call for help. However, the King did not want Saudi Arabia to be actively involved: arms, but no forces, were sent to al-Badr. Once more, the internal conflict in Yemen was settled before the impact of inter-

vention was felt. Imam Ahmad was back in control before the Saudi arms reached al-Badr. The Saudi intervention of 1955 repeated the pattern of that of 1948: in both cases support was given to the legitimate authorities and in both cases the intervention was limited.

In April 1956 Imam Ahmad travelled to Jeddah, where he met with President Nasser and King Saud.⁽¹⁾ The result of the meeting was the signing of the Jeddah tripartite pact. This pact, which set up a military alliance between the three countries, was in 1962 used by both Egypt and Saudi Arabia to justify the intervention in Yemen. The reference was to Article 2 of the pact which stated:

The contracting States consider any armed aggression committed against any State thereof or against their forces as an aggression against them. Therefore, and in implementation of the legitimate individual and collective right for the defence of their entity, each of them is bound to hasten to the assistance of the State against whom aggression is committed and to adopt forthwith all measures and to use all means at its disposal, including the use of its armed forces, in order to repel aggression and to restore serenity and peace. (2)

In 1956 the Imam agreed to the opening of a branch of a Saudi bank in Hodaida.⁽³⁾ In 1957 an air service between

(1) This trip to Jeddah was the first trip outside Yemen Ahmad took as Imam.

(2) Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League Vol. 2, (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), p. 251.

(3) Saba, April 19, 1956, p. 1.

Yemen and Saudi Arabia was established.⁽¹⁾ In the same year the first Saudi Minister to Yemen presented his credentials to the Imam.⁽²⁾ Previously, relations used to be conducted through the exchange of temporary missions.

The most serious divergence in policies occurred when Yemen applied for confederation with the U.A.R. Saudi Arabia at the time was hostile to the U.A.R. and the Imam's decision to adopt a unionist role puzzled and irritated King Saud. The King sent a special envoy to dissuade the Imam from joining. The envoy was kept waiting for nineteen days before he was given an audience with the Imam. The Imam said that he needed all the support he could get while he was engaged in the confrontation with the British. He enquired if Saudi Arabia was willing to support Yemen militarily. King Saud's envoy told him that Saudi Arabia was in no position to offer such support. The meeting had no results. When the Saudi attempt to frustrate the union between Syria and Egypt was made public there was a big hostile demonstration in front of the Saudi Legation in Sana and the Saudi Minister protested to the Imam.

As Saudi Arabia mended its relations with the U.A.R. and as it became clear that the Imam intended the confederation to be a dead letter, relations with Yemen improved although now there was a certain coolness. The Saudi Government regarded Ahmad's decision to join the U.A.R. as extremely foolish and was becoming apprehensive over the presence of large numbers of Communists next door. Furthermore, al-Badr appeared too radical for Saudi taste and the Saudi rulers would have much preferred to see al-Hasan as the heir to the Imam.

(1) Al-Nasr, June 19, 1957, p. 6.

(2) Al-Nasr, November 7, 1957, p. 2.

In 1960 there were two minor crises. The government of Saudi Arabia issued new restrictions on non-Saudis working in the country. Yemeni labourers suffered most and a number of them returned to Yemen. A Yemeni paper addressed an open letter to King Saud complaining that Yemenis were "maltreated and persecuted" by Saudi authorities.⁽¹⁾ The new regulations were seen as an attempt to exert pressure on Yemen to change its policies.⁽²⁾ However, the crisis was resolved when the regulations were cancelled. A statement by the Saudi Legation in Yemen said that Yemenis were treated exactly like Saudi citizens.⁽³⁾ In the same year the Imam asked that the Saudi Minister be replaced. No official reason was given but it was assumed that al-Badr, who disapproved of the Minister's vocal criticisms of the U.A.R., was behind the decision. No new Minister was appointed and when the revolution broke out Saudi Arabia was represented by a Charge D'Affaires.

Ties between Yemen and Saudi Arabia were greatly strengthened following the dissolution of the confederation and the Egyptian propaganda campaign against the regimes of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. To President Nasser, Imam Ahmad and King Saud were partners in a reactionary alliance; the downfall of one heralded that of the other. The Imam and the King perceived a need to maintain a solid front in the face of Egyptian attacks.

Although al-Badr's sympathies had always been more with Egypt than Saudi Arabia, he realized the necessity of having good relations with his neighbours. When he became Imam he had no

(1) Al-Nasr, March 10, 1960, p. 8.

(2) Al-Nasr, August 10, 1960, p. 5.

(3) Al-Nasr, September 8, 1960, p. 5.

intention of ending the friendly relations that existed with Saudi Arabia. Rather than attack the Saudi regime to please Egypt, he perceived himself in the role of a mediator between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. His message to King Saud informing him of Imam Ahmad's death was unusually warm and the King responded equally warmly. A high-ranking Saudi delegation visited Sana to congratulate the new Imam.

Relations between the governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabia were not without ups and downs but generally they were satisfactory. The attitude of Yemeni liberals and revolutionaries to Saudi Arabia was a different matter. Saudi interventions in 1948 and 1955, limited and undecisive as they were, convinced them that Saudi Arabia would immediately oppose any change in Yemen. Saudi Arabia was thus considered the guardian of backward conditions in Yemen. When Egypt adopted its anti-reactionary role the Yemeni liberals followed the Egyptian line and Saudi Arabia was, unnecessarily, attacked. Commenting on a visit of a Saudi team to Imam Ahmad in the summer of 1962, a revolutionary leaflet attacked the Saudi regime. "Saudi Arabia has no proper primary school," said the leaflet. "Saudi Arabia wants to turn the wheels of history back," it went on. ⁽¹⁾

The fact that any Yemeni government would have an easier time if it was on good terms with Saudi Arabia was ignored. The Saudi rulers were greatly underestimated, as the following words by al-Baidani indicate:

The truth is that the Saudi rulers do not represent any real danger in the area because of their naiveté, their primitive methods of political action,

(1) Al-Yaman al-Jadidah (September, 1963), p. 14.

and their unchanging philosophy: reliance on the principle of buying cheap souls.... Their activities beyond their borders are limited to giving bribes, buying loyalties, and sponsoring assassinations. (1)

The antagonism between the Saudi regime and the Yemeni revolutionaries had thus started even before the revolution broke out.

(1) Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Asrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1962), p. 210.

Chapter Nine

Egypt and Saudi Arabia

This chapter deals with the Egyptian-Saudi clash in the nineteenth century; discusses the initial contacts between kings Abdul Aziz and Fouad; and concludes with a more detailed study of Egyptian-Saudi relations between the years 1952-1962.

Memories of the Past

Wahhabism which started in Najd as a purely religious revival had by the opening years of the nineteenth century become a formidable political movement led by the al-Saud dynasty. Having subdued Najd, the Wahhabis gained control of Hijaz and were making raids into Syria, Iraq and Yemen. The Turkish Sultan was alarmed at the spread of their power. He sent local expeditions which proved ineffective and then asked Mohammad Ali, the viceroy of Egypt, to intervene on his behalf. Mohammad Ali, anxious to ingratiate himself with the Sultan and to extend his own sphere of influence, agreed. The war against the Wahhabis turned out to be long and costly; only in 1818, following eight years of bitter fighting was Mohammad Ali's son, Ibrahim, able to occupy the Saudi capital, al-Diriyyah. Abdullah bin Saud, the fourth ruler in the line, surrendered to Ibrahim. He was sent to Egypt and from there to Constantinople where he was beheaded. About four hundred Wahhabis were sent to exile in Egypt.

During the war and after the surrender, Ibrahim was harsh with the Wahhabis.⁽¹⁾ Although Ibrahim, like his father, was Albanian, the memories that lingered in Najd were of "Egyptian atrocities". To the al-Saud family, defeat at the hand of the Egyptian expedition was a severe setback. No member of the family, king or otherwise, could, or can now, forget the humiliating defeat followed by the execution of Abdullah. These painful memories, all associated with "Egyptian aggression", did not prevent the establishment of cordial relations with Egypt but whenever the relations deteriorated the memories were there to revive suspicion and hostility.

Inauspicious Beginnings 1924 - 1936

King Abdul Aziz's contacts with Egypt did not start until his realm included Hijaz which had strong commercial and cultural ties with Egypt. As the King was about to conquer Hijaz in 1925, King Fouad of Egypt offered to mediate between him and his opponent King Ali of Hijaz but Abdul Aziz politely refused.⁽²⁾ King Fouad did not like to see Hijaz ruled by a man he regarded as an ordinary Bedouin chieftain, and its fall in the same year upset him but there was little he could do about it.

For many years it was the custom that the Kiswah, the covering of al-Kaba, was supplied each year by Egypt as a gift. To Egypt this represented a great honour and the kiswah was sent

(1) See R. Bayly Winder, Saudi Arabia In The Nineteenth Century (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 19.

(2) Amin Said, Tarikh al-Dawlah al-Soudiyyah Vol. 2. (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1964), p. 232.

with pomp and ceremony. The mahmal, the camel which carried the kiswah, accompanied the pilgrims to Mecca and Araft. Escorted by a contingent of Egyptian troops, the mahmal attracted a great deal of attention. During the first pilgrimage season after the conquest of Hijaz, the more fanatical of the Wahhabi Najdis were enraged by the presence of the gaudy animal and a group of them attacked it. A fight ensued between the attacking Najdis and the Egyptian soldiers. The King personally intervened to end the fight but a few persons had already been killed.⁽¹⁾ A diplomatic crisis developed. The King insisted that in the future the mahmal should stay at Jeddah. The Egyptian government decided to stop sending the kiswah altogether.

Following the conquest of Hijaz in 1925, the King opened an agency in Egypt, but the Egyptian government, which did not grant his regime de jure recognition, refused to give the agency diplomatic status. After four years of waiting the King demanded the recall of the Egyptian Consul in Jeddah and the Egyptian Consulate was closed.

It was only after the death of King Fouad in 1936 that relations improved. In that year a treaty was signed in which Egypt recognized Saudi Arabia and the outstanding issues were settled. Agreements dealing with matters of post, customs and navigation were concluded.⁽²⁾ The sending of the kiswah was resumed but the mahmal remained in Jeddah.

(1) On the mahmal incident see H.St.J.B. Philby, Arabian Jubilee (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1952), p. 89.

(2) Said, op. cit., p. 236.

1952 - 1957 Friendship and Alliance

Following the signing of the 1936 treaty, relations steadily improved and cultural and economic exchanges increased. After the establishment of the Arab League Egypt and Saudi Arabia followed similar lines in their Arab policies. In 1945 King Farouk visited Saudi Arabia and in 1947 King Abdul Aziz returned the visit. It was said that he granted the Egyptian King an annual subsidy of about one million sterling pounds.⁽¹⁾

Although the downfall of King Farouk created "a reaction of sympathy and concern for the fallen dynasty and its leading personalities",⁽²⁾ the Saudi regime showed no hostility to the revolutionary regime in Egypt. In 1954 both countries were adopting active Arab policies. By 1955 they had, for different reasons adopted anti-Imperialist roles. For the next two years the ties between them were closer than ever before.

In October 1955 a mutual defence pact was signed; it was later enforced by the tripartite Jeddah pact. In January 1957 Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia signed a treaty in which the latter three countries undertook to give Jordan an annual subsidy. Although these treaties were at best partly implemented the fact that they were signed suggests the similarity in the policies of the two countries.

Throughout the Baghdad Pact controversy, the Czech

(1) George A. Lipsky and others, Saudi Arabia (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1959, p. 141.

(2) H.St. John Philby, Saudi Arabia (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1955), p. 354.

Arms debate, and the Suez crisis, Saudi Arabia was firmly at Egypt's side. In 1956 relations were stronger than ever before, or since. In April and November President Nasser publicly paid tribute to King Saud.⁽¹⁾ It is an indication of how close Saudi Arab policy followed Egypt's in 1956 that some thought that Saudi Arabia was "on the way of becoming Egypt's most valuable colony".⁽²⁾

1958 - 1961 Truce

In 1957 King Saud was gradually opting out of the anti-Imperialist role and groping for a new independent one. He was now more determined to have a place of leadership in Arab politics and his earlier relationship with Nasser was no longer acceptable. Furthermore, Saud was worried by what he perceived as Nasser's expansionist tendencies and when Syria appeared on the verge of uniting with Egypt his suspicions were confirmed.

In an effort to stop the union, which he considered as no more than an extension of Nasser's influence, King Saud plunged into a rash ill-conceived plan: inducing Syrian officers, through the payment of money, to forestall the union. The Syrian officer who was contacted demanded large sums. When he was in possession of three cheques, with a total value of about two million sterling, he took them to President Nasser who in a speech on March 5th disclosed the story. The plan was supposed to include the shooting down of Nasser's plane. A Saudi official statement

(1) Khutab wa Tasrihat al-Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser 1952 - 1959

(Cairo: Ikhtarna Lak, 1959), p. 1122 and p. 1489.

(2) Lipsky, op. cit., p. 142.

denied any knowledge of the matter and spoke of the formation of a commission of investigation. However, the evidence was too damaging to be thus dismissed and no more was heard about the commission.

President Nasser naturally reacted angrily and the Egyptian mass media launched an attack against King Saud. Nasser al-Said, a Saudi exile who had been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia following labour disturbances in 1954, was allowed to set up a National Front and was given access to the media.

A far more serious reaction took place at home. A group of influential princes, mostly brothers of the King, were dissatisfied with the King's extravagance and his mismanagement of the country's finances. When the news of his clumsy attempt to stop a union that was proving exceedingly popular with Arab masses everywhere was made public, the princes were convinced that the King was no longer fit to rule. They demanded that he surrender all his powers to his brother Crown Prince Faisal. Faced with an acute financial crisis and with external and internal waves of disapproval, the King accepted. On March 24th Prince Faisal took charge of the government. ⁽¹⁾

Faisal immediately set about improving relations with the U.A.R. At the time Faisal was generally considered an admirer of Nasser and this image helped. Amir, Nasser's vice-president, visited Saudi Arabia in June and in August Faisal passed through Cairo and met with Nasser. Relations appeared normal again

(1) Gerald De Gaury, Faisal (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1967), pp. 92 - 93.

and the Egyptian propaganda campaign was stopped.

However, despite apparent calm, despite Faisal's efforts and Saud's explanations,⁽¹⁾ the incident of the "plot" was never to be forgotten. Nasser in the future would time and again refer to it to prove that co-existence with "reactionaries" was impossible. Faisal felt that both King Saud and Saudi Arabia had made enough amends and that a fresh start must be made. This was not to be so; the seed of suspicion was sown and from now on relations would never be the same.

While Faisal was anxious to settle differences with the U.A.R. he was not ready to go so far as to adopt a unionist role. Between 1958 and 1961 relations were normal with neither the cordiality of the past years nor the turbulence of the years to come. Writing later, Haikal justified this phase by saying that the U.A.R. was too preoccupied to bother with Saud, first with the union, then with the Iraqi revolution and then with the threat of a Communist take-over in Iraq.⁽²⁾

1961 - 1962 Confrontation

Following Syria's breakaway from the U.A.R. in September 1961, Egypt was quickly developing an anti-reactionary role. Saudi Arabia reacted by enacting an anti-Socialist role.

(1) According to Haikal, on their next meeting, Saud swore to Nasser that he never intended to assassinate him in 1958. See al-Ahram, November 3, 1962, p. 9.

(2) Ibid.

Signs of the coming confrontation appeared. The Saudi press, without mentioning Egypt, attacked Socialism. On October 16th President Nasser said that from now on it was necessary "to fight Imperialism in the palaces of reaction and reaction in the lap of Imperialism".⁽¹⁾ In December, Haikal elaborated an earlier charge that King Saud, indirectly, financed the coup in Syria.⁽²⁾ On December 23rd President Nasser publicly attacked King Saud:

If there were social justice in the Saudi Kingdom, if the law of justice which is the law of God were applied, how would King Saud amass money? Where would he get gold if social justice were applied in the Saudi Kingdom? Where would he get the money he spends on concubines? ⁽³⁾

Almost a year later, referring to Nasser's speech Prince Faisal said:

When the matter was still confined to the press, radio broadcasts and commentaries, we did not take up the matter seriously, but when the head of the Egyptian Government stood in Port Said last year and spoke against the King of this country and against its sacred shrines, we tackled the matter by sending a note of protest to the Egyptian Government.... The note was shamefully rejected. It was returned to us without a single word and in an envelope

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- (1) Al-Jomhuriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Mottahidah, Majmouat Khutab wa Tasrihat wa Bayanat al-Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser, part 3, (Cairo: Wizarat al-Irshad al-Qawmi, n.d.), p. 567.
- (2) Al-Ahram, December 1, 1961, p. 9. In this instance, as well as in later instances, no proof was offered to substantiate charges of King Saud's "plots".
- (3) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., pp. 652-653.

in which not even a card was enclosed.... (1)

Following the President's speech, a full-scale propaganda campaign, more ferocious than that against the Imam, was launched against the Saudi regime. Unlike the Yemeni regime, however, the Saudi regime answered back. Noisy vituperative battles of words followed in which each side tried to outdo the other. According to the Egyptian propagandists, King Saud had "3,000 wives, 400 palaces, and 10,000 cars"⁽²⁾ and lived "in sin and immorality".⁽³⁾ He "enabled foreigners to steal Arab wealth".⁽⁴⁾ He and King Husain regarded Israel as their "protector".⁽⁵⁾ Prince Faisal "surrounded himself with a cloud of mystery and deceived the well-intentioned people and the simple-hearted ones".⁽⁶⁾ Internally, there was mounting unrest leading to waves of arrests and executions without trial.⁽⁷⁾ The King issued a royal order "to behead advocates of socialism".⁽⁸⁾

In turn, the Saudi mass media described President Nasser as a "staunch communist who is still as loyal to communism as he was the day he joined the secret communist organization in Cairo as a junior member".⁽⁹⁾ His attacks on the Saudi regime were

(1) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal Speaks (Ministry of Information, 1963), p. 26.

(2) SWB, 26.3.1962, p. 3.

(3) SWB, 5.7.1962, p. 7.

(4) SWB, 7.3.1962, p. 3.

(5) SWB, 21.12.1962, p. 5.

(6) SWB, 16.6.1962, p. 1.

(7) See, for example, SWB, 25.4.1962, p. 10.

(8) SWB, 13.8.1962, p. 4.

(9) SWB, 5.3.1962, p. 3.

inspired by his desire "to destroy everything connected with religion whether from near or far".⁽¹⁾ He was working according to a Communist plan and "little still remained to be done to turn Egypt into a purely communist State".⁽²⁾ Nasser was "co-operating with the U.S.A. over the conclusion of peace with Israel".⁽³⁾ He was in "secret agreement with Israel allowing it to use the Gulf of Aqabah".⁽⁴⁾ Internally, he stayed in power by ruthless suppression and the proof was "on the gallows from which blood still drips and in the hands of his executioners".⁽⁵⁾

As part of their campaign, the Egyptian mass media publicized the activities of Nasser al-Said and a few other Saudis who were agitating against the Saudi regime in Cairo. First, references were made to the National Reform Front, which was later transformed into the Union of the Sons of the Arabian Peninsula. When Prince Talal arrived in Cairo in August⁽⁶⁾ he was given a warm welcome and the Egyptian press reported the imminent formation of a Saudi Liberation Front consisting of free princes and Saudi intelligentsia.⁽⁷⁾ Not to be outdone, the Saudi mass media publicized the activities of a Front for the Deliverance of Egypt⁽⁸⁾ which was supposed to be working against Nasser's regime both inside and outside Egypt.

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- (1) SWB, 6.2.1962, p. 7.
 - (2) SWB, 19.2.1962, p. 3.
 - (3) SWB, 7.5.1962, p. 12.
 - (4) SWB, 2.5.1962, p. 5.
 - (5) SWB, 30.1.1962, p. 13.
 - (6) See below p. 267.
 - (7) SWB, 6.9.1962, p. 3.
 - (8) SWB, 18.5.1962, p. 2.

President Nasser and King Saud participated in the campaign. In June Nasser said that Saudi gold was spent on conspiracies.⁽¹⁾ In July he accused King Saud of having, two months earlier, paid 25 million Saudi riyals (about 2 million sterling pounds) to finance a plot against him. Nasser went on:

The people in Saudi Arabia can destroy reaction and get back their rights, the oil money which Saud has deposited in Swiss banks.... The people were deprived of everything and the money was distributed among Saud and those who work with Saud.... They said Socialism was infidelity.... Raising concubines, amassing money and usurping people's money - this is infidelity, this is against religion, against Islam and against the book of God. (2)

In August King Saud held a press conference in which he said that Nasser "gave Israel full opportunity when he responded to its wish and protected it with the international army of occupation on Arab Land".⁽³⁾ He spoke of "a hideous new plot of the Egyptian President to assassinate HM our brother King Husayn".⁽⁴⁾

In addition to the continuing campaigns, 1962 was a crisis-ridden year; almost every month brought a new incident. In January Egyptians working for a Saudi printing press in Jeddah resigned. Mecca Radio attributed their action to the instigation of the Egyptian Embassy whereas Cairo Radio claimed that they voluntarily resigned in protest over Saudi attacks on the U.A.R. The workers were not allowed to leave immediately. Mecca Radio said

(1) Al-Jomhuriyyah, June 27, 1962, p. 3.

(2) Al-Jomhuriyyah, July 27, 1962, p. 4.

(3) SWB, 10.8.1962, p. 3.

(4) Ibid.

that the workers could not leave before paying their debts and reaching a settlement with their employers. Egypt considered this a provocative action and forbade Saudis to leave Egypt. The ban remained in effect until the workers returned. In February Cairo Radio claimed that some Egyptians were under arrest in Saudi Arabia. In March Egypt said that Saudi gunboats opened fire on Egyptian fishing trawlers in the Gulf of Aqabah; Saudi Arabia denied the charge. In April Cairo Radio said that an Egyptian passenger aircraft in distress was denied permission to land in Jeddah; when it nevertheless landed it was surrounded by Saudi soldiers and passengers were prevented from leaving. In May Saudi Arabia rejected the Egyptian kiswah.⁽¹⁾ Recriminations followed and Egypt alleged that Egyptian pilgrims were maltreated. In June Egypt claimed that a Saudi "gang" raided and seized an Egyptian bank in Jeddah. July and August saw no improvement and by the time the Yemeni revolution broke out relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia were worse than ever before.

(1) See above pp. 177-178.

Part III

**The Impact of the Revolution on
the U.A.R.'s Foreign Policy**

Chapter Ten

Setting

Under the heading of internal setting, this chapter discusses the Egyptian foreign policy decision-making machinery, President Nasser as a decision-maker and the internal situation in 1962. Under external setting, the chapter deals with the development of roles in Egypt's Arab and international policies and concludes with a description of the external situation in 1962.

Internal Setting

Decision-Making Machinery

Traditionally, the formulation of foreign policy in Egypt had been "strictly the prerogative and sole responsibility of the Chief Executive".⁽¹⁾ The extent to which he was guided by his associates had been "a matter of personal choice".⁽²⁾ Following the revolution in 1952 authority was divided between General Naguib and the Revolutionary Command Council in which Colonel Nasser was dominant. In the years 1952 - 1954 foreign policy decisions, along with all major issues, were debated in the Council and in case of disagreement a vote was taken. Late in 1954 Naguib was relieved of

(1) Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt", in Joseph E. Black and Kenneth W. Thompson (editors), Foreign Policies In A World of Change (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 320.

(2) Ibid.

all his posts and Nasser emerged as the undisputed leader. As a Premier, he took direct control of foreign affairs. In 1956 he was elected President with vast powers including responsibility for foreign affairs. He retained the same powers as President of the U.A.R.

Beside tradition and constitutional obligations, other factors contributed to Nasser's personal control of foreign policy decision-making. His immense popularity in the Arab world was related more to external than internal achievements. Egypt was facing a series of crises, some of which threatened its very existence, and Nasser's personal attention was always required. Furthermore, President Nasser developed a taste for foreign policy and it seems that he derived more enjoyment dealing with foreign than domestic issues.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was charged with the routine of diplomatic representation and the implementation of decisions. The decisions themselves were taken by the President, assisted by a small group of personal aides, mostly ex-army officers whom he had known since the pre-revolution days. This centralization accounts for the swiftness and efficiency with which decisions were made.

The Principal Decision-Maker:
President Gamal Abdul Nasser

By 1962 President Nasser had come a long way from the unknown officer he was ten years ago; and no one was more conscious of the change than he himself. Speaking in 1961 about Socialism, Nasser remarked:

On July 23 /1952/ I did not know the things I am talking about today. If I sat with you on July 23 I would not have known this because I did not live the experience of the last ten years. If you had asked for a lecture on tactics or on a military subject I would have been able to deliver it. But if you had asked me to speak about the revolution and things we are discussing now I would have found it very difficult. (1)

In ten years the obscure Colonel had become the central figure in Middle Eastern politics,⁽²⁾ and the acknowledged leader of Arab nationalism. No man in modern Arab history attracted such controversy. None was more loved by admirers or hated by enemies. To the Arab masses, he appeared as a miracle performer ushering in the age of independence and prosperity. To his enemies, he was a demagogic dictator bent on establishing an Egyptian empire in the name of Arab nationalism. Nasser's astonishing career and his complex personality have been, and no doubt will be, analyzed many times. Our concern here will center around his notions of foreign affairs and his characteristics as a decision-maker.

Nasser started off with no experience in foreign

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- (1) Al-Jomhuriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Mottahidah, Majmouat Khutab wa Tasrihat wa Bayanat al-Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser, part 3 (Cairo: Wizarat al-Irshad al-Qawmi, n.d.), p. 586.
 - (2) "Middle East specialists... can be classified according to their theories of Nasser's motivation and intent," Charles D. Cremeans, The Arabs And The World (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 25.

affairs and almost no pre-conceived ideas. Only two things were clear in his mind. First, he was convinced that Egypt had an important role to play in world affairs. His discussion of the three circles - Arab, African and Islamic - in his Philosophy of the Revolution clearly indicates this belief. Nasser was determined to realize Egypt's full potentialities in the sphere of foreign affairs. Second, he wanted Egypt to be free to choose the foreign policy which suited it and he was not prepared to let any power, small or great, dictate Egypt's course. As he put it,

All we want today is to create for ourselves an independent, strong, nonaligned, free personality which directs its internal policy as it wishes and also directs its foreign policy to achieve its interests. (1)

Nasser thus started with a flexible attitude. The decisions he took were made in the midst of active interactions between Egypt on the one hand, the West, the East, and the rest of the Arab world, on the other. In this light should the remark often attributed to him, "I don't act; I react," be understood.

Although immensely pragmatical in domestic as well as in foreign spheres, President Nasser always attributed his decisions to "principles". One of his most favourite words was shiar, motto, a phrase which sums up a national objective. With the exception of the first two years during which Nasser was groping for an orientation, there always had been a basic motto. From 1955 to 1957 it was "opposition to Imperialism"; from 1958 to 1961 it was "Arab unity"; from 1961 on it was "war on reaction". As we

(1) Khutab wa Tasrihat al-Rais Gamal Abdul Nasser 1952 - 1959
(Cairo: Ikhtarna Lak, 1959), p. 694.

shall see, Egypt's roles in its Arab policy were closely linked to these mottos. A motto represented the latest conclusion derived from national experience and although it evolved pragmatically, it was endowed with theoretical validity. A current motto did not explain all foreign policy decisions but it provided the framework within which foreign policy operated. In taking a decision at any time, President Nasser had always been able to say that he was true to his motto.

Nasser began his foreign policy career with high hopes, but disappointments were quick to follow. His requests for arms from the West were turned down. His determination to have an independent foreign policy conflicted with Western designs for a Middle Eastern regional defence. The tripartite invasion of 1956 confirmed for him, for ever, the perfidy and basic evilness of Imperialism. Some Arab governments, dominated by "agents of Imperialism", were turning against him. President Nasser gradually came to develop what may be termed the "battle concept" of international relations. His achievements were "victories" won in "battles" against enemies. The enemies varied according to circumstances but the battles went on:

We triumphed in the Baghdad Pact battle.
We triumphed in the battle of Port Said.
We triumphed in the battle of conspiracies. We triumphed in our battle for unity. We triumphed in our battle to eliminate the agents of Imperialism. (1)

A similar section referring to battles and victories appeared in almost all President Nasser's speeches.

Throughout these battles Nasser considered the support of the Arab masses as his most potent weapon. He considered

(1) Al-Mottahida, op. cit., p. 276.

himself, and expected to be treated, as the spokesman of those masses: "What Gamal Abdul Nasser says does not represent Gamal Abdul Nasser alone; it represents these millions... from Egypt to Syria, nay, these millions in all parts of the Arab nation."⁽¹⁾ As his ties with Arab governments weakened, he felt that his ties with the masses were strengthened. For the first time in October 1961 he formally addressed a speech to "brothers in all parts of the Arab homeland".⁽²⁾ He gradually came to believe that his decisions stemmed from the hopes and aspirations of those masses.

To President Nasser, it was simply inconceivable that a true Arab nationalist would support a rival leader. After all, he was the one who gave Arabs "dignity" and to whom masses everywhere enthusiastically responded. It was probably this feeling of being the only representative of the masses that led Nasser to develop an attitude of righteousness. On the one hand, Nasser became extremely sensitive to criticism. An insult to him was interpreted as an insult to Arabs everywhere. One of Nasser's biographers comments:

Nasser's increasingly thin skin has proved his Achilles heel on more than one occasion. The man with nerves of steel in the face of international crises will lose his temper and take petty, impulsive actions because of superficial insults. ⁽³⁾

In 1960 Nasser banned Newsweek from entering the U.A.R. because it reported that the UN Secretary General had spoken harshly to him. "The people of the U.A.R. allow no one to speak harshly to

(1) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., p. 103.

(2) Ibid, p. 550.

(3) Wilton Wynn, Nasser of Egypt (Cambridge Mass.: Arlington Books, Inc., 1959), p. 63.

their President or raise his voice at him,"⁽¹⁾ said Nasser, justifying the ban. In his speeches Nasser never tired of referring to the attacks against him. On the other hand, the feeling of righteousness led Nasser to be curiously incapable of empathy. While he was quick to react forcefully to any act he considered even remotely insulting or threatening he failed to appreciate that others could react similarly to his own actions. He felt, for example, free to denounce pro-Western Middle Eastern governments, using at times, an openly threatening language:

No use; Imperialism, reaction, agents of Imperialism can never triumph.... We shall eliminate agents of Imperialism in all parts of the Arab world, for these are our principles and we can never renounce them.... For a time we may speak generally without naming names. But we must name names.... We are responsible for the achievement of social justice not only here, but in all parts of the Arab nation. (2)

A retort by the governments he attacked would invoke a feeling of injured indignation. The question whether or not President Nasser really wanted to establish an Egyptian empire will probably never be settled. At any rate, others perceived some of his moves as being expansionist and Nasser never bothered to allay their fears. Even if there were private assurances, his public declarations nullified them.

President Nasser's characteristics as a decision-maker gradually emerged. Nasser proved capable of taking momentous decisions in a short time. Bold and at times apparently reckless, the decisions were nevertheless made after careful consideration.

(1) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., p. 121.

(2) Ibid, p. 333.

"Although intensely political, Nasser must, contrary to the common view, be considered cautious, deliberate, and calculating."⁽¹⁾ The President never trusted "experts" and he wanted to be personally well-acquainted with any subject before taking any decision.

Nasser had a tremendous capacity for learning and did a staggering amount of reading daily. He prided himself on being well-informed of his enemies' arguments. Once a decision was made, Nasser moved to other decisions untroubled by doubts and afterthoughts. He always exuded confidence and was described as being "at his best in moments of crisis".⁽²⁾ As his experiences accumulated he felt more and more at home with foreign affairs.⁽³⁾

The innovations Nasser introduced in Egyptian foreign policy were of two kinds: in substance and in style. Substantively, he proved that things which were considered "impossible" could in fact be done. He successfully challenged the British domination of the Middle East. He showed that a small power could deal with big powers as an equal. He defied with impunity the taboo attached to dealing with the Soviet Union. In matters of style, he introduced two innovations. First, he utilized Egypt's propaganda machinery in support of his foreign policy to a degree unknown before in the Middle East. Second, he broke with the tradition, accepted in the Arab world, that a head of state should stick in his public addresses to diplomatic and proper language.

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- (1) P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 51.
 - (2) Robert St. John, The Boss (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1960), p. 238.
 - (3) A few months after he decided to intervene in Yemen President Nasser said that to him foreign policy had become "a matter of routine"; Mahadhir Mubahathat al-Wihdah (Cairo: al-Ahram, 1963), p. 291.

Nasser was uninhibited in his oratory, using colloquial language and ridiculing his enemies, including sometimes other heads of state. Although he revealed only what he intended to reveal, he insisted that no secrets were hidden from his audiences. Nasser was without doubt the most effective public speaker among the Arab leaders.

Nasser had always had the benefit of discussions with advisers. Yet, gradually, as his own stature grew the role of his advisers diminished. The days in which a decision was put for a vote were gone. A student of Egyptian foreign policy made the following observation:

After Suez, a change took place in the method of making foreign policy partly owing to a change in Nasser himself. Most of his countrymen and many other Arabs believed that by his own barakah (the luck or magic of his personal star) he had won victories against impossible odds. He cannot have been entirely unaffected by this popular feeling about him. An even greater change took place in the attitude of the people around him. Men closely associated with him for years who had argued with him through interminable strategy sessions, giving as good as they got, began referring to him as EL rais (the leader, or the president) and quoting his opinions as the final word on every subject. (1)

Nasser's advisers would still discuss the alternatives and probable consequences of decisions. Yet now there was an awe-inspired inhibition. The basic premises of the President were not challenged. He was considered as having a far superior intellect and past experiences had shown him right many times before. When he wrote the National Charter in 1962 he was perceived as not only a great

(1) Cremeans, op. cit., p. 33.

statesman but a brilliant theoretician as well and there was even greater reluctance among his advisers to question the wisdom of his decisions.

The Internal Situation in 1962

In July 1961 the Socialist measures were introduced. The government took over the entire import trade and a large part of the export trade. Banks and insurance companies were nationalized. The ownership of about three hundred industrial and commercial establishments was in whole or in part transferred to the state. Five thousand Egyptian pounds was made the maximum income.⁽¹⁾ The Agrarian Reform Law of 1952 was amended to prohibit the ownership of more than a hundred acres instead of the earlier two hundred. Arab Socialism was thus born.

In September 1961 President Nasser faced the most severe setback of his career: Syria's secession from the U.A.R. At first he decided to crush the separatist movement and forces were dispatched but as it soon became clear that the new rebel government was in full control of Syria Nasser reversed his decision and ordered the forces back. A period of introspection and stock taking followed. A new departure was announced. Externally, the U.A.R. would never again compromise with "reaction". Internally, there was no way open except that of revolutionary Socialism.

President Nasser had always wanted to create an organized political base that would at least lessen his dependence

(1) Peter Mansfield, Nasser's Egypt (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin African Library, 1969), p. 158.

on the army. He chose the single-party system to achieve this. From 1953 to 1957 there was the Liberation Rally, and from 1957 to 1961 the National Union. Both these organizations were established by decree; none of them enjoyed real powers and the functions they performed were largely ceremonial. Following the secession President Nasser declared that the National Union had been infiltrated by reaction. He indicated the need for a new organization which would represent the alliance of the working forces and which would give full freedom to the people - but not to their enemies (the capitalists). In November 1961 a Preparatory Committee met to prepare for a National Congress which would adopt a Charter of National Action. In May 1962 the National Congress met; and in June it adopted the draft of the National Charter presented by President Nasser. The Charter introduced the Arab Socialist Union as the country's single political organization. (1)

Nasser, contrary to the expectations of his enemies, had survived the setback. Although some precautionary arrests and seizures of property were announced in Cairo following Syria's secession, it was apparent that the regime faced no serious threats. The debates, both of the Preparatory Committee and of the National Congress, were quite free and uninhibited. President Nasser in 1962 could feel that finally Egypt was on the road to true democracy.

In accordance with a Constitutional declaration, (2) President Nasser issued a decree on September 27th, setting up a 12-member Presidential Council. (3) Theoretically, most of the

(1) For details see Ibid, pp. 227 - 231.

(2) See Middle Eastern Affairs (December, 1962), pp. 299-300.

(3) See al-Ahram, September 27, p. 1.

President's powers were now vested in the Council. Hence, some decisions and statements about developments in Yemen were issued in the Council's name. However, the new arrangement did not affect the President's control of foreign affairs. The Council was set up as an interim measure until a National Assembly could be elected and it was mainly concerned with legislation.⁽¹⁾ The vital decisions regarding intervention in Yemen were taken by the President, and then discussed, and approved, by the Council.

External Setting

1952 - 1954 Search for a Role

Following Egypt's revolution, the officers had no fixed ideas about Egypt's Arab and international roles. They played by ear. The United States adopted a friendly attitude towards the revolution and they hoped to find continued American cooperation. They had more doubts with regard to Britain which was still in occupation of the large military base at the Canal. One of the officers' first objectives was to get Britain out of Egypt but they naturally preferred to do it non-violently if possible. The officers had little taste for Communism and in the two years following the revolution no perceptible intensification of contacts with the Soviet Union took place.

Between 1952 and 1954 Egypt's relations with the West were in flux. On the one hand, there were encouraging signs. The United States was helping to facilitate a settlement with the

(1) See Mahdhir, op. cit., p. 234.

British. Britain indicated willingness to evacuate, and an agreement was reached in 1954. On the other hand there were difficulties. Egypt's requests for arms were not met. Britain and the United States were interested above all in establishing an anti-Soviet military alliance in the Middle East and recruiting Arab countries to join it. As Nasser put it in 1955, "they are concerned with defence; we are concerned with our freedom."⁽¹⁾ Yet, in 1954 neither side reached definite conclusions about the other. Some Arabs even thought of Nasser as an American agent.

Arab nationalists had always complained of Egypt's preoccupation with its internal affairs to the exclusion of Arab causes. In Egypt the concept of Arab nationalism never took roots. Egyptians thought in terms of an exclusive Egyptian nationalism. When the revolution broke out this attitude did not immediately change. None of Egypt's leaders gave much thought to the question of relations with other Arab countries. Nasser's early speeches indicate that he had little knowledge of Arab affairs. Reading these speeches, one finds it difficult to remember that the same man emerged a few years later as the leader of Arab nationalism. In 1953 Nasser spoke of "Arab nations",⁽²⁾ a phrase Arab nationalists regard as heretical since there is only one Arab "nation". In the same year he said that the tie of Arabism "had so far been illusory and not real".⁽³⁾

It was probably in 1954 that Nasser became fully

(1) Khutab, op. cit., p. 694.

(2) Ibid, p. 206.

(3) Ibid, p. 209.

conscious of the Arab "circle". In that year he spoke of "the single Arab nation".⁽¹⁾ In another speech he said that "the problems of the Arabs are the problems of the Egyptians".⁽²⁾ The commitment to an Arab orientation was not complete, however. In August of the same year he referred to "Egypt the Great",⁽³⁾ a notion incompatible with that of the single Arab nation.

Nasser was quite aware of Egypt's potentialities in the Arab scene. Egypt had natural claims to the leadership of the Arab world. It was the most densely populated, the strongest, the most stable, and in many ways the most advanced Arab country. Egyptian educational institutions had attracted generations of Arab students. Egyptian culture enjoyed a wide appeal throughout the Arab world. In 1954 Nasser wanted to exercise this leadership although at the time he did not quite know in which direction.

Development of Inter-Arab Roles

1955 - 1957 Anti-Imperialist Role

Whether, as Arab writers claim, Arab nationalism is centuries old or, as Western authors assert, it was a phenomena introduced through nineteenth century contacts with the West, can be argued. All agree, however, that as a concept Arab nationalism refers to the consciousness of the Arabs of belonging to one nation and to their desire for independence, some form of unity, and social justice. The goals were never clearly elaborated and

(1) Ibid, p. 366.

(2) Ibid, p. 420.

(3) Ibid, p. 465.

the emphasis varied from one historical period to another. In 1955 Nasser began to absorb the Arab nationalist doctrine. Gradually he told the Egyptians to think of themselves not as Egyptians who happened to speak Arabic but as Arabs who happened to inhabit Egypt. From 1955 on Nasser left his own imprint on the doctrine of Arab nationalism.

In January 1955 Turkey and Iraq announced their intention of concluding a military alliance. Sponsored by Britain, this alliance came to be known as the Baghdad Pact. To Nasser, already sensitive to a long history of occupation and humiliation by the British, the Pact was a role-influencing event. He considered it a proof that Britain wanted to continue to shape the destinies of Arab countries. In his thinking the Baghdad Pact was only the beginning: "the Imperialists wanted it as a base from which to pounce on Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Sudan."⁽¹⁾ In February of the same year there was a large-scale Israeli attack on Gaza. Egypt's military weakness, which Nasser attributed to the refusal of the West to supply him with arms, was painfully exposed. Nasser regarded the attack as being another Imperialist-inspired attempt to humiliate Egypt.

In 1955 the anti-Imperialist role was evolved. The Imperialist enemy was Britain, but to the extent that France and the United States were in collusion with Britain in the Middle East they, too, were considered Imperialists. The role meant closer ties with Arab countries following anti-British policies, hostility to pro-British regimes and a general attack on British interests throughout the Middle East.

During this phase, President Nasser thought of

(1) Ibid, p. 1160.

Arab nationalism as meaning above all opposition to Imperialism. Socio-political-economic differences among anti-British Arabs were ignored and they were all considered Arab nationalists.

The Arab entity spreads from the Atlantic to the Arabian Gulf. We are all one people, one Arab people, struggling together, united, shoulder to shoulder, to achieve our right of freedom, and our right of life, struggling together against Imperialism and the agents of Imperialism. (1)

Brushing aside the problem of incompatible social theories, President Nasser said in 1956:

All Egypt wishes is freedom for every Arab country; all it wishes is for every Arab country to have strength and dignity. In achieving this, Egypt is ready to agree with any Arab country to the extent desired by this country. Our policy is based on non-interference. We are not concerned with any internal affair. We never interfere. (2)

Egypt developed close relations with Arab countries following anti-Imperialist roles: Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. When Jordan appeared to follow an anti-Imperialist role in 1956 relations were strong. But when in 1957 King Husain reverted to a pro-Western stand they deteriorated. Iraq was openly pro-Western and its relations with Egypt were stormy. Egypt supported anti-British movements in Aden and Oman and encouraged the anti-French struggle in Arab North Africa.

(1) Ibid, p. 1070.

(2) Ibid, p. 1228.

1958 - 1961 Unionist Role

In February 1958 Egypt and Syria merged to form the United Arab Republic. The union came about through Syrian initiative. President Nasser was reluctant at the beginning and suggested gradual unification. At the insistence of the Syrians he finally agreed. Characteristically, once he decided to accept the union, Nasser forgot his earlier scepticism and threw himself into his new responsibilities. The U.A.R. adopted a unionist role.

The new role had two implications. First, President Nasser's attention was drawn to internal affairs. "To read President Nasser's speeches of 1958 and 1959 is to recognize the apparent shift in emphasis (temporary as it may have been) from the foreign to the domestic."⁽¹⁾ Later, Nasser himself said that he spent three quarters of his time dealing with the affairs of Syria.⁽²⁾ Second, the U.A.R. openly advocated Arab unity. When Egypt was following an anti-Imperialist role it emphasized Arab cooperation against Imperialism but "comprehensive unity did not loom large in Egyptian policy until after the union of Syria and Egypt, that is to say, until forced upon Egypt by the logic of events themselves".⁽³⁾ Arab nationalism now was interpreted to mean not only opposition to Imperialism but also the desire for unity. Although President Nasser made it clear that unity should not be imposed, he believed that only Imperialist influences thwarted the achievement of complete Arab unity:

Arab unity is the highest stage of

(1) Vatikiotis, op. cit., p. 138.

(2) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., p. 536.

(3) Leonard Binder, The Ideological Revolution In The Middle East (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 210.

patriotism.... When foreign influence ends, when there are no more people who receive their orders from foreign states, Arab unity becomes very easy. (1)

Preoccupied with the internal affairs of the union, President Nasser was willing to follow conciliatory Arab policies. When Yemen applied for confederation he accepted. When Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Prince Faisal, indicated a desire to improve relations he favourably responded. The union established between Iraq and Jordan as a countermove to the U.A.R. collapsed when the Iraqi revolution broke out in July 1958. Relations with Iraq immediately improved. However, a struggle soon developed in Iraq between those who wanted Iraq to join the U.A.R., led by Colonel Abdul Salam Arif and those who wanted to preserve Iraq's entity, led by Brigadier Abdul Karim Kasim. Arif lost and was imprisoned. There was an open break between Kasim and Nasserist elements who were ruthlessly suppressed. To maintain support Kasim relied on Iraqi Communists. The U.A.R. denounced Kasim and he in turn characterized the union between Egypt and Syria as Nasserist Imperialism.

1961 - 1962 Anti-Reactionary Role

Syrian secession in September 1961 was Nasser's first defeat after an unbroken chain of "victories". He himself described the rebellion in Syria as "more dangerous" than the tripartite invasion of 1956.⁽²⁾ The secession was perceived as a plot engineered by the Imperialists in alliance with the "reac-

(1) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., p. 335.

(2) Ibid, p. 522.

tionaries". Nasser considered the secession as only the opening move in an Imperialist-reactionary scheme to destroy the Socialist revolution by destroying his regime. He was determined to thwart them by opposing and defeating the reactionaries. On October 2, he said:

We could turn this setback into a force moving forward to eliminate reaction everywhere in the Arab nation. We must, brothers, we must follow this road. This setback must be made the starting point for a big initiative to eliminate reaction everywhere in the Arab nation. (1)

On October 16th Nasser spoke of the dangers of compromising with the reactionaries. (2) From now on Arab nationalism meant in addition to opposition to Imperialism and desire for unity, belief in Socialism. Egypt had adopted an anti-reactionary role. In general, reaction designated non-Socialist regimes with close relations with the West. The definition was deliberately left vague to allow for some flexibility in foreign policy.

Commenting on the new hard line, Haikal said that Egypt had two roles: that of a state and that of a revolution. From now on, if there was any contradiction between the two roles priority must be given to the revolutionary role. In doing this, Egypt must be prepared to accept the possibilities of a paralyzed Arab League and of severed diplomatic relations with any Arab country "ruled by reaction". "The battle now," wrote Haikal, "requires nothing less than confrontation and calls for no result less than the achievement of total victory...." (3)

(1) Ibid, p. 542.

(2) See above p. 183-184.

(3) Al-Ahram, December 12, 1961, p. 9.

This uncompromising stand was incorporated in the Charter which stated:

Imperialism has unmasked itself and so has reaction by being too eager to cooperate with it. It, therefore, became incumbent upon the people to strike at them and defeat them at one and the same time to assert the triumph of the political revolution in the remaining parts of the Arab Nation, and to consolidate the Arab masses' right to a better social life.... (1)

The Charter further stated that the U.A.R. must freely advocate its principles "without hesitating for one minute before the outworn argument that this would be considered an interference in the affairs of others". (2)

Predictably, the new role led to strained relations with some Arab countries. Following King Husain's prompt recognition of the separatist government in Syria, diplomatic relations were severed with Jordan; a severe propaganda attack was launched on the Jordanian regime. Egypt not only refused to recognize the Syrian government but severely denounced it. In December the confederation with Yemen was ended. In the same month the Yemeni and Saudi regimes were attacked. Relations with Iraq continued to deteriorate.

Development of International Role

1955 - 1962 Non-Alignment

The West's obsession with military alliances and

(1) The Charter (Cairo: Information Department, 1962), p. 107.

(2) Ibid, p. 109.

its refusal to meet Egyptian requests for arms drove Nasser to seek closer ties with the Soviet Union which proved willing to supply Egypt with the arms it needed. It was thus practical necessity that made Nasser aware of the advantages of non-alignment. As well as allowing him to be independent, non-alignment enabled him to meet Egypt's immediate demands. Nasser's attendance of the Bandoeng Conference, held in April 1955, and his subsequent friendship with Tito and Nehro reinforced his belief in non-alignment. By 1956 non-alignment, or as Nasser put it "positive neutrality", had become the cornerstone of Egypt's international policy.

However, until 1959, Egypt's non-alignment was basically anti-Western. Series of moves and counter-moves resulted in a mutual lack of confidence.⁽¹⁾ The adoption of an anti-Imperialist role indicated the extent of deterioration in Egyptian-British relations. "Prior to the Suez crisis, the United States was frequently a junior partner to Great Britain"⁽²⁾, in the Middle East; as such, it was considered an Imperialist power. In 1957 the United States announced the Eisenhower Doctrine which Egypt attacked as an attempt to justify intervention in Arab affairs. The United States lost most of the credit it gained when it opposed Britain over the Suez War. To American decision-makers Nasser's foreign policy moves appeared in harmony with the designs of "International Communism".

In 1959 relations with the West improved and Egypt's non-alignment became more balanced. Gradually the United States came to think that Nasser far from being a Communist, was probably the best defence against Communism in the Middle East. In 1959

(2) John S. Badeau, The American Approach To The Arab World (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 82.

(1) See John C. Campbell, Defense Of The Middle East (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 67-69

Khrushchev criticized Nasser for his attacks on Iraqi Communists. Nasser promptly answered back proving that he was willing to assert his independence even at the expense of Egyptian-Soviet relations. Furthermore, non-alignment was now accepted by both East and West. Egypt's relations with America showed a marked improvement after the election of President Kennedy.

External Situation in 1962

In January 1962 President Nasser described Egypt's international position in the following manner:

I can describe our relations with the Eastern Block as good. We have close cooperation with the Soviet Union, especially in economic matters. Our relations with other Eastern Block states are also cordial. As for our relations with the Western Block, there are different degrees. While we have close cooperation with Germany and Italy for instance, we find that our relations with the United States are ordinary and we try to strengthen them by attempts at mutual understanding. But we find that our relations with Britain and France are always exposed to crises. (1)

This picture remained basically unchanged in September 1962.

Continuing to follow its anti-reactionary role, Egypt in 1962 had more Arab enemies than ever before. Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia were hostile. With the exception of Yemen, they were all denouncing the Egyptian regime with a vehemence similar to that of the Egyptian attacks against them.

(1) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., pp. 674-675.

Other Arab regimes, while not antagonistic, were a little uneasy. Only Algeria, which gained its independence in the summer of 1962, was firmly at Egypt's side.

Chapter Eleven

Egyptian Intervention: Narrative

This chapter records developments connected with the Egyptian intervention in Yemen from the day the news of the Yemeni revolution reached Cairo to the 7th of November 1962. The choice of the last day is arbitrary, but not entirely so. By that date Egypt had a substantial number of troops in Yemen. A change in the leadership in Saudi Arabia did not lead to any improvement in Saudi-Egyptian relations. On November 6, diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed; thus, any hopes for a negotiated mutual disengagement were removed.

September 27

The republican government in Yemen appealed to Egypt for military support.⁽¹⁾ Dr. Abdul Qadir Hatim, Minister of State, said that the U.A.R. was following the reports of the revolution in Yemen. He added that the U.A.R. opposed any external intervention in Yemen's affairs.⁽²⁾ Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi declared that he supported the revolution. He did not expect any intervention either from Imperialism or from any neighbouring state because "they will find no one within the country who is against the popular will represented in the establishment of the Republic".⁽³⁾ Ali Al-Moayyad, Yemen's representative in the Arab

(1) Dr. Hasan Sabri al-Kholi, Interview, Cairo, 18.1.1970.

(2) Al-Ahram, September 28, 1962, p. 1.

(3) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: BBC), (Hereafter SWB), 28.9.1962, p. 4.

League said that the revolution had not been expected.⁽¹⁾ Ahmad Mohammad Noman, President of the Yemeni Union, said that the Union could not adopt a particular attitude towards the revolution until matters were clarified.⁽²⁾ Cairo Radio said that a revolutionary communique in Sana stated that all tribal chiefs had declared their support for the revolution and the army.⁽³⁾

September 28

Abdul Rahman al-Baidani said that al-Hasan "would probably be killed if he came to Yemen".⁽⁴⁾ Cairo Radio said that American and British troops "poured on the military base in Aden following the onset of the Yemeni revolution and the doing away with monarchy".⁽⁵⁾ Commenting on the activities of al-Hasan, the Radio said that he "has lost his mind and forgotten that this revolution has utterly crushed monarchy, destroyed all its palaces and strongholds and arrested all the elements that support it".⁽⁶⁾

September 29

President Nasser received the following telegram from Brigadier al-Sallal:

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- (1) Ibid.
 - (2) Ibid.
 - (3) Ibid., p. 5.
 - (4) SWB, 29.9.1962, p. 10.
 - (5) SWB, 1.10.1962, p. 7.
 - (6) Ibid., p. 10.

The real representatives of the people have entrusted us with the duty of carrying out their wish in changing outdated, reactionary ruling conditions and destroying the tyranny under which our noble and great Arab people have long suffered. We participated with the people and with every soldier and officer in realising the hope which we have awaited a long time. Our revolution against the extinct regime was successful from its early hour. On... 26 September 1962, a democratic republic was established under the name of the Yemeni Arab Republic, based on modern ruling systems, respecting the dignity and rights of man, securing social justice and development for the people, participating in the building of a united Arab nation and opposing usurpers and imperialists.... (1)

The U.A.R. decided to recognize the new regime in Yemen. It was the first country to do so. The recognition of the Yemeni Republic was the first decision made by the newly formed Presidential Council. (2) President Nasser sent the following cable to al-Sallal:

The UAR people have followed with interest and care the development of the great events in Yemen and the attempt of the people and the army to establish a new life which would realise on Yemeni soil the dignity and prestige of man. The UAR people believe that this is the age of the people who make their own fate and who with their free will realise all their wishes. Almighty God created human beings free and equal in rights and opportunities. The Almighty will not be pleased to see barriers of exploitation, tyranny and reaction standing against his will. We have no

(1) SWE, 1.10.1962, p. 4.

(2) Al-Ahram, September 30, 1962, p. 1.

doubt that the liberated Yemeni people are capable of participating in the great Arab battles for the sake of a dignified Arab life and cherished Arab security. If the forces against progress, those of the reactionary and imperialist elements, are not pleased with the liberation of the Yemeni people, we believe that God will be pleased to see freedom prevailing, because this is his holy wish. I have the pleasure to inform you that the UAR Government has decided to recognise the Yemeni Arab Republic and its Government. We stand with the Yemeni people without any hesitation and support their wish and legitimate right. Please accept our sincere greetings. (1)

Cairo Radio reported that Arab circles in London held the opinion that Britain was backing Prince al-Hasan.⁽²⁾ Quoting an Egyptian newspaper, the Radio said that King Saud could do nothing "except reach the hearts of some people among the tribes through al-Hasan" and concluded that "King Saud can only become a danger to the extent of his agreement with Britain and the USA".⁽³⁾

September 30

An Egyptian aeroplane arrived in Sana carrying Abdul Rahman al-Baidani and Mohammad Mahmoud al-Zobairi.⁽⁴⁾ It was the first aeroplane to land in Yemen after the revolution.

(1) SWB, 1.10.1962, pp. 4-5.

(2) Ibid, p. 7.

(3) Ibid, p. 9.

(4) Al-Baidani was appointed Minister of Economy and al-Zobairi Minister of Education. On October 1 al-Baidani was appointed as al-Sallal's deputy.

The plane also carried an Egyptian officer, and Egyptian N.C.O. and a wireless transmitter.⁽¹⁾ It seems that by this time President Nasser had decided to answer the Republican appeal;⁽²⁾ the officer was to report on the situation and apparently suggest the scope of military assistance needed. Al-Ahram reported that al-Hasan met with King Saud "to prepare for the mobilization of the forces of reaction against the Yemeni revolution".⁽³⁾ Mohsin al-Aini, the Republican Foreign Minister arrived in Cairo. He dismissed the reports emanating from "reactionary circles" that forces loyal to al-Hasan were moving on Sana. "The army and the people are united behind the revolution and there is no going back",⁽⁴⁾ he said. The Yemeni Union in Cairo held a meeting to support the revolution.⁽⁵⁾ Cairo Radio warned King Saud:

You are left with two alternatives: either you depart with your family so as to escape the fate awaiting you as King Faruq escaped, or you stay and wait for your inevitable fate at the hands of the people and thus join those like you who preceded you to Hell. Faysal, Nuri as-Said, Abd al-Ilah, King Abdullah, and recently the Imam Muhammad al-Badr. They are there to welcome you at any moment now. (6)

(1) Dr. Hasan Sabri al-Kholi, Interview, Cairo, 18.1.1970.

(2) According to John Badeau, the American Ambassador to Egypt at the time, "After three days of consideration, the decision was taken to support the republicans in their struggle," John S. Badeau, The American Approach To The Arab World (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 127.

(3) Al-Ahram, October 1, 1962, p. 1.

(4) Ibid, p. 11.

(5) SWB, 2.10.1962, p. 6.

(6) Ibid, p. 9.

October 1

President Nasser met with Mohsin al-Aini. Al-Aini said that he expressed to the President the gratitude of the Yemeni people and the appreciation of the government for the U.A.R.'s recognition and support. ⁽¹⁾ Al-Aini also met with the American Ambassador. Mohammad Ahmad Pasha, head of the Yemeni diplomatic mission in Cairo, said that the Ambassador informed the Foreign Minister that his country would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Yemen. The Ambassador denied that the United States gave any support to Prince al-Hasan. ⁽²⁾ Quoting the Egyptian press, Cairo Radio said that King Saud intended to provide al-Hasan with everything he needed. According to the Radio,

Britain knows that if the revolution is successful she will be expelled from the Protectorates. America also must assist Britain so that the revolution may be overthrown and steered in a way which pleases the imperialists. ⁽³⁾

October 2

Three Saudi Air Force pilots arrived in a Saudi military plane. The pilots said that they were ordered to carry arms from Jeddah to Najran near the Yemeni border. Instead, the pilots flew to Egypt. Welcoming the Saudi pilots Dr. Abdul Qadir Hatim said:

The reactionary rulers in the Saudi Kingdom tried to push these officers into acting against the Yemeni Arab Republic.

(1) Al-Ahram, October 2, 1962, p. 11.

(2) SWB, 3.10.1962, p. 4.

(3) SWB, 2.10.1962, p. 9.

They loaded this plane with all these arms and asked the officers to transfer them to the Yemeni border so that they can be smuggled inside Yemen. But the officers refused to be a tool of reactionary plotting against the will of an Arab people which found its way to free life. In the face of what reaction does, the U.A.R. reiterates its support for the free everywhere and its support for the Arab people in the Yemeni Republic.... (1)

President Nasser appointed the Saudi pilots in the Egyptian Air Force. (2) A thrice-weekly air service between Sana and Cairo was started. (3)

October 3

A Saudi training aeroplane landed in Egypt. Its two pilots asked for political asylum. (4) President Nasser received the three Saudi pilots who landed on October 2. (5) Al-Sallal sent a telegram to President Nasser in which he conveyed to the President the decision of his government to adhere to the Jeddah Pact of 1956. (6) The Presidential Council discussed the situation in Yemen and decided that the U.A.R. would honour the Jeddah Pact and would implement it should there be any aggression on the borders or the territory of the Yemeni Republic. (7)

(1) Al-Ahram, October 3, 1962, p. 11.

(2) Ibid, p. 1.

(3) Ibid, p. 9.

(4) Al-Ahram, October 4, 1962, p. 1.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

October 4

President Nasser sent the following cable to
al-Sallal:

I received with great care and attention your telegram in which you mentioned that the Yemeni Arab Republic abides by the Jeddah Pact between Yemen and the U.A.R... I assure you that the U.A.R. implemented the Jeddah Pact from the first moment it received news of the Yemeni peoples' revolution. I want you to be always sure that the inevitable solidarity among the peoples of the Arab nation... is the strongest and more lasting pact.... (1)

A Jordanian military mission which arrived in the summer was expelled from Yemen. (2)

October 5

Al-Sallal said that it was very necessary to renew the union with the U.A.R. He said he wished to visit Cairo to obtain inspiration from President Nasser "regarding the great steps which have achieved progress, prosperity, and welfare for the Arab people". (3) Cairo Radio reported that the "Yemeni forces last night opened fire on about 100 armed Saudis who were trying to infiltrate into Yemeni territory". (4) The Radio said that the "eastern borders were today purged from the mutineers, loyal to the former Imam, who took refuge in the mountains". (5) Commenting

(1) Al-Ahram, October 5, 1962, p. 1.

(2) Ibid.

(3) SWB, 6.10.1962, p. 4.

(4) SWB, 8.10.1962, p. 5.

(5) Ibid, p. 5.

on the U.A.R.'s decision to honour the Jeddah Pact, the Radio said that it was taken "in face of the attempts of reaction and imperialism to put an end to the inspirations of freedom and the radiation of the revolution emanating from Yemen".⁽¹⁾

October 6

An Egyptian ship arrived in Hodaida carrying Egyptian troops.⁽²⁾ At the time, however, this was not announced and the ship was said to carry "medical and technical aid".⁽³⁾ Al-Ahram said that the revolutionary government in Yemen was able

(1) Ibid, p. 6.

(2) Makram Mohammad Ahmad, al-Thawrah Jonoub al-Jazirah Aden wa al-Yaman (Cairo: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi li al-Tibaah wa al-Nashr, n.d.), p. 66. Some sources insisted that active Egyptian military intervention started earlier; see for example Scott Gibbons, The Conspirators (London: Howard Baker, 1967), p. 28. As the Egyptian military movements at the time are still considered classified information, this point cannot be finally settled. It is fairly certain, however, that although arms and military advisers were dispatched earlier (see Badeau, loc. cit., and The Times October 2, 1962), the first fighting force arrived on this ship. President Nasser later said that on October 5 the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen was one hundred, "who were the first people we sent". As the ship arrived early in the morning of October 6, President Nasser was probably referring to the force that arrived in her. For President Nasser's speech see al-Ahram December 24, 1962, p. 7.

(3) Al-Ahram, October 6, 1962, p. 1.

to crush repeated attempts against the revolution by the forces of Imperialism and reaction represented by Saud and Husain.⁽¹⁾ The Republican Minister of Guidance said that Yemen had asked for loans and technical assistance from the U.A.R.⁽²⁾ Al-Sallal confirmed that al-Badr had been killed under the debris of his palace.⁽³⁾

October 7

Cairo Radio said that the "last desperate attempt by reaction to strike at the Yemeni revolution was crushed yesterday by the Yemeni forces when they clashed with the infiltrators who were sent by Saud".⁽⁴⁾ The Radio predicted that "the end of this autumn will also be the end of monarchy in the Arab world".⁽⁵⁾ The Yemeni Republic asked for fifty two Egyptian experts.⁽⁶⁾ Al-Ahram said reaction's arms and mercenaries were "pouring in the direction of Yemen's northern borders".⁽⁷⁾

October 8

Two Saudi civilian aeroplanes landed in Egypt.⁽⁸⁾ Al-Sallal said in Sana that:

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- (1) Al-Ahram, October 7, 1962, p. 1.
 - (2) SWB, 9.10.1962, p. 3.
 - (3) Ibid, p. 10.
 - (4) Ibid, p. 3.
 - (5) Ibid, p. 15.
 - (6) Al-Ahram, October 8, 1962, p. 1.
 - (7) Ibid.
 - (8) Al-Ahram, October 9, 1962, p. 1.

The British and the Saudis and those whom you know and understand have lured some of the poor and hungry nomadic bedouin and have given them some gold, money and weapons. They thus want to take revenge on our revolution and to crush our Republic. (1)

According to al-Sallal, the events taking place on the Yemeni borders were "mere skirmishes being carried out by some of the mercenaries to whom Saudi gold is being distributed". (2) Al-Ahram said that reports from Yemen's northern borders indicated that the military intervention against Yemen on the part of the forces of King Saud and King Husain, which were working under a joint command, now represented a flagrant aggression against Yemen. (3) Al-Baidani stated that heavy arms had been smuggled from Baihan into Yemen. (4) Al-Baidani protested to the British Charge D' Affaires about the attitude of the Aden authorities who were permitting "the remnants of reaction to carry out a subversive political activity" (5) against the Yemeni Republic.

October 9

Egyptian troops in Yemen now numbered five hundred. (6) Cairo Radio reported that "Saudi-Jordanian forces, reinforced by Yemenis residing in Saudi Arabia who were recruited by threats and enticement" had crossed the border and advanced on Sada on the

(1) SWB, 10.6.1962, p. 4.

(2) Ibid, p. 6.

(3) Al-Ahram, October 9, 1962, p. 1.

(4) SWB, 9.10.1962, p. 5.

(5) SWB, 10.10.1962, p. 7.

(6) President Nasser's speech in al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 7.

evening of October 7. The Radio said that Yemeni forces had clashed with them. Heavy losses had been inflicted and a large number of them, especially the Yemenis, had joined the Yemeni side.⁽¹⁾ A delegation of Egyptian meteorological experts and Egyptian medical missions arrived in Sana.⁽²⁾ Cairo Radio said that the "recurring escapes of the free Saudi airmen to the UAR" had caused King Saud a nervous breakdown.⁽³⁾

October 10

The Presidential Council studied the situation in Yemen and discussed the "Saudi-Jordanian aggression" on Yemen's northern borders as well as "the intervention directed against Yemen from the south". The Council decided that the U.A.R. would stand with all its powers by Yemen in resisting any aggression against it.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Sallal said in Sana, "Our Republic is certainly exposed to the threat of invasion, but we are capable of warding off the enemies".⁽⁵⁾ He said that everyone "must know that all the potentialities of the UAR have been placed under our disposal to repel any aggression against us".⁽⁶⁾ Two Egyptian military aeroplanes were dispatched to Yemen.⁽⁷⁾

(1) SWB, 11.10.1962, p. 8.

(2) Ibid, p. 9.

(3) Ibid, p. 10.

(4) Al-Ahram, October 11, 1962, p. 1.

(5) SWB, 12.10.1962, p. 6.

(6) Ibid.

(7) President Nasser's speech, al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 7.

October 11

Al-Sallal said that the U.A.R.'s decision to resist aggression on Yemen had had the greatest impact on the people and the government of Yemen.⁽¹⁾ Cairo Radio said that as soon as the decision became known "all the people of the Yemeni towns came out in popular demonstrations cheering for the long life of the Yemeni revolution and calling for the downfall of Saud..."⁽²⁾ The Radio reported that the southern, eastern and northern borders of Yemen "are expected to be finally purged of the forces of colonialism and reaction within a week at the latest".⁽³⁾

October 12

Al-Ahram reported that after aerial attacks al-Hasan had fled from Sada fort.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Sallal said that Yemeni forces in the northern and eastern borders "are now besieging the remnants of the infiltrators who were sent by Saud to strike at the revolutionary movement in Yemen".⁽⁵⁾

October 13

Anwar al-Sadat and Kamal Rifat, members of the Presidential Council, arrived in Sana and met with al-Sallal and al-

(1) Al-Ahram, October 12, 1962, p. 1.

(2) SWB, 13.10.1962, p. 1.

(3) SWB, 13.10.1962, p. 5.

(4) Al-Ahram, October 13, 1962, p. 1.

(5) SWB, 15.10.1962, p. 2.

Baidani. ⁽¹⁾ "The U.A.R. with all its potentialities," said al-Sadat, "stands by the Yemeni revolution to enable it to achieve all the hopes of the Arab people." ⁽²⁾ Al-Sallal said that the visit "gave us great strength. Through the spirit of brotherhood, through sincere cooperation, and through the support of President Nasser we shall succeed in strengthening and securing our revolution". ⁽³⁾ Al-Ahram reported that Sada had been purged and that al-Hasan's forces in Marib had started to surrender. ⁽⁴⁾

October 14

Al-Sadat and Rifat returned to Cairo and immediately met with President Nasser. Marshal Amir, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, also attended the meeting. ⁽⁵⁾ Al-Ahram said that the final results of the previous week's battles had been a crushing victory for the revolutionary forces. The counter-revolutionary forces were in general retreat in Sada and were negotiating a surrender in Marib. ⁽⁶⁾ For the first time al-Ahram acknowledged that al-Badr was alive. ⁽⁷⁾ Al-Ahram reported a meeting between Marshal Amir and the Chief of Staff, the head of Operations and senior Operations officers. ⁽⁸⁾

(1) Al-Ahram, October 14, 1962, p. 11.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid., p. 1.

(5) Al-Ahram, October 15, 1962, p. 1.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid., p. 4.

October 15

An official source in Sana said that no one was any longer concerned whether al-Badr was alive or dead. ⁽¹⁾ Cairo Radio reported that the Yemeni forces had controlled most of Marib. ⁽²⁾

October 16

Imam al-Badr sent the following message to President Nasser:

We were able to leave Sana to meet the sons of our free people who received us with every hospitality and welcome.... They have decided to fight this group /the revolutionaries/ and take revenge for their leaders, their ulamas, and their shaykhs. Their indignation was great when they knew about the arrival of aircraft, arms, and experts sent by you to fight the sons of our dear people and to impose the evil and treacherous gang on them. Perhaps you know that I am the legal Imam, chosen by the members of the nation, big and small, and recognized by all States and by your Government. Therefore, in the name of our Government, we ask you to withdraw quickly your armed forces and experts and allow us to solve our own problems by ourselves. ⁽³⁾

The contents of the message were not revealed in Cairo and Nasser sent

(1) SWB, 16.10.1962, p. 11.

(2) SWB, 17.10.1962, p. 5.

(3) SWB, 19.10.1962, p. 2.

no reply. The number of Egyptian forces in Yemen now totalled two thousand.⁽¹⁾

October 17

The Presidential Council discussed a report submitted by al-Sadat on his visit to Yemen. According to al-Sadat's report "the situation became calm after the defeat of the aggressive forces, supported by Saudi and Jordanian forces, in northern Yemen and their withdrawals beyond the borders".⁽²⁾ Cairo Radio reported that "Yemeni forces routed and repulsed mercenaries who tried to penetrate from the Jawf area on the eastern border".⁽³⁾ The Radio said that Yemeni forces were in full control of the northern borders after capturing Sada fort.⁽⁴⁾

October 18

At a press conference held in Sana al-Sallal displayed money which he said had been presented by Saud to the Yemeni tribes.⁽⁵⁾ Cairo Radio reported the arrest of Jordanian officers in al-Hazm.⁽⁶⁾

(1) President Nasser's speech, al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 27.

According to Nasser this number remained unchanged till the last few days of October when reinforcements were sent.

(2) Al-Ahram, October 18, 1962, p. 1.

(3) SWB, 19.10.1962, p. 6.

(4) SWB, 18.10.1962, p. 1.

(5) SWB, 20.10.1962, p. 7.

(6) SWB, 20.10.1962, p. 3.

October 19

Cairo Radio considered the appointment of Prince Faisal as Prime Minister evidence of a weakening in King Saud's position, which was attributed to the defeat of "Saudi forces" in Yemen. When his "plots" had failed Saud had abandoned power. (1)

Al-Sallal said:

If Saud and Husayn have sought the aid of the dirty imperialists, we, thank God, have sought the aid of our brothers, the UAR soldiers and that of our brother Jamal Abd an-Nasir who has placed his strength, that of the army, and all their potential to protect your revolution. Large striking forces have arrived to protect our country against every criminal aggressor in cooperation with our heroic army and free officers. Thus, if Saud or Husayn try to attack us, our people and their forces will move to destroy all the enemies of this Republic, our freedom and our dignity. (2)

Commenting on slogans demanding immediate unity with Egypt, al-Baidani said:

... Cairo has its own opinion about unity... which says that for Arab unity to be achieved certain steps must be taken. We have not yet reached these steps but President Nasser is helping your republic with all his potentialities. What we are getting now, what we will get tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow is not at all less than what we can get under unity. (3)

Haikal wrote that it was no more a secret that while telegrams

(1) SWB, 20.10.1962, p. 1.

(2) SWB, 22.10.1962, p. 1.

(3) Ibid, p. 2.

were exchanged between al-Sallal and Nasser with regard to the Jeddah Pact an Egyptian force was on its way to Yemen.⁽¹⁾

October 20

An official Yemeni source said in Sana that the northern borders had been "purged of the remnants of Saud's followers" and that "only small skirmishes continue in the Jawf region".⁽²⁾

October 21

Cairo Radio reported that Republican forces expected to occupy Marib "tomorrow".⁽³⁾

October 22

Al-Ahram said that reaction was mobilizing its forces for a second round in Yemen. It said that "big forces were carried to Najran by aeroplanes in preparation for the new round".⁽⁴⁾

October 23

Al-Sadat met with the Yemeni Minister in Beirut and

(1) Al-Ahram, October 19, 1962, p. 9.

(2) SWB, 23.10.1962, p. 10.

(3) SWB, 24.10.1962, p. 5.

(4) Al-Ahram, October 22, 1962, p. 1.

the Yemeni Liaison officer in Cairo. Al-Sadat said after the meeting that the forces of the Yemeni Arab Republic were "repelling every aggression against its territories and crushing anyone who tries to infiltrate inside Yemen".⁽¹⁾ Nabil al-Waqqad, an Egyptian officer, was killed in Marib. He was the first Egyptian casualty in Yemen.⁽²⁾ Cairo Radio issued a warning to Prince Faisal:

The sons of all the Arabian Peninsula lie in wait for you and your family, for you in particular, because now you have taken over the leadership of your family after defeating your reactionary idiot of a brother, Saud, and have done so in order to consolidate reaction in the region and support the little King Husayn.... Faysal, nothing but death awaits you. (3)

October 24

The Presidential Council discussed the situation created by "Jordanian-Saudi concentrations" along the Yemeni borders and decided that the U.A.R. "is resolved to stand by Yemen and counter aggression by imperialism and reaction".⁽⁴⁾

Cairo Radio reported that some numbers of "the Saudi army surrendered to the Yemeni command in the Maydi area and asked to join the Yemeni National Guard".⁽⁵⁾ Yemen had asked the Arab League to discuss the "Saudi-Jordanian aggression". The Arab League

(1) Al-Ahram, October 24, 1962, p. 1.

(2) Ahmad, op. cit., p. 68.

(3) SWB, 29.10.1962, p. 4.

(4) SWB, 26.10.1962, p. 4.

(5) Ibid, p. 6.

Secretary-General told the Yemeni Republican and Royalist Foreign Ministers that the League could not meet at present because it was still suffering from the failure of its meetings at Shtowrah. (1)

October 25

Sana Radio said that the "fugitive from justice called al-Badr has died in one of King Saud's hospitals as the result of injuries received during his flight". (2)

October 26

Al-Ahram said that the forces of the revolution had crushed another attempt at infiltration in Yemen's north-eastern region. (3) President Nasser received Colonel Abdullah Juzailan, Chief of Staff of the Yemeni armed forces. (4) Marshal Amir secretly arrived in Yemen. (5) Commenting on Prince Faisal's arrival in Saudi Arabia Cairo Radio said:

Faysal returned with his ashen face and made a declaration in which he asked the Arab States not to intervene in Yemeni affairs. He proclaimed al-Badr Imam of Yemen. He announced the legitimacy of al-Badr as the ruler in Sana. He has not said anything new. What he said was a reiteration of Saud's policy. (6)

(1) SWB, 26.10.1962, p. 6.

(2) SWB, 27.10.1962, p. 3.

(3) Al-Ahram, October 26, 1962, p. 1.

(4) SWB, 27.10.1962, p. 4.

(5) Al-Ahram, October 30, 1962, p. 1.

(6) SWB, 29.10.1962, pp. 4-5.

October 27

Al-Ahram reported that the revolutionary forces had annihilated the mercenaries who had joined a new attempt by al-Hasan. (1) Al-Sallal said that al-Badr had died of his wounds in Saudi Arabia. (2) Cairo Radio told the citizens of Saudi Arabia:

Kill al-Badr. Kill Muhammad al-Badr for in the past he planted corruption in Yemen and now has come to plant corruption in your own land. Kill Muhammad al-Badr in whose name Husayn and Saud sent hundreds of brothers by force to be killed under British command. Kill al-Badr, kill him for he is a criminal and a murderer who has killed hundreds of innocent people. (3)

October 28

The Yemeni Defence Minister said in Cairo that the situation along the borders of Yemen was quiet. (4) A Yemeni delegation of five ministers arrived in Cairo in connection with Yemen's complaint to the Arab League of "armed aggression launched against the Yemeni revolution by Saud and Husayn". (5) In Sana a reward of 5,000 riyals (about 2000 Sterling) was offered anyone who captured or killed a member of the Royal Family. (6)

(1) Al-Ahram, October 27, 1962, p. 1.

(2) SWB, 30. 10.1962, p. 1.

(3) Ibid, p. 2.

(4) Ibid, p. 3.

(5) Al-Ahram, 29.10.1962, p. 1.

(6) SWB, 30.10.1962, p. 2.

October 29

Marshal Amir returned from his four-day secret visit to Yemen and reported to President Nasser. Al-Ahram said that he had made a wide-ranging investigation during the visit. He had met with al-Sallal, al-Baidani, the Revolutionary Command, the Cabinet, and the leaders of the Yemeni army. He had visited some of the camps and concentration centers of the Egyptian troops.⁽¹⁾ Cairo Radio said that the attempt at infiltration into Naib had ended "in total failure when forces of the Yemeni Arab Republic, backed by elements of the UAR forces, opposed the attack".⁽²⁾

October 30

Cairo Radio said that an important meeting had been held in Sana. It was attended by al-Sallal, al-Baidani and numbers of "the joint Yemeni-UAR command".⁽³⁾ Al-Baidani said that the "Yemeni Air Force now has missiles and the Yemeni Republic has the biggest military force in the Arabian Peninsula".⁽⁴⁾

October 31

A Provisional Constitution was announced in Sana. The Revolutionary Command appointed al-Sallal President of the

(1) Al-Ahram, October 30, 1962, p. 1.

(2) SWB, 30.10.1962, p. 4.

(3) SWB, 1.11.1962, p. 5.

(4) Al-Ahram, October 31, 1962, p. 2.

Republic, in addition to his other duties. Al-Baidani was appointed Vice-President.⁽¹⁾ A Saudi lieutenant who had defected to Yemen arrived in Sana.⁽²⁾ The Presidential Council met. A spokesman said that the Council heard Marshal Amir's report on his visit to Yemen. It was clear from this report that the Yemeni revolution had established itself everywhere in Yemen and that the people gave it their full support. The Marshal reported that the Egyptian and Yemeni forces on Yemen's eastern and northern borders were fully prepared to meet any external aggression. "From this situation," said the spokesman, "it is clear that the reports of the radios of Saud and Amman throughout last month about the so-called Imam's forces marching on Sana are baseless."⁽³⁾

November 1

Quoting Associated Press, al-Ahram said that al-Sallal had stated that Marshal Amir promised "full support by sending Egyptian forces to defend Yemen against any external aggression".⁽⁴⁾ Al-Sallal said that relations between Yemen and the U.A.R. "must be strengthened to achieve comprehensive unity".⁽⁵⁾

November 2

Cairo Radio said that "the joint Yemeni-UAR forces

(1) Al-Ahram, November 1, 1962, p. 1.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Al-Ahram, November 1, 1962, p. 1.

(4) Ibid.

(5) SWB, 2.11.1962, p. 5.

routed a whole Saudi-Jordanian battalion when the latter attacked the northern border of the Yemeni Republic near the town of Harad".⁽¹⁾

November 3

Al-Ahram reported the crushing of the "biggest attempt to invade Yemen". It said that the revolutionary forces had crushed the attempt by 5,000 Saudi and Jordanian troops, led by al-Badr, to invade Harad.⁽²⁾ Commenting on the Saudi claim that Egyptian planes had attacked Saudi villages an Egyptian military spokesman said:

The government of the U.A.R. declared that it supported the revolution of the Yemeni Arab People against any aggression and that it would stand with all its power by the side of the people of Yemen and their revolution. The U.A.R. considers the government of Saud and Faisal responsible for all the results following the flagrant aggression on Yemen's borders which had been crushed. ⁽³⁾

Cairo Radio said that King Saud and King Husain "allowed British imperialism to prepare the plan for aggression against the Yemeni revolution". The Radio said that the two Kings, together with al-Badr, "depended on aid offered to them by the USA from behind the scenes".⁽⁴⁾ Al-Baidani said that so far there had been no signs along the north-western border of Yemen "indicating another Saudi adventure after the extermination on Yemeni soil of all the forces dispatched by Saud".⁽⁵⁾

(1) SWB, 6.11.1962, p. 6.

(2) Al-Ahram, November 3, 1962, p. 1.

(3) Al-Ahram, November 4, 1962, p. 1.

(4) SWB, 6.11.1962, p. 7.

(5) Ibid, p. 9.

November 4

Al-Baidani said that the Yemeni Air Force planes had not so far raided any position outside the Yemeni border and he denied that they had attacked any Saudi position.⁽¹⁾

November 5

Al-Ahram published a statement by al-Sallal saying that Yemen would strike at any base from which any new attempts at aggression started.⁽²⁾ Al-Ahram reported that political observers in Sana believed that al-Sallal had told the representatives of Britain and the United States in Yemen that "their countries are responsible for any new aggression against the Yemeni revolution by the reactionary monarchy".⁽³⁾

November 6

The Egyptian Charge D'Affaires in Jeddah was informed by the Saudi Foreign Ministry that the Saudi government had decided to sever diplomatic relations with the U.A.R. Al-Ahram said that the excuse offered was that Egyptian planes had bombed Saudi villages.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Ibid, p. 8.

(2) Al-Ahram, November 5, 1962, p. 1.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Al-Ahram, November 7, 1962, p. 1.

November 7⁽¹⁾

The U.A.R. government issued a lengthy statement about the severing of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. The statement said that this "nervous measure" showed that the Saudi government was trying on the one hand to vent its hatred for the U.A.R. and on the other to conceal the crushing defeats of "the mercenary forces". It said that it was only to resist Saudi aggression that Egyptian forces had been dispatched to Yemen. The fact that all the battles so far had taken place on the borders proved that "all the operations were attempts from beyond the borders". Even assuming the validity of the Saudi claims that Egyptian aeroplanes had bombed Saudi villages the responsibility lay with the government of King Saud which had persistently followed an aggressive policy against Yemen. In conclusion, the statement said:

This nervous measure taken by the government of King Saud indicates nothing new about its attitude to the U.A.R. Official relations had been almost completely suspended since King Saud revealed his flagrant plotting against the aims of Arab revolutionary struggle and the demands for freedom, Socialism and unity. (2)

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- (1) No official figures are available, but Egyptian troops in Yemen were by this date estimated at about four thousand.
- (2) Al-Ahram, November 8, 1962, p. 9.

Chapter Twelve

Egyptian Intervention: Analysis

This chapter discusses the reasons behind the Republican appeal for help and then analyzes the response of the U.A.R.

The Republican Appeal for Help

Even before the 1948 revolution the Yemeni liberals doubted the acceptance by the Zaidi tribesmen of a progressive government. Traditional and conservative, these tribesmen were expected to rally to the counter-revolution. Hence in the 1948 revolution, the revolutionaries made desperate appeals for recognition and support to the Arab League and Arab states; they even claimed that they had already received external support. On the third day of the revolution Abdullah al-Wazir warned those opposing the new regime of severe reprisals including aerial bombardment,⁽¹⁾ although no aircraft were available to him. In another warning al-Wazir said that his calls for external support had been answered and that he had been given "land, sea and air forces".⁽²⁾ Before the fall of Sana he made a new frantic appeal to the Arab League and the heads of Arab states: "Sana, the capital of Yemen, is in grave danger from the savage, wild tribes. In the name of

(1) Amin Said, al-Yaman (Cairo: Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1959), pp. 141-142.

(2) Ibid, p. 142.

children, women and the elderly, I appeal to you to save them by any means and with all speed."⁽¹⁾

The collapse of the revolution confirmed the image of the Zaidi tribesmen as enemies of revolutionary change. A discussion which took place in 1953 among liberals and officers, imprisoned after Imam Ahmad's triumph, showed how pessimistic they had become. Abdul Rahman al-Aryani bitterly complained of the Zaidi tribesmen's unquestioning loyalty to the Imamate.⁽²⁾ Al-Sallal was more blunt and referred to the "mad men of upper Yemen".⁽³⁾

Convinced that the tribes which hold the balance of military power would be opposed to revolutionary change, the liberals reached the conclusion that for a revolution to succeed, there must be an external intervention on its side. Al-Sallal believed that there were two ways of introducing revolutionary change in Yemen: a gradual way which would take a long time to succeed and which depended on circumstances lacking in Yemen; or a short-cut. The short-cut meant:

A cautious and careful adventure, provided that it was based on a plan which guaranteed success.... This cannot be done unless we seek the help of the Arab rulers who approve of our plan and guarantee the cooperation which would finish what we started. Especially that today Arab rulers are adventurers /revolutionaries/ who support every movement which destroys obstacles in the way of Arab unity. (4)

(1) Abdullah bin Abdul Karim al-Jirafi, al-Moqtataf min Tarikh al-Yaman (Cairo: Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1951), p. 263.

(2) Abdullah al-Sallal and others, Min Wara al-Aswar (Beirut: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, n.d.), p. 33.

(3) Ibid, p. 91.

(4) Ibid, p. 93.

Al-Sallal went on:

We must seek help and cooperation and not stay alone. This is a rule which applies to every nation which tried to get rid of what we are trying to get rid of. It would not hurt us to seek the help even of the devil, as Churchill said. (1)

Al-Sallal quoted the example of Italy in the nineteenth century. Only when the help of France was secured could Italy be united. (2)

The collapse of the 1955 coup reinforced the fears of the liberals. Now they were more convinced than ever that without external help no revolution would succeed. After the 1952 revolution Egypt appeared as the best, if not only, source of help. In 1953 a liberal went so far as to say:

Who knows, an Arab leader might emerge who would unite the Arab countries under one government by steel and fire as Bismarck did. Maybe this is the plan which Egypt is trying to execute in co-operation with liberals in the Arab countries. (3)

Although dismayed by the development of friendly relations between Egypt and the Imam, the liberals never gave up hope. The adoption of an anti-reactionary role in 1961 firmly placed Egypt at their side. The jubilation of the liberals can be seen in the telegram Noman and al-Zobairi sent to President Nasser following his open attack on Imam Ahmad.

In the name of the Yemeni people in the enslaved north and occupied south we support your frank revolutionary stand vis-a-vis Arab reaction, the mask of

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid., pp. 93-94.

(3) Ibid., pp. 67-68.

foreign Imperialism. We feel today that our people who have for a long time yearned for your beloved voice /condemning the reactionaries/ are adequately compensated for the bitterness they have suffered over your silence which the executioners of Yemen enjoyed and considered as their perpetual right.... (1)

From December 1961 to the time the revolution broke out, Egypt consistently condemned the Imamate and openly called for its downfall.

Once in power, the revolutionaries naturally turned to Egypt. Although they claimed to have the support of all tribes, they expected most of the Zaidi tribes to rally to the Royalist cause. They were convinced that without Egyptian support their fate would not be different from that of the revolutionaries of 1948 and 1955. Hence they asked for Egyptian military support on the second day of the revolution before Saudi Arabia showed any reaction.

Egyptian Response (2)

Perception

The Yemeni revolution was perceived as a progressive,

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- (1) Al-Ittihad al-Yamani, Nahn ma Ahrar al-Yaman (Cairo: Dar al-Hana li al-Tibaah, n.d.), p. 12.
 - (2) In analyzing the Egyptian and, later on, the Saudi interventions a simplified version of a decision-making model developed by Burton will be employed. For the model see J.W. Burton, Systems, States, Diplomacy And Rules (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 65.

popular, pro-Egyptian movement which was threatened by a concerted reactionary-Imperialist effort. The activities of the liberals had made Yemen's backward conditions widely known. Any movement to change these conditions was considered progressive. Unlike the attempts of 1948 and 1955, the 1962 revolution abolished the Imamate and established a Republic. It could not therefore be considered a palace coup in which personalities, but not structures, change. Although Noman preferred to wait, both al-Zobairi and al-Baidani announced their support for the new movement. President Nasser perceived the revolution as being of a progressive nature. As he put it later;

The Yemeni Revolution is a liberating Revolution that is transforming Yemen from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. It has changed a feudalist, reactionary Government into a Government of justice and equality. (1)

It was immediately obvious that the revolution enjoyed support in Sana, Taizz and Hodaida. All of these cities declared for the new movement. It was generally assumed that in all Shafi areas the revolution would find support. These facts, and the calm that followed the take-over, led President Nasser to perceive the revolution as enjoying the support of the people. He believed that "From the first day the Revolution was successful and was supported by all the Yemeni people."⁽²⁾ The revolution was a "true realization of the will of the masses of the Yemeni people"⁽³⁾ in the cities as well as the tribal areas. Later Haikal

(1) A speech on January 9, 1963, Arab Political Documents 1963 (Beirut: Political Studies and Public Administration Department of the American University, n.d.), p. 8.

(2) Ibid

(3) A speech on May 20, 1963; Lajnat Kutub Qawmiyyah, al-Yaman Thawrah wa Salam (Cairo: Kutub Qawmiyyah, 1965), p. 335.

wrote that "during two days it became clear that all the people were with the revolution".⁽¹⁾ At this point President Nasser overlooked the fact that popular as the revolution appeared to be with city dwellers it was not necessarily accepted by the Zaidi tribesmen. Instead of recognizing this, the President perceived the revolution as being popular with "all the people".

There was little doubt concerning the new regime's external orientation. It would naturally stand with the revolutionary camp in the revolutionary-reactionary war. The appeal for Egyptian support which came on the second day of the revolution proved, if proof was needed, that the regime was openly committed to Egypt.

The appeal also made it clear that the new movement felt insecure. Al-Badr had escaped and the Republicans knew that it was a matter of time before he, or another member of the Royal Family, led a counter-revolution which was likely to attract the support of most Zaidi tribes.

There was here an apparent dilemma. How can a revolution be, at one and the same time, so popular and yet so insecure? President Nasser resolved the difficulty by persisting in perceiving the revolution as being popular and attributing the danger to external intervention: that of "reactionary" Saudi Arabia and Imperialist Britain. Left alone, the President thought, no tribe would side with the reactionary Imamate against the progressive Republic. The fact that the Royalist danger became obvious only after Saudi Arabia was committed to the Royalists confirmed the President's perception. President Nasser would keep insisting

(1) Al-Ahram, October 19, 1962, p. 9.

that the Egyptian intervention was a reaction to a Saudi-British-Jordanian intervention. The Egyptian mass media reported the battle as being between the Yemenis, on the one hand, and "Saudi-Jordanian" aggressors, supported by a few tribesmen who had been bought, on the other. There was no reference to Royalists - only to "infiltrators".⁽¹⁾

Classification and Memory

Since Syria's secession President Nasser had been without "victories". The "reactionaries" were denouncing him as loudly as he was denouncing them. Egypt's calls for revolution had not produced results. Almost coinciding with the first anniversary of the secession, the Yemeni revolution was the first breakthrough in the war on reaction. It was, President Nasser believed, "the first movement or the first act challenging reaction which was collaborating with Imperialism".⁽²⁾ As such, the revolution was classified as a victory for Egypt.

The Yemeni revolution brought forward memories related to past associations with Imam Ahmad and the other two "reactionaries", Husain and Saud. Two previous attempts at revolu-

(1) Holden attributes President Nasser's perception of the revolution as being popular everywhere in Yemen to inadequate pre-revolution intelligence reports. See David Holden, Farewell to Arabia (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 102. It is quite possible that Nasser was influenced by the experience of revolutions in Egypt, Iraq and Syria where a take-over of the capital practically meant that a revolution was successful.

(2) A speech on April 20, 1964; Lajnat Kutub Qawmiyyah, op. cit., p. 359.

tion, in 1948 and 1955, collapsed in Yemen. In both cases the sympathy of Egypt was with Imam Ahmad. In 1948 Egypt itself was dominated by reactionaries. In 1955 Egypt was motivated by the need to strengthen the anti-Imperialist camp. Things, however, had changed. Imam Ahmad had unmasked himself and proved an enemy of the principles the U.A.R. embodied. This time the revolution should not be allowed to fail.

President Nasser believed that Egypt went out of its way to accommodate Ahmad. The activities of Yemeni liberals were curtailed to please him. He was given full support in his quarrel with the British. When he applied for a confederation Egypt agreed to unite with Yemen. When he refused to implement the Charter Egypt did not protest. The Imam, however, was never grateful. Nor was he ever anything other than a reactionary. He showed his true colours after Syria's secession. Convinced that the secession meant the beginning of the end for Nasser, he was emboldened to attack him. Later Nasser recalled that the Imam "was confident that his reactionary regime was secure. He started attacking Socialism and freedom in poetry and prose."⁽¹⁾ Al-Badr, the new Imam, was not only weak and unreliable but also likely to revert to his father's ways.

Husain and Saud were even worse than Ahmad. Believing their protestations of sincerity, Nasser had offered them goodwill and friendship. Yet they were only waiting for the right time to turn against him - which they did, Husain in 1957 and Saud in 1958. Since then, they had never really stopped plotting against the U.A.R. Both were to a great extent responsible for Syria's secession.

(1) A speech on February 21, 1963; Arab Political Documents op. cit., p. 37.

Now that the Yemeni revolution had shaken the reactionary camp, the two Kings, supported by the Imperialists, were out to destroy the revolution and win Yemen back in their camp.

Policy-Making Process

The perception of the Yemeni revolution as a popular, progressive, pro-Egyptian movement, and its classification as a "victory" for Egypt, led President Nasser to consider it deserving Egyptian support in a general, as yet unspecified, manner. This decision was reached soon after the revolution. President Nasser later said that he supported the revolution "from the first day, from the first minute".⁽¹⁾ He said that he took this decision even before he knew the names of the officers who executed the revolution.⁽²⁾

Yet "support" is an elastic word. From the beginning Egypt had three choices:

1. To lend political and moral support which would include propaganda campaigns on behalf of the new regime.
2. To lend military assistance in the forms of arms and advisers but without the commitment of combat troops.
3. To send combat troops.

By the second day of the revolution President Nasser decided to lend political and moral support. Egyptian mass media gave the revolution an extremely friendly coverage and the U.A.R.

(1) A speech on January 9, 1963; Lajnat Kutub Qawmiyyah, op. cit., p. 327.

(2) Arab Political Documents op. cit., p. 8.

warned against external interventions. This support culminated in recognition on September 29.

Even as he decided to lend political support Nasser was becoming aware that this might not be enough. The Republicans had asked for military support and he began to think that they were justified. Later he recalled:

After the Yemeni revolution broke out under the command of the heroic leader Abdullah al-Sallal, what happened? Twenty-four hours after the revolution broke out, I was thinking.... It became apparent that Saud would not keep quiet, and then the foreigners in the south the English who are staying in Aden and the Protectorates, became scared and it became apparent that they would not keep quiet. The introduction of revolution in the Arabian Peninsula worries Imperialism, worries reaction, worries the English and King Saud, worries the enemies of progress, worries the agents of Imperialism /and/ King Husain. A day after the revolution we were discussing our attitude to the revolution and our position if the revolution was exposed to external aggression. Do we keep quiet? Do we let reaction, King Husain /Nasser probably meant King Saud/ spend a few million riyals and destroy the Yemeni peoples' right of revolution and right of life? (1)

Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as Nasser expected, reacted with hostility to the new movement. Nasser reached the conclusion that left alone, the Yemeni revolution had no chance of survival.

To Nasser, the defeat of the revolution would mean

(1) A speech on December 23, 1962; Al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 5.

much more than the failure of another attempt against the regime in Yemen. It would be a victory for the "reactionaries" who were trying to isolate and defeat him. Speaking later to a group of Egyptian soldiers who returned from Yemen, Nasser said:

When you went to Yemen there was a violent battle everywhere in the Arab nation aiming at your revolution here in Egypt, your unionist, Socialist revolution, the revolution which worked for the freedom of the country and the freedom of the citizens.... There were severe campaigns... campaigns against the Egyptian people and campaigns against the Egyptian army. (1)

A victory for the "reactionaries" would automatically be a defeat for Egypt. Furthermore, the reactionaries would then be encouraged to bring the battle closer to Egypt.

Do we keep quiet and watch reaction defeat the revolution in Yemen and then turn against us and say "Let us move the battle against Socialism, against progress, against the Egyptian people, to Cairo?" Never! Under no circumstances! We must defend our principles in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula against reaction, against Imperialism and against Zionism. (2)

On September 30, President Nasser decided to lend military support without the commitment of troops. "Trainers, advisers and military equipment were dispatched to aid the small Yemeni army." (3)

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- (1) A speech on August 11, 1963; al-Jomhuriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Mottahida, Nashrat al-Wathaiq, 12th year vol. 2, (Cairo: Maslahat al-Istilamat, n.d.) p. 3.
 - (2) Al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 6.
 - (3) John S. Badeau, The American Approach To The Arab World (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 127.

The decision to send arms and advisers was hardly taken when it became clear that this form of support in turn would not be sufficient to protect the revolution. Reports sent back from Yemen indicated that the situation was much worse than President Nasser expected. The defence and irregular armies, which were thought to be predominantly pro-Imamic anyway, had almost completely disintegrated. The regular army had always had low standards of discipline, equipment and training and had never been an effective fighting force. Now its limited capacity was reduced further. Almost all the trained officers were preoccupied with their new political roles. There were purges among senior officers. The soldiers still maintained their tribal loyalties and could not be counted upon to obey all orders regardless of their effect on these loyalties. It was established beyond doubt that al-Badr was not only alive but proceeding to Hajjah and gathering tribal support as he advanced. Marib was threatened by the surrounding tribes. In this situation the news of al-Hasan and other members of the Royal Family entering Yemen, after having been supplied with money and arms by Saudi Arabia, was most alarming. President Nasser had hoped that whatever fighting needed would be done by the Republicans with the Egyptians assuming an advisory and secondary role. Now it was clear that the Republicans were hardly equipped to fight. The Egyptians would have to bear the brunt of the battle.

The gloomy picture of the internal situation in Yemen was matched by an alarming external situation. Haikal wrote later:

It was clear that King Saud threw all his weight in the battle by first mobilizing all the Yemenis who were forced by circumstances to migrate from their country to his and reinforcing them by Saudi tribes living near the border

after having lavishly paid them. He then sought to reinforce these with some Yemeni tribes who might accept his gold-filled bags and behind all this some elements he can trust from his regular army.... It was clear that King Husain threw all his weight - or weightlessness - in the battle.... It was clear that Britain with its designs on the Arab south feared the revolution and secretly participated in the battle. (1)

The new conclusion was that unless Egypt sent combat troops the Republic would collapse.

Sending troops, however, was quite different from providing arms and advisers. It was more dramatic and riskier; it was also unprecedented and irrevocably committed Egyptian prestige. President Nasser had hoped that local movements would do his fighting for him in the "war on reaction". Egypt would provide the example, the moral and political support, but could not be committed to every local struggle. In the Charter Nasser took care to note the inadvisability of such intimate involvement.

If the United Arab Republic feels that it is her... duty to support every popular, national movement, this support must remain within the framework of the basic principles, leaving the manoeuvres of the struggle to the local elements to rally the national potentialities and drive the struggle toward its end in conformity with the local process of development and potentialities. (2)

No matter how tense Egypt's relationship became with an Arab country outright military force was never employed. Although in 1957 Egypt sent troops to Syria which had a quarrel with Turkey

(1) Al-Ahram, October 19, 1962, p. 9.

(2) The Charter (Cairo: Information Department, 1962), p. 109.

at the time, this was more a gesture of solidarity than an actual intervention; a clash with Turkey was unlikely. Even when he had the constitutional right to use force during Syria's secession Nasser reversed his decision to send Egyptian troops as soon as it became clear that the new government controlled Syria. He justified this reversal by saying that Arab blood should never be shed by Arab arms. Now this principle would have to be violated. Furthermore, Nasser was worried about the reaction of the Egyptian army. Following Syria's secession, and the maltreatment of Egyptians then residing in Syria, some Egyptians began to question the wisdom of entanglement in Arab affairs. The President never forgot that Egypt had only recently become conscious of its Arab identity; this new orientation was not yet internalized. Nasser feared that a direct Egyptian intervention might provoke another direct Imperialist intervention.

On the other hand, there were factors making the commitment of troops possible. The Egyptian community's reaction to the Yemeni revolution was favourable. Not only did the vast majority of Egyptians believe all that the mass media told them but they completely trusted the President and expected him to make the right decisions. If he thought that the use of troops was necessary they would understand and accept the decision. Nasser did not have to worry about pressure groups, unfavourable reactions from the community or dissenting views among his advisers.⁽¹⁾

(1) Later, it was generally thought that Kamal al-Din Husain, a close associate of Nasser, was against the intervention; see Peter Mansfield, Nasser's Egypt (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin African Library, 1969), p. 65. However, there is so far no evidence that any of Nasser's advisers were against it at the time the decision was taken.

Furthermore, while there was still an element of risk it did not warrant too much alarm. The Soviet Union had recognized the Republic on October 1, and there was little doubt that it would support the anti-Imperialist, anti-reactionary Egyptian intervention. The United States since President Kennedy was elected had tried to shed its image as the ally of conservative Arab regimes and to develop a more balanced attitude. While Nasser suspected that American sympathies were with the Royalists and Saudi Arabia he doubted that the United States would intervene militarily in Yemen. Even Britain which he was convinced was secretly helping the Royalists would be unlikely to fight on their behalf.

Two considerations tipped the balance in favour of sending troops. The first consideration was that Nasser perceived the defeat of the Republic as a long-run threat to the U.A.R. itself. It would leave the initiative with reaction; revolutionary forces, including Egypt, would be on the defensive. The cold war with reaction had turned into a shooting war. This was the way reaction wanted it and he was not going to shun the battle. Nasser believed that "this is not the battle of the Yemenis... it is our battle".⁽¹⁾ The intervention was undertaken to "face up to reaction which wanted to attack us inside our country".⁽²⁾ The battle with reaction was a "battle of life or death... one of us will disappear. God willing, reaction will disappear".⁽³⁾ The Egyptian troops were sent to Yemen "to defend Cairo in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, to attack reaction in the heart of reaction".⁽⁴⁾

(1) Al-Ahram, December 24, 1962, p. 6.

(2) Ibid, p. 7.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

The second consideration was the President's belief that the intervention would not require the presence of a large number of troops for a long time.⁽¹⁾ He had no idea at the time that an increasing number of the tribes would fight at the Imam's side and that the arrival of Egyptian troops instead of intimidating them into submission to the Republic would increase their attachment to the Imam. The fact that only a hundred were sent in the beginning indicates how optimistic Nasser was. Nasser had scant knowledge of Yemen's geography and history and almost no knowledge of its tribes.⁽²⁾ He was convinced that only external intervention enticed a few tribes to side against the Republic. He had no doubt that his vastly superior troops would have no difficulty in subduing them. Furthermore, Nasser considered the Saudi regime insecure and doubted its ability to continue to support the Royalists. However, President Nasser did not expect the intervention to be simply a military exercise. He probably thought that at worst, a few thousand troops would be required and then for no longer than a few months.

The decision to send troops was probably taken on October 2. On that day the Saudi pilots arrived in a Saudi military plane loaded with arms.⁽³⁾ Its arrival confirmed Nasser's analysis.

(1) In 1968 President Nasser said, "Yemen was a miscalculation. We never thought it would lead to what it did." Look, March 19, 1968, p. 67.

(2) Dr. Hasan Sabri al-Kholi acknowledges that Egypt had very little information about Yemen at the time of the intervention but argues that once the decision to defend the Republic was taken no further amount of knowledge would have changed the outcome; Interview, Cairo, 18.1.1970.

(3) See below p.

On the one hand, it revealed the extent to which King Saud was prepared to go in his support of the Royalists. On the other, it showed that Saud's action was unpopular. Egypt later claimed that the decision to send troops was taken "only after the free Saudi pilots revealed the intentions of invasion".⁽¹⁾ It is much more likely that the decision would have been taken even had no Saudi plane arrived.

President Nasser justified the departure from the principle that "Arab blood should not be shed by Arab arms" by saying that reaction left him no choice. Confident that because of his principles and because of the circumstances Egypt would be unable to act, reaction felt secure to attack the Yemeni revolution. The decision to send troops was "painful" but it was necessary. "Otherwise we would acknowledge reaction's right to shed blood in accordance with its designs and we would leave principles with no arms to legitimately protect them."⁽²⁾ Haikal went so far as to say, "We did not go to a war in Yemen. It would be closer to the truth to say that we went to prevent a war in Yemen."⁽³⁾

Execution

According to President Nasser, his fears of the army's unwillingness to go to Yemen proved unjustified. There was no reluctance to serve in Yemen. Nasser later said:

When I asked Marshal Abdul Hakim Amir

(1) Al-Ahram, November 16, 1962, p. 9.

(2) A speech on May 20, 1963; Lajnat Kutub Qawmiyyah, op. cit., p. 335.

(3) Al-Ahram, November 16, 1962, p. 9.

how would the armed forces feel when they were ordered to Yemen he said he would answer me after twenty-four hours. After twenty-four hours he told me that he had asked for a number of volunteers to go to Yemen and all the members of the armed forces, all the officers, volunteered and there was nothing to worry about. (1)

It seems that the transfer of Egyptian troops to Yemen went smoothly. Haikal claimed that it was a "miracle in military movement". (2)

Because it was unannounced, and perhaps more importantly because it was gradual, Egypt's military intervention did not explode as a dramatic, sensational development. It was a quiet, almost unobtrusive, process. On October 2, The Times reported a series of flights between Egypt and Yemen. On October 5, The New York Times said that "Egyptian forces, including paratroopers, have recently been shipped from Suez to an undisclosed destination in the Red Sea". Not until October 9, did The Times report that there was "no doubt that Egypt is now sending troops as well as arms to Yemen". The first Egyptian acknowledgement of the presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen did not come until October 19, in an article by Haikal in al-Ahram.

Feedback

Even before the first groups of Egyptian soldiers landed in Yemen, the Republicans asked for reinforcements. According to Haikal, when President Nasser sent a telegram to al-Sallal

(1) Al-Mottahidah, op. cit., p. 10.

(2) Al-Ahram, November 16, 1962, p. 9.

giving him the details of the Egyptian force on its way to Yemen al-Sallal's answer was a telegram which simply said, "More. More. More."⁽¹⁾ As we saw in the last chapter, in one month the number of Egyptian troops jumped from one hundred to an estimated four thousand.⁽²⁾ In the first week of October Sada and Marib were occupied by the Royalists. Having succeeded in expelling the Royalists from Sada and besieging them in Marib, the Egyptian troops fought a bigger battle in Harad which was attacked by the Royalists early in November.

The Republican regime was being recognized by an increasing number of states. By the end of October among major Western powers only France, Britain and the United States refused to grant recognition. In the Arab world Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Libya were the only countries that still recognized the Royalists. To President Nasser this was in harmony with his perception. Progressives recognized the Republic;⁽³⁾ reactionaries sympathized with the Royalists.

The Egyptian intervention did not turn out to be risky. There were no violent reactions on the part of the United States or Britain. The sympathy of the Arab masses seemed to lie

(1) Al-Ahram, November 16, 1962, p. 9.

(2) This escalation process continued until in 1965 the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen was estimated at seventy thousand.

(3) Although Syria and Iraq recognized the Republic the recognition was not taken as indicating approval of the new Yemeni Regime. Syria's recognition on October 1, was attributed to "popular pressure" (Al-Ahram, October 2, 1962, p. 1), and Iraq's recognition which came two weeks after the revolution warned against external interventions in Yemen's affairs, thus, indirectly, criticizing the U.A.R.

with the Republic and Egypt. The vast majority of these masses believed the Egyptian versions of the developments in Yemen. The allegations of al-Badr's death, "Saudi-Jordanian aggression", and "infiltrators" were widely accepted. In Egypt itself, as the President expected, there were no signs of opposition to the intervention in Yemen.

Nothing in the feedback worried Nasser except the increasing Royalist strength and the continuing Saudi intervention on their behalf. Yet early in November the President was still convinced that time was definitely on his side. The defection of more Saudi pilots to Cairo and the formation of a new government proved that King Saud found it difficult to cope with the internal situation. Nasser did not expect Faisal, who appeared determined to continue supporting the Royalists, to be more successful. As for the Royalists, now that the Egyptian troops constituted an effective force they could not hold on for long.

Part IV

The Impact of the Revolution on Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy

Chapter Thirteen

Setting

Under the heading of internal setting, this chapter discusses the foreign policy decision-making machinery of Saudi Arabia, King Saud, and Prince Faisal as decision-makers and the internal situation in 1962. Under external setting it traces the development of Arab and international policies and concludes with an examination of the external situation in 1962.

Internal Setting

Decision-Making Machinery

During King Abdul Aziz's reign the King himself was the source of all important decisions in the domestic and foreign spheres. While the King delegated some of his powers in the domestic sphere to his Minister of Finance, to Prince Saud in Najd, and to Prince Faisal in Hijaz, he maintained a personal control of foreign policy. Only during the last few years of his life, when his health was failing, did Abdul Aziz allow Prince Saud to share in the responsibility for foreign policy decisions. The establishment of a Council of Ministers in 1953, with Saud as Prime Minister, did not interfere with the management of foreign affairs. The Council operated in a purely advisory function and none of its recommendations could become binding without the King's approval.

Following Abdul Aziz's death in November 1953, Saud

became King and Faisal was designated Crown Prince. In 1954 Saud made Faisal Prime Minister. This title carried little power, however. Despite a new law increasing the functions of the Council the advisory nature of its recommendations was not altered. The King's position remained dominant. From 1953 to 1958 King Saud was personally in charge of foreign policy decision-making.

Unlike his father, King Saud had to ensure the support of his brothers to continue exercising his vast powers. In 1958 the support of most princes shifted to Crown Prince Faisal, and Saud was forced to hand over to him all his executive powers.⁽¹⁾ A new law was promulgated which provided constitutional justification for this transference. The Council and the Prime Minister were given executive powers. Although the King still exercised a few functions, the approval of the budget for example, the Prime Minister became in effect the chief executive responsible for both domestic and foreign affairs. Thus, until 1958 foreign policy decision-making was the prerogative of the King; from 1958 on it became the responsibility of the Prime Minister.

Foreign policy decision-making machinery was simple and centralized. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs neither made nor recommended policies. The man responsible, whether the King or the Prime Minister, personally made all the decisions. He could ask for the counsel of his advisers but this was not obligatory. The Council played no role in foreign policy; it was not even consulted. This centralization of decision-making was facilitated by the fact that "until very recently the vast majority of the people have shown little concern, with the possible exception of the

(1) See above p. 181.

Israeli problem, for matters of foreign policy".⁽¹⁾

King Saud

Saud was born in 1902, received a rudimentary classical education and from an early age participated in his father's military expeditions. In 1933 his father designated him Crown Prince. The decision was popular with the Royal Family and Saud did not face any challenge as the future king. His responsibilities increased as his father became weaker. In 1953 he was appointed Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces as well as Prime Minister.

Some had expected that with the death of its founder and first monarch Saudi Arabia would lapse into anarchy. This gloomy prospect did not materialize and the succession was smooth and orderly. The new King started his reign with the Royal Family firmly behind him and with the country as a whole showing signs of goodwill.

From his early days as King, Saud displayed a yearning for glory and popularity which amateur psychologists attributed to a strong and long-suppressed jealousy of his father. In the domestic sphere he promised that his reign would be a war on ignorance, disease and poverty. In the foreign sphere he followed an activist line which was inaugurated by a series of state visits to Arab and Moslem countries.

(1) George A. Lipsky and others, Saudi Arabia (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1959), p. 138.

King Abdul Aziz had consistently resisted the temptation to translate his legendary fame and the almost universal reverence he commanded into a position of leadership in Arab politics. His first over-riding concern was to build a strong, united Kingdom. This achieved, he concentrated on consolidating the new entity and did not take an active concern in developments beyond the Arabian Peninsula. The fact that the era of nationalism and turbulent inter-Arab relations had not arrived yet helped in maintaining the inactivist line. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy revolved within three principles: friendship with Britain and the United States; total absence of contacts with the Communist Block; modest participation in Arab politics with no attempt at leadership. Far from being a Yahya-type isolationist, King Abdul Aziz nevertheless did not see any wisdom in close involvement in Arab politics.

King Saud had much more ambitious plans. He was determined to make full use of the prestige he enjoyed as the defender of the holy shrines in Mecca and Madina and of the new affluence introduced by oil. He wanted Saudi Arabia to assume a place if not of leadership at least of prominence in Arab politics. It was with this intention that he started his reign.

As a foreign policy decision-maker, the King showed himself capable of breaking with tradition. He followed a violently anti-British line which was in complete contrast with a long history of cordial British-Saudi relations. It soon became clear that the King was capable of quickly making up his mind and as quickly changing it. Hence the sudden shifts in Saudi foreign policy. Intimate relations with Egypt in 1956 were followed by coolness in 1957 and almost a total break in 1958. By 1957 the anti-Imperialist line was all but forgotten. Hostility with Jordan

in 1956 was followed by intimate friendship in 1957.

King Saud made his decisions quickly without long consideration of alternatives and consequences, expected quick results, and failing such results was liable to lose interest in a certain venture. He was generally thought to be under the complete influence of his advisers. This, however, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that none of his advisers were known to tell him anything except what he expected to hear. The shifts in foreign policy cannot be traced to any changes in the composition, or thinking, of his advisers.

King Saud had an exaggerated belief in the efficacy of money as an instrument of foreign policy. This was in keeping both with his generosity which bordered irresponsibility and with the domestic experience in which subsidies proved a vital element in keeping the tribes under control. In most foreign policy problems the King believed that money had an important role to play.

His anti-Nasser venture in 1958 cost the King dearly. Once again in control in 1960 Saud seemed to have learned from bitter experience. His bid for leadership proved fruitless and the King now became much less impulsive than in his earlier years. His approach became more realistic and there were no sudden changes. He would now be content if other Arab states left him alone.

Prince Faisal

Born in 1905, Faisal like Saud received a traditional education and was involved in his father's military activ-

ities. Unlike Saud, however, Faisal was at a very early age exposed to the outside world; at fourteen he made an official tour of Europe. ⁽¹⁾ His interest in foreign affairs was strengthened when he was appointed Foreign Minister in 1930, a position that, except for two years, he occupied from that time till 1962. It was in this capacity that he travelled, met statesmen, and developed his ideas about international relations.

Both Saud and Faisal were overshadowed by their father. As the viceroy of Hijaz, Faisal had more latitude but King Abdul Aziz's personality was so dominant that at the time he died both Saud and Faisal were unknown quantities. Nonetheless, at the time of the succession it was remarked:

Had it been left to foreign observers to choose the King, Faisal would probably have been their choice. His wide travels and experience abroad seemed to have given him more natural dignity, drive and social grace... and many inferred a more extensive mental capacity as well. ⁽²⁾

Faisal did not exercise any effective power until 1958. He proved very successful in meeting the two most pressing problems he faced. Externally, he was able to mend the badly damaged relations with Egypt. Internally, he introduced a series of unprecedented austerity measures that succeeded in producing a speedy economic recovery.

As Prime Minister, Prince Faisal had a meditative, almost philosophical, turn of mind. He believed the consequences

(1) Gerald De Gaury, Faisal (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1967), pp. 23-30.

(2) Michael Sheldon Cheney, Big Oilman From Arabia (London: Heinemann, 1958), p. 270.

of hasty actions infinitely more harmful than those of delayed action. He felt that many problems could be safely left for time to solve and that in certain circumstances inaction was an appropriate response. While Faisal realized that a measure of popular support was necessary for a policy to succeed, he did not believe that popularity should be an end in itself. Foreign policy in particular must not cater to popular emotions. The masses were too misinformed, too excitable and too unreliable to exert any beneficial influence on the making of foreign policy. Real interests, not emotions or considerations of pride, should be the final determinants of policy.

Faisal believed that foreign policy should be conducted in a calm, quiet manner by rational statesmen who should endeavour, patiently and persistently, to solve their differences. Only fools go around making enemies. A state must know its limitations as well as its strengths and should never set itself goals too high to achieve. Adventures might bring a short-run success; in the long run they were bound to fail.

Prince Faisal's concept of Saudi Arabia's role was similar to his father's. He had no illusions about Saudi Arabia's leading the Arab world. Hence he was careful not to antagonize, or compete with, Egypt. He found Nasser's style demagogic but was aware of the Egyptian leader's strong appeal. He also believed that, with or without Nasser, Egypt had assets Saudi Arabia could never match. So long as Egypt left the Saudi regime alone he was prepared to do all he could to accommodate it. It was because of this attitude that he was perceived as pro-Egyptian.

As a decision-maker, in domestic as well as in foreign spheres, Faisal was known to take his time before reaching

any decisions. He hated to commit himself irrevocably before he was absolutely convinced of the wisdom of an action. He refused to be rushed, thus at times giving the deceptive impression of being indecisive. In this extreme caution the roots of the notion of "Faisal the enigma" are to be found. However, once his mind was made up Faisal stuck to his course with dogged persistence.

The Internal Situation In 1962

In December 1960 Prince Faisal, following King Saud's refusal to approve the budget he submitted, resigned. The King, who had been anxious to regain his executive powers, immediately accepted the resignation. For the next two years the rivalry between the King and the Crown Prince was the most important factor in Saudi Arabian politics.

King Saud formed a new Cabinet with himself as Prime Minister, thus continuing with the tradition of the Prime Minister as the chief executive. Prominent in the new Cabinet was Prince Talal, who was known for his outspoken liberal views, and who now strove to give the regime a liberal and popular image. Talal, however, soon quarrelled with the King and in July 1961 he resigned. Meanwhile, Faisal, out of office, continued to receive the support of most princes. When King Saud had to go abroad for treatment in November 1961 he had no choice but to appoint Faisal as Regent.

Saud returned in March 1962 and a new Cabinet was formed with Saud as Prime Minister and Faisal as Deputy Prime Minister. In the past Faisal was said to have turned down this post which did not carry any real powers. It was probably in

response to the increasing Egyptian attacks on the regime that the two brothers felt the need for reconciliation and Faisal accepted the post.

In August Prince Talal, enraged by the seizure of his property in Saudi Arabia, publicly attacked the Saudi regime in a press conference in Beirut. The Saudi government answered by depriving him of his Saudi passport. Later in the month Talal, along with two brothers and a cousin, moved to Egypt to continue agitating against the regime.⁽¹⁾

In September 1962 the regime was subject to many pressures. The violent Egyptian campaign was in full swing. In comparison the attacks of the Saudi mass media appeared ineffectual. Talal's defection was the first open break in the solidarity of a family which had always been proud of the solid front it presented to the world. Despite many disagreements the facade of unity was always maintained. Even the serious quarrel between Saud and Faisal was never carried out in the public. Hence Talal's action was a very disturbing precedent. The prestige of the Saudi Royal Family both in Saudi Arabia and abroad was at a low ebb. Furthermore, the relationship between Saud and Faisal was a little uneasy. Nobody expected the existing arrangement, in which Faisal, despite the support he enjoyed, accepted a post with no effective power, to last for long.

Although the regime was perceived by most outside observers as being in danger of imminent collapse, in reality no serious threat existed.

It should... be remembered that in

(1) For more details see De Gaury, op. cit., pp. 103-109.

Saudi Arabia there exist no political parties of any kind, nor are there any leading families or political leaders who can effectively contest Saudi leadership in the state. All key positions of the government are held by the Saudi princes... or by individuals of unquestioned loyalty to the royal family. The army, which represents the sole potential threat to the regime, is kept small (13,000) and widely dispersed throughout the country; while the royal bodyguard, the so-called "white army"... is poised against any threat to the status-quo. (1)

Prince Faisal was in no doubt at all about the regime's ability to survive, even if King Saud had his moments of worry. It was therefore a harassed, but not mortally threatened, regime that faced the news of the revolution in Yemen.

External Setting

Development of Inter-Arab Roles

1955 - 1956 Anti-Imperialist Role

King Saud started his reign with an active Arab policy which in 1955 culminated in the adoption of an anti-Imperialist role. There is no single satisfactory explanation for this development. Three considerations were probably involved. First, although the history of British-Saudi relations was mainly

(1) H.B. Sharabi, Governments and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), p. 234.

one of friendship, the British support for the Hashimite regimes in Iraq and Jordan had always been a sore point. The dynastic rivalries between the Hashimite and al-Saud families were strong and long established; the principle of "the friend of my enemy is my enemy" operated to some extent. However, King Abdul Aziz was firmly convinced of the value of British friendship and allowed no disagreement to spoil it. King Saud did not attach importance to this friendship and was consequently unrestrained in his resentment of the British-Hashimite alliance.

Second, anti-Imperialist stands were proving increasingly popular. By opposing the British Imperialists King Saud could appear as a popular hero not only in his own country but throughout the Arab world. Saud might have even fancied himself as the architect of an achievement as great as that of his father: ridding the Arabian Peninsula, and probably the whole Middle East, of British Imperialism.

Third, there was the Buraimi question, which turned out to be a role-influencing situation. The oasis of Buraimi was claimed by Saudi Arabia on the one hand and by the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman on the other. In 1952 a Saudi force occupied the oasis. A standstill agreement was concluded with Britain, which was acting on behalf of the Ruler and the Sultan, followed by an arbitration agreement in 1954. This agreement established a five-member tribunal composed of one British representative, one Saudi, and three neutral members. The tribunal met in Geneva on September 11, 1955. Before a decision was reached the British representative resigned on the ground that the Saudi member, being a government official, could not act as an impartial arbitrator. In October the British Foreign Office accused Saudi

Arabia of using bribery to win the support of the inhabitants of the oasis. Later in the month a British-led force expelled the Saudi garrison and occupied Buraimi.⁽¹⁾ There was an immediate reaction as

... all Arabia rose in a joyous outburst of outraged patriotism. Press and radio shrieked revenge, the nation's armed might was flexed in parades, happy crowds roamed the streets crying for a holy war The King had never been so popular. (2)

King Saud had no doubt at all that Buraimi belonged to Saudi Arabia and he thought that the British support for the counter-claim was entirely unjustified. He considered the expulsion of the Saudis from the oasis as unwarranted aggression.

These considerations combined to lead to the adoption of an anti-Imperialist role. In February 1955 King Saud issued a statement warning against pacts and condemning the Arabs who joined them.⁽³⁾ In October a basically anti-Imperialist alliance was concluded with Egypt, to be reinforced with the tripartite Jeddah pact. In 1956 Saudi Arabia was fully committed to the anti-Imperialist role. Speaking of that period, Sir Anthony Eden later said:

He /King Saud/ was making continuous attempts to undermine his neighbours on the Persian Gulf and in Oman. Widespread and lavish bribery was directed against the British position in the Middle East. As a result, an absolute monarch of a medieval State was play-

(1) For more details on the Buraimi problem see Lipsky and others, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

(2) Cheney, op. cit., p. 288.

(3) Al-Abhath (March, 1955), p. 115.

ing the Soviet game. (1)

In 1955 and 1956 Saudi Arabia's anti-Imperialist outlook determined its relations with other Arab States. Thus, relations were strong with Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, all following anti-Imperialist roles. Relations with Iraq were bad and with Jordan even worse, except for a brief period in 1956 when King Husain appeared to follow an anti-Imperialist role.

1957 - 1961 Independent Role

Early in 1957 King Saud was having second thoughts about the anti-Imperialist role. Two years of active anti-British policies yielded no great results. Buraimi had not been recovered. The King enjoyed a measure of popularity but it was President Nasser who captured the imagination of the masses and who got the credit for all the victories. King Saud was regarded as a junior partner in the anti-Imperialist struggle. The Suez war showed that anti-Imperialist policies were not as safe as they at first appeared. Furthermore, Nasser's anti-Imperialism was leading to conflict with the United States, a prospect the King did not relish for his country. It was in this frame of mind that Saud travelled to the United States in January 1957. There a similarity of opinion was discovered and the King was encouraged to assert his independence from Egypt. Upon his return, Saud gradually broke away from Nasser's camp; an independent role was evolved.

Saudi Arabia's new role soon led to marked improvement in relations with Iraq and Jordan. King Saud even sent troops to assist King Husain in maintaining his position following his

(1) Sir Anthony Eden, Full Circle (London: Caswell, 1960), pp. 331-332.

clash with Nasserist elements. During the Syrian-Turkish crisis, Saud, unsuccessfully, offered to mediate. Although relations with Egypt did not immediately deteriorate, it was becoming clear that the two countries were drifting apart. Now that Saudi Arabia no longer pursued an anti-Imperialist role, the thing that united the two countries most was gone. King Saud became conscious of the common interests the institution of monarchy created and began to perceive Nasser as a potential threat to that institution.

With Faisal in control the independent role was maintained, but Faisal took care to steer a neutral course in Arab affairs and not in any way to provoke Egypt. The Saudi troops were recalled from Jordan. The Iraqi revolution in July 1958, which led to the establishment of a republic, did not lead to strained relations with that country. When Saud took charge again he continued with Faisal's cautious policies.

During the anti-Imperialist phase the Saudi regime had appeared on the verge of accepting the Arab nationalist doctrine. Now, however, it was becoming clear that the Saudi regime's version of Arab nationalism was not the same as the one advocated by Nasser and his followers. To the Saudi rulers their Arabness was such a self evident fact that no theoretical elaboration was needed. Being of tribal stock, they thought of themselves as the real, ethnically pure Arabs. While they recognized the special ties among Arab countries they attributed them as much to religion and proximity as to Arabism. They did not recognize any mystical links emanating from Arab nationalism. If unity was to be the goal, it should be based on Islam, rather than Arabism.

The critics of the Saudi regime, including at a later time President Nasser, could never understand how the Saudi

rulers could, with their extravagant and lax ways, insist on speaking in the name of Islam. The Islamic orientation, they maintained, was just a pretence. This, however, was not entirely so. While the Saudi regime as it evolved in the fifties bore little resemblance to the earlier austere Wahhabi movements, it was nevertheless the inheritor of the Wahhabi legacy. Islam was the *raison d'etre* of the Saudi state, both in its first inception in the eighteenth century, and at its revival at the hands of King Abdul Aziz. Islam, regardless of any lapses in practice, was still the official ideology with which Arab nationalism, as a secular doctrine, could not compete.

1961 - 1962 Anti-Socialist Role

The Saudi regime regarded the U.A.R.'s adoption of Socialist measures in July 1961 with extreme apprehension. Socialism was considered an un-Islamic, potentially destructive creed. Now that it was applied in Egypt, it would be even more dangerous. Yet the regime was not sure whether to come into the open and condemn Socialism outright, thus risking a rupture with Egypt, or to keep silent. Some articles in the Saudi press criticized Socialism but no official statements were made. After Syria's secession, President Nasser enacted an anti-reactionary role. Uncertainty in the Saudi regime was ended and Saudi Arabia adopted an anti-Socialist role.

Now all the differences and disagreements between the two regimes came to the fore. Violent propaganda attacks were exchanged.⁽¹⁾ To the Saudi regime Nasser appeared bent on its

(1) See above pp. 184-187.

destruction, and it had to defend itself. Nasser's references to Arab nationalism, Socialism now incorporated in the doctrine, were countered by references to Islam as the ideology of the Saudi regime. Relations with other Arab countries following anti-Socialist roles, Syria, Yemen, and Jordan became quite close.

Development of International Role

Pro-American Non-Alignment 1953 - 1962

At the time Saud became King, Saudi Arabia had for years maintained no diplomatic ties with any Communist country⁽¹⁾ and enjoyed cordial relations with the United States. King Abdul Aziz deeply hated Communism and there were no pressing political needs to justify contacts with the Communist Block. The United States, on the other hand, advocated no dangerous philosophies and was ready to provide arms and technical assistance. The economy depended almost entirely on the exploitation of oil, which was carried out by Aramco, an American concern. The relationship between the government and the company was quite satisfactory; the government did its best to facilitate the company's work while the latter scrupulously respected Saudi sovereignty. In 1951 a treaty was signed between the two countries, providing for American military aid and for the lease of the airbase at Dahran.

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- (1) When King Abdul Aziz entered Hijaz there was a Soviet Consulate. The Soviet Union was the first state to recognize him as King of Hijaz. The Consulate later became a Legation. In 1938 the Soviet representatives were recalled and the Legation was closed. Since then there had been no diplomatic representation with any Communist state.

King Saud continued both traditions. No diplomatic representation was established with any Communist state, and the friendly relations with the United States were not disturbed. Even at the height of the anti-Imperialist phase there was no friction with the United States. Saudi Arabia, however, did not enter any military alliances with the United States.⁽¹⁾ Officially Saudi Arabia was non-aligned and on this point there was no disagreement between Saud and Faisal. There were no advantages to be gained from a formal alliance.

The External Situation In 1962

Saudi Arabia's anti-Socialist role determined its relations with other Arab countries. Relations with Egypt were worse than ever before, whereas ties with anti-Socialist Syria, Yemen, and - especially - Jordan were getting stronger. In August an agreement with Jordan was signed providing for military and political cooperation. Cairo Radio said that the agreement was directed against Egypt and Amman Radio defiantly answered: "Yes. We are in alliance against abd an-Nasir."⁽²⁾

Diplomatic ties with Britain and France were severed following the Suez war and they had not been restored. However, after 1957 Saudi Arabia stopped pursuing anti-Imperialist policies. The Buraimi question, although still unresolved, was no longer a burning issue. Even in the absence of official relations Britain

(1) When the Dahran base agreement, having been renewed in 1957, expired in 1962 it was not renewed again.

(2) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: B.B.C.) 5.9.1962, p. 3.

and Saudi Arabia were moving closer to each other.

The most disturbing feature of Saudi Arabia's external situation in 1962 was the perceived American partiality toward Nasser. The United States not only did not react to the turning of Egypt into a semi-Communist Socialist state but was continuing to help Nasser economically and seemed indifferent to his violent attacks on the Saudi regime. To the Saudi rulers this attitude made little sense and could only be attributed to a secret understanding by which Nasser continued to enjoy American economic aid and a free hand in the Arab world in return for undertaking not to attack Israel and to prepare gradually for an Israeli-Arab settlement. Friendship with the United States had always been the cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's international policy. Now in their hour of need the Saudi rulers felt themselves to be abandoned; while ^{their} American "friends" maintained neutrality in a confrontation designed to overthrow them. It was mainly to discuss this issue with American officials that Prince Faisal went to New York in September. Ostensibly, he was there to head the Saudi delegation to the U.N.

Chapter Fourteen

Saudi Intervention: Narrative

Utilizing mostly Royalist and Saudi sources, this chapter traces the developments connected with the Saudi intervention. As in chapter twelve the narrative starts with September 27, and ends with November 7.⁽¹⁾

September 27

Al-Hasan announced in New York that he was leaving for Yemen. He issued a statement addressed to the Yemeni people in which he said:

Feel safe and secure, for I am on my way to you. Further, I call upon tribal leaders and notables to prepare themselves for meeting us in a place that we will make known to them upon arrival. Also I call upon those who took arms against the King to cease their hostility. You have caused enough disorder. Should you cease hostility and repent, we will meet your wrongdoings with forgiveness and response that would please God. (2)

Al-Hasan met with Prince Faisal. In Saudi Arabia, the press and the radio completely ignored the revolution.

September 28

King Saud dispatched a special aeroplane to Khartoum

(1) See above p. 212.

(2) The Times, September 28, 1962.

to await al-Hasan's arrival and bring him to Saudi Arabia. The Yemeni Legation in London issued a statement saying that the revolt did not enjoy popular support and that al-Hasan was now the legal Imam.⁽¹⁾ Al-Hasan arrived in London. He said that the revolt was carried out by only a small group of the army and expressed his confidence that the Yemeni people would crush the revolt.⁽²⁾ He said that he had no official news that al-Badr was killed.⁽³⁾ Al-Hasan later met with the head of the Foreign Office Arab Department.⁽⁴⁾ Prince Khalid, King Saud's brother, cut short his trip in Europe and returned to Saudi Arabia.⁽⁵⁾

September 29

Al-Hasan was refused a visa to enter Sudan. He flew to Beirut. In the aeroplane he sent a telegram to President Nasser asking him not to interfere in Yemen's internal affairs.⁽⁶⁾ In Beirut airport al-Hasan said that he intended to go to Yemen and unite the people in a campaign against the revolutionaries.⁽⁷⁾ Amman Radio⁽⁸⁾ reported that "all the provinces in Yemen - tribal

(1) The Daily Telegraph, September 29, 1962.

(2) The Guardian, September 29, 1962.

(3) The Times, September 29, 1962.

(4) The Guardian, September 29, 1962.

(5) Al-Ahram, September 29, 1962, p. 11.

(6) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami; Interview, London, 4.3.1969. Al-Shami was the Yemeni Minister in London at the time and was with al-Hasan on the aeroplane.

(7) Al-Hayat, September 30, 1962, p. 1.

(8) During the period in which Mecca Radio ignored the revolution the Royalist version of developments in Yemen was given by Amman Radio.

chiefs, ulama, officers and men - support the Imam al-Hasan".⁽¹⁾

September 30

Al-Hasan arrived in Jeddah and was met by members of the Yemeni Royal Family who acknowledged him as the Imam. He flew to Riyadh and met with King Saud. The King assured him of Saudi Arabia's support. Al-Bilad said that Nasser and Khrushchev, the two international Communists, were prompt in welcoming the rebellion in Yemen, despite the failure of the rebels.⁽²⁾

October 1

Abdul Rahman al-Baidani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Yemeni Republic, informed the Saudi Charge D'Affaires that the Yemeni government resented the attitude of his government toward the Yemeni revolution. He asked the Charge D'Affaires to go to Saudi Arabia and convey a verbal message to his government in this respect. Al-Baidani ordered the closing of the Yemeni Legation in Saudi Arabia until relations between the two countries had been considered.⁽³⁾ Later, al-Baidani said in a speech:

We are anxious to meet the family of Hamid al-Din and we are anxious to meet Saud and the sons of Saud. We have taken all measures to move the

(1) Summary of World Broadcasts part 4 (London: B.B.C.)

(Hereafter SWB), 2.10.1962, p. 7.

(2) Al-Bilad, September 30, 1962, p. 1.

(3) SWB, 3.10.1962, p. 1.

battle to the Saudi territory itself and to Riyadh itself, if necessary. This is not for local consumption or propaganda. In the name of the Government of the Yemeni Arab Republic and in the name of the Yemeni people, I declare the acceptance of the Saudi challenge. We shall wait for it to begin. (1)

Al-Hasan, accompanied by other members of the Yemeni Royal Family, moved to Najran near the Yemeni border, where he was supplied with money and arms. (2)

October 2

Al-Hasan and other members of the Yemeni Royal Family crossed into Yemen from Najran. Al-Sallal received a telegram of support from Prince Talal and his two brothers, Badr and Fawwaz. (3)

October 3

Prince Talal praised the Saudi pilots who defected to Egypt. "We expect many such deeds in the coming few days,"⁽⁴⁾ he said. A Saudi official statement said that the aircraft which landed in Egypt was carrying "ordinary military supplies" to the

(1) Ibid, p. 3.

(2) The first sum al-Hasan received was 4,000 gold sovereigns (about £20,000). At this early stage no heavy arms were supplied; al-Hasan received a few thousand rifles.

(3) SWB, 4.10.1962, p. 1.

(4) SWB, 5.10.1962, p. 5.

garrison at the Saudi southern border. The statement said that the "Egyptian Intelligence had contacted the pilot of the aircraft and seduced him into committing this betrayal of his honour as a soldier and the teachings of religion".⁽¹⁾ The statement added:

Cairo wanted to use this plot which it hatched in cooperation with the pilot to give the impression that the Saudi government is interfering in the affairs of sisterly Yemen so as to justify criminal action undertaken by Cairo itself now against the Yemeni people. (2)

October 4

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered to the Egyptian Embassy a note strongly protesting against the U.A.R.'s granting of asylum to the Saudi pilots, "which is a clear indication of a flagrant interference in the internal affairs of the government of Saudi Arabia" and demanded the immediate return of the aircraft and the crew.⁽³⁾ Commenting on the landing of a second Saudi aeroplane in Cairo an official statement said that it was "a continuation of the mean plots" which seduce traitors into abandoning their sacred duty of protecting their homeland.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Ibid, p. 6.

(2) Omm al-Qura, October 5, 1962, p. 1.

(3) Omm al-Qura, October 12, 1962, p. 1.

(4) Ibid.

October 5

The Royalist Radio⁽¹⁾ said that a progressive government would be formed and that the "sons of the people" would take part in it.⁽²⁾ The weapons in the Saudi aircraft which landed in Egypt on October 2 arrived in Sana.⁽³⁾

October 6

The Egyptian Embassy returned the Saudi note of protest.⁽⁴⁾ A Ministry of Defence statement denied that Saudi officers sought asylum in Yemen.⁽⁵⁾ President Kennedy reviewed the Yemeni situation with Prince Faisal. The Prince was "believed to have made a strong argument against immediate recognition of the rebels on the ground that the outcome of the struggle remained in doubt".⁽⁶⁾

October 7

An official statement said that

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- (1) Broadcasting in the name of the Mutawakilite Kingdom of Yemen, this radio station was given to the Royalists by Saudi Arabia and was located near the Yemeni border.
 - (2) SWB, 8.10.1962, p. 3.
 - (3) Ibid.
 - (4) Omm al-Qura, October 12, 1962, p. 1.
 - (5) SWB, 9.10.1962, p. 6.
 - (6) New York Times, October 7, 1962.

there had not been, and there will never be, any skirmishes on the Yemeni-Saudi border and there had not been, and there will never be, any fighting or infiltration.... There are no Saudi armies on the border except the usual garrisons. (1)

The Saudi Charge D'Affaires in Yemen arrived in Saudi Arabia and confirmed that al-Badr was not killed but had escaped.

October 8

King Saud sent one of his advisers and Ahmad al-Shami to meet al-Hasan on the Saudi-Yemeni border and convey to him the King's hope that there would be no quarrel over the Imamate now that it was known that al-Badr was alive. Al-Hasan said that when al-Badr appeared he would readily acknowledge him as the Imam. (2) Commenting on the landing of two more Saudi aeroplanes in Egypt, an official statement said: "All that has happened proves what we said in our previous statements about Egyptian espionage and its different ways to entice the weak-spirited and the traitorous to their country." (3)

October 9

Ahmad al-Shami, the Royalist Foreign Minister, said in Amman that Royalist forces had occupied "most of Yemen". (4)

(1) Al-Bilad, October 7, 1962, p. 1.

(2) Ahmad Mohammad al-Shami, Interview, London, 4.3.1969.

(3) SWB, 10.10.1962, p. 8.

(4) SWB, 11.10.1962, p. 5.

Sana Radio said that uncertainty and fear had prevailed in Saudi palaces since the proclamation of the Yemeni republic.⁽¹⁾ Mecca Radio reported that King Saud had received telegrams from citizens "pledging their support and allegiance to him and condemning in the strongest terms the treacherous acts carried out by the Saudi pilots who had landed in Cairo".⁽²⁾

October 10

Talal renounced his title of Prince. In a broadcast over Cairo Radio Talal said that King Saud's actions in support of the Royalists were "bringing his own end nearer".⁽³⁾ Mecca Radio announced the end of the silence it had maintained over the developments in Yemen:

We sought not to interfere in the events taking place between our brethren and neighbours.... However, developments, the collision between justice and falsehood, and the interference of the Egyptian radios with the purpose of inciting sedition, evil and rioting among the ranks of the Yemeni people have given us the right to convey to the Arab world the truth about events in the sister Yemeni country gathered from information reaching us.⁽⁴⁾

Al-Baidani said that the Saudi authorities had concentrated their forces on the Yemeni borders and had begun to smuggle arms into Yemen, a matter which was tantamount to aggression against the Yemeni Republic. "This situation compels the Yemeni Government to

(1) Ibid, p. 7.

(2) Ibid, p. 9.

(3) SWB, 12.10.1962, p. 1.

(4) Ibid, p. 2.

consider itself in a state of war with Saudi Arabia," he added.⁽¹⁾
A Jordanian delegation arrived in Riyadh to discuss the implementation of the agreement concluded between the two countries in August.⁽²⁾

October 11

Mecca Radio reported that "the forces of HM the Imam are continuing their advance" in Ibb and Sada.⁽³⁾ Two Saudi notes protesting the Egyptian action of granting asylum to the defecting pilots and demanding the return of pilots and the aircraft were delivered to the Egyptian Embassy.⁽⁴⁾

October 12

Mecca Radio said that

the mutiny in Yemen is not a nationalist movement, nor is it a revolution of the people, as alleged by the rabid trumpets. It is a foreign interference with a free and innocent people ruled by a legal Imam, who was unanimously acclaimed by the people. The criminals who have been interfering in the affairs of Yemen have enlisted the assistance of some renegade traitors to cover up their interference.⁽⁵⁾

The Radio denied Saudi penetration and smuggling of arms into

(1) SWB, 12.10.1962, p. 8.

(2) Al-Hayat, October 11, 1962, p. 2. See above p. 275.

(3) SWB, 13.10.1962, p. 3.

(4) Omm al-Qura, October 19, 1962, p. 2.

(5) SWB, 15.10.1962, p. 5.

Yemen. (1) Al-Baidani said, "Let Saud know that the revolutionary Government could destroy Saud's very palace if he moved a single soldier against Yemen." (2) Saudi Arabian Airlines decided to discontinue all their flights to Cairo. (3)

October 13

An official statement said that the Saudi Arabian authorities had in the past few days detected unidentified aircraft flying at very high altitude over Saudi territory and warned that all foreign aircraft were prohibited from flying over Saudi territory without prior permission. (4) Mecca Radio denied that Saudi forces participated in the fighting in Yemen. (5)

October 14

Mecca Radio reported that the Royalist forces were marching on Sana. (6) The Radio said that the Egyptians sent to Yemen were "Nasirist communists who have no respect for religion and who are ignorant of the Yemeni peoples' traditions and customs". (7) The Egyptian Embassy returned the Saudi notes

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- (1) SWB, 13.10.1962, p. 6.
 - (2) SWB, 15.10.1962, p. 3.
 - (3) Al-Bilad, October 12, 1962, p. 1.
 - (4) SWB, 16.10.1962, pp. 2-3.
 - (5) Al-Bilad, October 14, 1962, p. 1.
 - (6) SWB, 16.10.1962, p. 5.
 - (7) Ibid.

of protest.⁽¹⁾

October 15

Imam Mohammad al-Badr crossed the border and arrived in Jaizan.⁽²⁾ In a message to King Husain al-Badr said that the plan for the revolution in Yemen was drawn up in Cairo.⁽³⁾

October 16

King Saud received a message from al-Badr in which the latter said that President Nasser on the day of the revolution "supported the movement by sending his aeroplanes loaded with arms and supplies to Sana".⁽⁴⁾ Mecca Radio denied a report that al-Badr was in Saudi Arabia.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Ibid, p. 2.

(2) Having fled from Sana, al-Badr headed toward Hajjah gathering tribal support as he moved. After failing to capture Hajjah, which was in the hands of the Republicans, al-Badr proceeded toward the Saudi frontier. For more details on al-Badr's activities from the time he left Sana see Scott Gibbons, The Conspirators (London: Howard Baker, 1967), pp. 19-24; and Dana Adams Schmidt, Yemen: The Unknown War (London: The Bodley Head, 1968), pp. 31-35.

(3) SWB, 17.10.1962, p. 4.

(4) Al-Bilad, October 17, 1962, p. 1.

(5) SWB, 18.10.1962, p. 2.

October 17

King Saud dismissed the Cabinet and asked Prince Faisal to form a new one.⁽¹⁾ A few days earlier six Ministers protested to the King against Saudi Arabia's intervention on the Royalist side and demanded its end. Al-Badr announced the formation of a new government with al-Hasan as Prime Minister.⁽²⁾ Al-Hasan made a statement acknowledging al-Badr as the Imam.⁽³⁾ Commenting on the change in the Saudi government Talal said that it was "an attempt to preserve a collapsing system".⁽⁴⁾

October 18

Mecca Radio denied that there were any engagements between Saudi and "rebel" forces in al-Jawf.⁽⁵⁾ The Royalist Radio said that the Royalist forces had continued their advance on all fronts.⁽⁶⁾

October 19

Cairo Radio reported that the chieftains of Sada area had requested the Yemeni government to restore all Yemeni areas which had been under Saudi control.⁽⁷⁾

(1) Al-Bilad, October 18, 1962, p. 1.

(2) SWB, 19.10.1962, p. 2.

(3) Al-Bilad, October 18, 1962, p. 3.

(4) SWB, 19.10.1962,

(5) SWB, 20.10.1962, p. 5.

(6) SWB, 22.10.1962, p. 3.

(7) Ibid.

October 20

The Prime Minister of Jordan denied that there were Jordanian forces in Yemen.⁽¹⁾ Mecca Radio said that the Yemeni tribes "would not allow Islamic Yemen to become a communist country".⁽²⁾ Al-Badr said that "popular and regular armies are being prepared for the holy march against the stronghold of treachery and aggression".⁽³⁾

October 21

Talal said that he expected Faisal not to interfere in Yemen.⁽⁴⁾

October 22

Prince Faisal said in New York that Saudi Arabia's policy would be consistent with its belief that al-Badr was Yemen's legitimate ruler.⁽⁵⁾ Mecca Radio said that "wounded and frightened Egyptians are all over the field of battle in Marib".⁽⁶⁾

October 23

Prince Faisal held a press conference in Beirut.

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- (1) SWB, 23.10.1962, p. 2.
 - (2) Ibid, p. 10.
 - (3) Ibid, p. 3.
 - (4) Ibid, p. 12.
 - (5) Al-Bilad, October 23, 1962, p. 1.
 - (6) SWB, 24.10.1962, p. 5.

Asked if Saudi Arabia would help al-Badr, Faisal said:

We must define help first. I must point out first of all that our stand toward the government of Imam al-Badr is to support legitimacy. As for the help, it depends on the request of al-Badr and the nature of the help. (1)

The Prince added, "I want to mention that our hope is that no one would interfere in Yemen's internal affairs. I mean that Yemenis should be given the freedom to determine their future for themselves."⁽²⁾ Asked about the defection of Saudi pilots to Egypt, the Prince said: "Worthless pilots took a plane or two and ran away in them. So what? This happens in every state, everywhere."⁽³⁾ Talal announced in Cairo the Charter of the National Liberation Front. He said that the front would struggle "to establish a national democratic government and to leave to the people the freedom to choose the kind of government they prefer."⁽⁴⁾

October 24

Badr, Talal's brother, said in Cairo that the Saudi regime was "steeped in backwardness, underdevelopment, reactionary individuals, and tyranny".⁽⁵⁾

October 25

Prince Faisal arrived in Riyadh and immediately

(1) Al-Hayat, October 24, 1962, p. 4.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) SWB, 25.10.1962, p. 4.

(5) SWB, 6.11.1962, p. 1.

set about forming the new government. Mecca Radio denied a report by Sana Radio that al-Badr had died.⁽¹⁾

October 26

Quoting Royalist sources, al-Hayat reported a new Royalist advance in Sirwah.⁽²⁾ A Royalist statement said that "the morale of the tribes is very high as they fight against the Socialist Communist Republic".⁽³⁾

October 27

Mecca Radio broadcast a recording of a speech delivered by al-Badr over the Royalist Radio in which he assured the Yemenis that he was with them "in body and soul".⁽⁴⁾ The Radio denied that a number of Saudi officers had taken refuge in Sana.⁽⁵⁾ The Royalist Radio reported desertions to the Imam's forces.⁽⁶⁾

October 28

Royalist sources stated that the fighting was going on in many fronts including Sirwah.⁽⁷⁾

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- (1) SWB, 25.10.1962, p. 6.
 - (2) Al-Hayat, October 26, 1962, p. 1.
 - (3) Ibid.
 - (4) SWB, 30.10.1962, p. 1.
 - (5) Ibid, p. 4.
 - (6) Ibid, p. 3.
 - (7) Al-Hayat, October 28, 1962, p. 1.

October 29

Mecca Radio said that there was a "violent behind-the-scenes conflict" between Nasser and other Egyptian leaders regarding the critical situation in which Nasser placed himself by his armed intervention in Yemen. The Radio said that Amir was dispatched to Yemen "to see what could be done to withdraw the Egyptian forces, or at least to keep them out of the fighting". (1)

October 30

The Royalist government issued a statement of policy promising reforms in the social, economic, cultural and military spheres. (2) Al-Baidani said in Sana:

We were content to repulse the Saudi aggression and crush the Saudi forces inside our Yemen's territory. But if the Saudi aggression continues to defy and provoke Yemenis' feelings, we shall be compelled to take the battle inside Saudi territory, in accordance with the lawful right of self-defence. Therefore, your Government now declares that all military commands in the various Yemeni districts must forthwith prepare the National Guard forces in excess of their requirements to be in a state of alertness and ready for immediate movement to the Saudi borders, if necessary, preparatory to waging the holy war and repelling the aggressive invaders. (3)

(1) SWB, 31.10.1962, p. 4.

(2) SWB, 1.11.1962, p. 1.

(3) Ibid, p. 4.

October 31

The new Saudi government was formed.⁽¹⁾ Quoting the Royalist Radio, Mecca Radio broadcast a list of about 180 names which it said were those of the Egyptian paratroopers killed in the Sirwah and Marib areas.⁽²⁾ Al-Sallal said:

Our enemy is the tyrannical, atheistic and impudent Saud.... If Saud is conceited and continues his aggression against our country, we shall wage a decisive battle and kindle a devastating war. (3)

The Royalist government issued a statement urging the people of Egypt to rise against Nasser "to prevent him from committing gangster acts in Yemen and causing the death of Egyptians at the hands of the Yemeni heroes".⁽⁴⁾ A government communique on the talks held in Riyadh between the Jordanian and Saudi delegations regarding the implementation of the Taif agreement said that the two sides discussed "the various economic, military, administrative, cultural and information matters related to the agreement."⁽⁵⁾

November 1

Al-Baidani said that "last night" Saudi forces had attacked the northern Yemeni borders in the Harad area. He said that the Yemeni forces had inflicted heavy losses on the Saudi

(1) Ibid, p. 7.

(2) Ibid, p. 5.

(3) SWB, 2.11.1962, p. 6.

(4) Ibid, p. 7.

(5) Ibid.

forces.⁽¹⁾ Mecca Radio, quoting the Royalist Radio, reported fierce fighting in Harad.⁽²⁾

November 2

Al-Baidani said:

... we have ordered our striking forces to move to the north and we have also ordered our fleet to move from Hudaydah towards the northern part of our Yemeni shores so our striking forces can be prepared and ready to enter Saudi territory as soon as the orders in this respect are issued to them - when we decide to transfer the battle to inside Saudi territory. (3)

Al-Sallal said that King Saud "would discover that the decisive battle with Saudi Arabia would be fought in Riyadh".⁽⁴⁾

November 3

An official communique said that on November 2 "U.A.R. craft operating with the Yemeni mutineers" made five raids on the Saudi border, "causing losses among peaceful, unarmed women, children and elderly people". It said that these raids were "tantamount to aggressive, barbaric actions on the part of the U.A.R. Government against the inhabitants and property of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". In conclusion, the comm-

(1) SWB, 3.11.1962, p. 2.

(2) Ibid, p. 4.

(3) SWB, 5.11.1962, p. 1.

(4) Ibid, p. 2.

unique said:

While the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announces its strong protest against these aggressive actions, it holds the UAR Government responsible for all the consequences of these actions and reserves the right to adopt all necessary measures to ward off this flagrant aggression and to make all endeavours in this respect. (1)

Mecca Radio denied the reports of Saudi soldiers in Harad and said that the Saudi Government had no officers or soldiers in Yemen. (2)

November 4

Mecca Radio broadcast a Royalist communique stating that the Imam's forces had taken over "all the valleys, villages, vehicles, tanks and arms in Harad". (3) Quoting the Royalist Radio, Mecca Radio said that al-Badr's forces were tightening their seige around Sada and that all the roads and passes between Sana and Sada were in their hands. (4) Al-Sallal said:

The Supreme Command has issued orders that our forces should enter Najran and Qizan to restore our usurped Yemeni territory if Saud, King of the harems and concubines, does not stay where he belongs. (5)

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) SWB, 6.11.1962, p. 10.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid, p. 11.

November 5

A Royalist statement said that Sirwah fort had fallen after several days bitter fighting in which the Egyptian paratroopers were "exterminated".⁽¹⁾

November 6

An official statement said that on November 5 Egyptian aircraft and three Egyptian naval units bombarded two villages within the Saudi border "thus committing aggression against Saudi territory and waters and causing heavy damage to these villages and their inhabitants".⁽²⁾ The Foreign Ministry Under Secretary informed the Egyptian Charge D'Affaires that owing to the continued flagrant armed aggression by the U.A.R., the Saudi government had decided to sever diplomatic relations with the U.A.R.⁽³⁾ A spokesman at the Foreign Ministry said:

... the Saudi Arabian Kingdom has been regrettably exposed for a long time to biased and unjust campaigns stamped with malice and grudge and motivated by the desire of the Cairo Government, which has intensified its grudge, to dominate and sow disunity. Its treachery reached such an extent that it began and is still making aggressive air raids on Saudi territory. By these aggressive activities the Cairo Government has ignored all ties of blood, religion, language, and neighbourliness in addition to its violation of every usage, law

(1) SWB, 7.11.1962, p. 3.

(2) SWB, 8.11.1962, p. 7.

(3) Ibid, p. 6.

and international pact. It has even violated the simplest principle of humanity by killing innocent and peaceful children, women and old men. Every hope of understanding has been exhausted. The Saudi Arabian Kingdom has thus been obliged to sever diplomatic relations with the Cairo Government. (1)

Prince Faisal announced a programme of far-reaching reforms. (2)

November 7 (3)

Al-Baidani said: "Our relations with Saudi Arabia have been severed since we expelled the Saudi Charge D'Affaires in Yemen when the Saudi aggression took place against us." (4) King Saud told journalists in Riyadh:

I assure you that all the Yemeni people and tribes are rallying around His Majesty the Imam. All the tribes there are marching on Sana. The vanguard columns of the march are thirty five miles away from the capital, Sana. Had it not been for the intervention of Egyptian aircraft which bombarded peaceful inhabit-

(1) Ibid.

(2) Among other things, the ten-point programme abolished slavery and promised to introduce a fundamental law (constitution), to reform the judicial system, and to curb the religious police.

For more details see Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal Speaks (Ministry of Information, 1963), pp. 7-11.

(3) By November 7 Saudi Arabia spent an estimated 25 million Riyals (about £2 million) both in direct subsidies and in arms given to the Royalists.

(4) SWB, 9.11.1962, p. 7.

ants, Sana would have been purged of the mutineers. (1)

King Saud added:

You have heard of the aggression which Egyptian aircraft and naval units committed against some of our villages on the border. At any rate, we are taking our own measures to defend our country and the security of our territory. (2)

(1) Omm al-Qura, November 9, 1962.

(2) Ibid.

Chapter Fifteen

The Saudi Intervention: Analysis

This chapter examines the Royalist appeal for help and then analyzes the Saudi response.

The Royalist Appeal For Help

As soon as he heard of the revolution al-Hasan decided to oppose it. At the time he believed the report of al-Badr's death and he considered himself the new Imam. He had no doubts whatsoever that he could crush the revolution. Naturally he welcomed any outside help, and hoped that both Saudi Arabia and Britain would support him.

Both in 1948 and 1955 Saudi Arabia stood with legitimacy in Yemen. This time, with the Saudi regime committed to an anti-Socialist role and with the confrontation with Egypt at its height, there was no doubt that Saudi Arabia would lend it support to the Royalist cause. Yet al-Hasan, a fanatic Zaidi, regarded the Wahhabi rulers of Saudi Arabia with distaste and it was sheer necessity that drove him to seek their help.

Al-Hasan's meeting with Prince Faisal in New York was disappointing. The Prince told him that he considered what happened in Yemen as an internal affair in which Saudi Arabia would not be involved. He even requested al-Hasan not to enter

Yemen through Saudi territory.⁽¹⁾ Sympathy, but not help, was all that Faisal offered.

When he arrived in London al-Hasan's plan was to go to Aden and from there cross into Yemen. However, he soon discovered that the British did not want the Protectorates to be the staging post for Royalist operations. Although sympathetic to him, the British were officially committed to a policy of neutrality and they were not willing to intervene on the Royalist side. An encouraging development was King Saud's gesture of sending an aeroplane to wait for him in Khartoum. Prince Faisal's desire for non-involvement apparently represented more the Prince's views than official Saudi policy. With the British refusing active support, Saudi help was vital. Al-Hasan changed his earlier plans and headed to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Response⁽²⁾

Perception

King Saud perceived the Yemeni revolution as an Egyptian-engineered mutiny which would give the Egyptians a foothold in the Arabian Peninsula and encourage subversion. The King was in no doubt that President Nasser planned and instigated the rebellion. Publicly through violent propaganda campaigns, and secretly through intelligence networks, Nasser had been doing his best to bring down monarchist regimes. The King was convinced

(1) Dr. Rashad Faroun, Interview, Riyadh, 22.11.1969.

(2) See above p. 241.

that the rebellion in Yemen was prepared by the Egyptian intelligence; it was Yemeni only in name. At this point King Saud completely ignored the possibility that the revolution might be genuinely Yemeni.

What happened in Yemen was a "mutiny", tamarrod, a group of officers defying their legitimate masters. To the King's thinking, revolution was never justified. It inevitably led to a breakdown of law and order and resulted in a government worse than the one it destroyed. In Yemen there was no justification for this mutiny. Saud realized that Imam Ahmad's rule had been harsh and too traditional. Yet that was all over now. Al-Badr had already implemented important reforms and more were to follow. If the officers who staged the mutiny were really interested in reforms they should have supported the Imam and helped him carry through his reforms. Instead, they treacherously killed him and announced a Republic.

Revolution was too dignified a name to apply to the actions of Nasser's stooges in Yemen. Neither the tribes, nor the ulama, nor indeed any intelligent person would support the mutiny. The King realized that a minority, youths mostly, would welcome the rebellion. Those, however, had been brain-washed by Nasserist propaganda. They had no real power or prestige and could be dismissed. The majority of the Yemeni people, all those who count, would definitely oppose this Nasserist plot. King Saud thus ignored the genuine support enjoyed by the revolution in cities and in Shafi areas; he perceived it as a mere mutiny with no real popular backing behind it.

The rebellion in Yemen, the King feared, was only

the first step in a Nasserist scheme. The Yemeni revolutionary government would be completely subservient to Nasser who, to all intents and purposes, would be Yemen's real ruler. Secure in his Yemeni base, Nasser would concentrate on Saudi Arabia with a view to destroying the Saudi regime and replacing it with a puppet government. In the end the whole Peninsula, with its oil wells, would lie at his feet. Saud suspected that it was the greed for oil which motivated Nasser. He might speak of nationalism and unity and other misleading slogans but it was the oil he was after.

Not only would the Yemeni rebellion give Nasser a base in the Peninsula, it would encourage similar rebellions. The King did not think that there was a threat of an imminent rebellion in his own country. Nevertheless, the rebellion in Yemen was a very dangerous precedent. If allowed to succeed, it would give heart to revolutionaries everywhere. If revolution could take place in Yemen, the most traditional and backward Arab country, then why not in Saudi Arabia? Republicanism should not be allowed to enter the Peninsula unchallenged.

In the days following the revolution, King Saud's perceptions seemed to be confirmed. The enthusiastic reception of the rebellion by the Egyptian mass media suggested Egyptian complicity. Recognition came two days after the rebellion. Nasser could not even wait to make sure that his stooges were in control.

Classification and Memory

King Saud classified the revolution as a threat to Saudi Arabia. The revolution evoked memories of past associa-

tion with Yemen and of Egyptian "aggression". In 1948 and 1955 Saudi Arabia supported legitimacy in Yemen; in both cases the side it supported won. This time there was even more reason to support the legitimate government. Unlike the previous two times, a Republic had been announced and an aggressive Egypt was openly committed to the rebellion, two factors which made the present rebellion much more of a threat than the previous two. The King was sure that once more the legitimate Imam would emerge triumphant.

Perceived as an Egyptian plot, the revolution brought forward memories of Egyptian attempts to undermine the Saudi regime. King Saud reflected that Saudi Arabia had always tried to maintain friendly relations with Egypt. Between 1954 and 1957 King Saud was a close ally of Nasser. Only when Nasser's expansionist intentions became clear did Saud gradually move away from close association with him. Only in 1958 did Saud take a positive action to halt Nasser's expansion. This action was undertaken to save the independence of Syria. The King thought that Nasser had no reason to be indignant since he himself was engaged in similar acts all the time. The King's action almost cost him his throne. He apologized to Nasser, explained his motives, and showed every sign of goodwill. Nasser, however, had never given up his dream of turning the Arab world into an Egyptian empire. Having failed to do it under the pretext of unity, he was now trying to achieve it under the banner of Socialism, that atheistic, alien, subversive creed.

Instead of recognizing the secession as the inevitable result of his tyrannic methods in Syria, Nasser had blamed the "reactionaries" by which he seemed to mean everybody

not willing to submit to him. He had launched a savage campaign and Saudi Arabia in particular was subject to increasing pressure. In the year following secession Nasser had proved that he would stop at nothing in his all-out effort to destroy the regime in Saudi Arabia.

Policy-Making Process

King Saud felt the need to react to the threat posed by the revolution. It was not in his nature to wait and meditate further. Inaction, the thought, would only be interpreted as weakness. Saud faced three alternatives:

1. To lend political and moral support to the Royalists.
2. To give the Royalists arms, supplies and money and to allow them to operate from Saudi territory.
3. To intervene by committing Saudi troops.

The King dismissed the first alternative as insufficient. The revolution took the Yemeni regime by surprise. Al-Badr was killed. There was no organized Royalist resistance in Yemen. The revolutionaries seemed to be in control, at least in the cities. Al-Hasan was away. He would need arms and supplies as well as a base of operations. Under these circumstances, political support alone would not have a decisive impact.

The third alternative was both impracticable and undesirable. It was impracticable because Saudi Arabia was hardly in a position to send troops to Yemen. The regular army was small; it was ill-prepared for such a venture. The irregular army was not trained or equipped for an external war. A symbolic presence

was worse than none; an effective presence was beyond the country's military capabilities. Furthermore, even had it been feasible to intervene militarily, Saud did not think such intervention desirable. It would be difficult to justify. It would almost certainly provoke an Egyptian intervention. A direct military clash with Egypt was the last thing the King wanted.

The second alternative, the King thought, was the only feasible one under the circumstances. Saudi Arabia could afford to supply the Royalists with arms and give them subsidies. The King enjoyed a free hand in managing the country's finances and was accountable to no one. It was a safe alternative; there would be no Saudi casualties. The fighting would be done by the Yemenis themselves. By September 28 King Saud had reached his decision. Saudi Arabia would support the Royalists by giving them arms and money and allowing them to use Saudi territory but no Saudi troops would be involved.

The King's perceptions were shared by his advisers and the leading princes who unanimously approved of his decision. The King did not have to contend with dissenting views. Talal and his two brothers, the princes with strong liberal convictions who might have perceived the Yemeni revolution differently, were now abroad agitating against the regime.

Prince Faisal's position was different from that of the King. Typically, Faisal needed more information and more time to make up his mind. Although he thought that the revolution was probably instigated by Nasser, he believed that Nasser had made a mistake. The Royalists would certainly win. This being the case, Saudi Arabia had nothing to gain by intervening; a period

of watchful non-involvement would be the best policy.⁽¹⁾ Faisal, however, felt that with the Saudi regime under pressure, he should defer to the King. An open clash between them at this point would be disastrous. He therefore sent a message to King Saud informing him that he would completely support whatever decisions the King made.

King Saud's knowledge of Yemen went back to 1934 when he led a Saudi army in the Yemeni-Saudi war. The King's personal experience taught him that the Zaidi tribesmen were great warriors. His army was almost pinned down by them. With them on the Imam's side, victory was assured. Saud believed that religious sentiment would overshadow any other consideration and the Zaidi tribes would support the Imam. Yemen's history, ancient and recent, showed that the side which had the loyalty of the Zaidi tribes won.

Internationally, King Saud thought that Saudi Arabia was fighting a lonely battle. Nasser, with the active encouragement of the Soviet Union, was out to dominate the Arab world. Saudi Arabia's friends, the United States and Britain, idly watched. Nasser, it seemed, could get away with anything. Even now when it was so obvious that he had instigated the Yemeni rebellion neither the United States nor Britain acted. In the Arab world only Jordan was firmly behind Saudi Arabia. All other

(1) In 1965 King Faisal recalled, "When that event /the Yemeni revolution/ occurred, I was at the U.N.... At that time we did not want to interfere. Interference was out of the question then," Arab Political Documents 1965 (Beirut: The Political Studies and Public Administration Department of the American University of Beirut, n.d.), p. 320.

countries were too intimidated by Nasser. Saudi Arabia had to rely on itself. To the King's mind, its stand in opposing Nasser over Yemen had all the elements of heroism.

King Saud never doubted Nasser's responsibility for the rebellion and he expected him to continue supporting his stooges. Without Egyptian support, the revolutionaries could not survive. However, King Saud expected Nasser to send arms, and possibly advisers but not troops. The secrecy maintained over the Saudi intervention was mainly because Saud did not want to provoke Nasser into active intervention. Early in October the King expected a Royalist victory after at most five or six months.

King Saud knew that not all his countrymen would approve of his decision to support the Royalists. He was fully aware of the effectiveness of Nasser's propaganda and expected some Saudis to believe it. Those who supported the Yemeni revolution, Saud thought, were either misinformed or else disloyal to his regime. In either case they were a small, insignificant minority and could be safely ignored.

Execution

Saudi Arabia's intervention was carried out in secret. Neither al-Hasan's arrival nor his meeting with King Saud were announced. No mention was made of the help al-Hasan received. Officially, Saudi Arabia claimed complete non-involvement. In the first two weeks following the revolution, the press and radio almost completely ignored the Yemeni revolution. However, Saudi Arabia's intervention was immediately detected by

the Egyptian government which not only reported it but magnified it out of all proportion. It was termed an "aggression" and Saudi troops were said to be involved.

Executing the decision to support the Royalists did not present great difficulties. Although Saudi Arabia was not militarily prepared for emergencies, it was nonetheless able to supply the Royalists with rifles and other light arms. Arrangements were made to import more weapons. The defection of the Saudi plane loaded with arms to Cairo was a political embarrassment but it did not interfere with the flow of aid to the Royalists.

Najran and Jaizan near the Yemeni border were the points from which arms and supplies were sent into Yemen. Crossing the border did not present any problems. No arms or subsidies were given directly to Yemeni tribesmen; all aid was channelled through al-Hasan. The King's decision that no Saudi troops should be involved in the fighting was scrupulously followed. While some Saudis were engaged in moving supplies across the border and later in training the Royalists, no Saudis actually participated in the fighting.

Al-Hasan and other members of the Royal Family moved into Yemen and established their headquarters in Yemeni territory; they returned to Saudi Arabia only for important consultations. Although the Royalists moved freely across the border, "infiltration" from Saudi Arabia was not a crucial factor in the war. The tribes which fought with the Royalists lived within Yemen.

Feedback

A week after the Royalists started their operations there were encouraging signs. They had succeeded in occupying Sada and establishing themselves in the Jawf region and Marib. An increasing number of tribes was rallying to them. The Republicans seemed besieged in the cities. Al-Badr's escape was welcome news. It exposed the Republicans and Egyptians as liars. Saud's apprehension of an ensuing rivalry between al-Hasan and al-Badr proved unjustified; al-Hasan willingly acknowledged his nephew as the Imam. Led by the youthful and popular Imam, the Royalists would no doubt achieve more victories. It would be only a matter of time before the Imam was back in Sana.

Internationally, as Saud expected, Saudi Arabia stood alone, except for Jordan. Jordan's mass media publicized the Royalist victories and bravely refuted Nasser's "lies". A group of Jordanian officers arrived to train the Royalists and act as military advisers to them. The Soviet Union was among the first countries to recognize the mutineers. The United States, incredibly, was not content to remain neutral; it appeared on the verge of recognizing the rebels. Britain's attitude was more reasonable. At least it ignored the Royalist activities in Baihan in the Aden Protectorate and appeared in no hurry to recognize the Republicans.

By mid-October the extent of Egyptian involvement in Yemen became clear. The King knew beyond doubt that Egypt had dispatched combat units to Yemen. Encouraged by the Egyptian forces, the Republicans were issuing ominous statements which could no longer be ignored. While Saud foresaw Egyptian involvement he failed to predict its scope, and the sight of the Egyptian

army at his doorsteps was most disturbing.

Saud was acutely aware of the inferiority of his armed forces in any clash with the Egyptian army. Jordan remained at Saudi Arabia's side and six Jordanian military aircraft arrived. This was about all the help Jordan would offer. Saud hoped that if it came to a direct Egyptian attack on Saudi Arabia the United States would restrain Nasser. For the moment, however, Nasser got away with sending troops to Yemen. The United States offered vague assurances but did not take any firm actions. ⁽¹⁾

Another development which alarmed the King was the growing opposition at home to the intervention in Yemen. The King did not expect unanimous approval; but neither did he count on active opposition. The defection of the Saudi pilots to Egypt was an act of defiance unprecedented in the country's history. It embarrassed the King, tended to undermine the authority of the government and strengthened Nasser's position. What was even more disturbing than the defection of the pilots was the strong protest of six Cabinet Ministers. In a memorandum to the King, the Ministers argued that Saudi Arabia's support for the Royalists was unjustified and invited risks the country could not cope with, and they demanded its cessation. The Ministers' opposition could not be explained away as an Egyptian plot. Those involved were

(1) According to Weintal and Bartlett when Jordan and Saudi Arabia expressed fears that their integrity would be compromised by the United States' approval of the Republicans, Secretary Dean Rusk "assured the two governments that unlike Yemen, both had 'powerful friends' gravely concerned and interested in their fate". See Edward Weintal and Charles Bartlett, Facing the Brink (London: Hutchinson, 1967), p. 39.

not excitable and guilable youths, vulnerable to Nasser's propaganda. They were experienced, well-informed men with undoubted loyalty to the regime. The King could only conclude that the decision to intervene was much more unpopular than he had thought.

Faced with opposition at home and with the presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen, Saud showed signs of hesitation. On the one hand, he was still convinced of the wisdom of his decision and the Royalist victories were proving him right. On the other hand, the risk of a military clash with Egypt was becoming greater and opposition at home made things more difficult. To stop the intervention now was to show weakness and to bow to pressure. To continue with the intervention was to encounter greater risks in Yemen and to invite more opposition at home. The King decided that the best way out of the dilemma was to delegate the responsibility to Faisal. Saud was sure Faisal would continue to support the Royalists; let him then cope with the consequences. Once this dangerous phase passed the King could reassert his authority any time he wanted.

The Change of Government

Saud's decision to appoint him Prime Minister came as a surprise to Prince Faisal. For the past two years the King had insisted on retaining the Premiership. Faisal knew that only his inability to cope with the situation had driven Saud to ask him to take over. Nonetheless, Faisal did not hesitate to accept the responsibility. He was confident that he could effectively deal with the crisis.

Prince Faisal's attitude towards Yemen had been undergoing gradual change. In the beginning he favoured non-involvement and did not encourage al-Hasan to expect help from Saudi Arabia. Once the King had decided to intervene Faisal, with misgivings, accepted the decision. By the time he was asked to form a new government, Faisal had reached the conclusion that Saudi Arabia should continue to support the Royalists.

Two developments were responsible for Faisal's new resolve: the hostility shown by the Republic and the arrival of Egyptian troops in Yemen. The expulsion of the Saudi Charge D' Affaires from Yemen and al-Baidani's statements clearly proved that the revolutionary regime had hostile intentions toward Saudi Arabia. At the time Saudi Arabia could hardly be said to have intervened. The Republicans, it seemed, were much more interested in fighting Nasser's battles than in reforming Yemen. Al-Baidani had attacked Saudi Arabia even before assuming power. Now he was doing it again in an official capacity. Saudi Arabia would not just watch while this puppet government was rudely attacking it.⁽¹⁾

The other, and much more important development, was the presence of Egyptian troops. The question now was no longer that of a struggle between Royalists and Republicans in Yemen; Saudi Arabia's security became involved. The issue now was not one of intervention but of survival.

(1) In 1965 King Faisal, recalling the period following the Yemeni revolution, said, "... Sallal used often to direct his threats against us and to warn that he would destroy the thrones of reactionaries in Riyadh with his aircraft", Arab Political Documents 1965 op. cit., p. 232.

... we all found ourselves in a position where we had no choice but to act according to our principles, our religion and our honour. We found ourselves in a position where we had no alternative but to defend ourselves and to defend our country. Egypt's rulers declared that they had sent their expedition to fight in Yemen to destroy our country and to capture it. We were, therefore, driven into a position where we had no alternative but to defend ourselves. Every state and every country in the world is entitled to self-defence. (1)

Faisal believed that as far as Egypt was concerned, it did not matter whether al-Badr or al-Sallal ruled in Sana. Egypt was far away from Yemen and its security was in no way affected by the type of the regime in Yemen. Nasser's decision to send troops to Yemen not only proved beyond any doubt that Nasser himself had instigated the rebellion but showed the lengths to which he was prepared to go in his effort to destroy Arab monarchies. An Egyptian army in Yemen was a direct and unmistakeable challenge to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia could not answer by a military showdown. It could, however, continue to support the Royalists who, in turn, would harass and, ultimately, defeat Nasser's army.

Faisal was positive that the fiercely conservative Zaidi tribes would accept no substitute for the time-honoured Imamate. Furthermore, they would not allow a conqueror to subdue them. Nasser had made a fatal miscalculation. He would not be more successful in Yemen than the Turks were. Yet, Nasser himself had chosen to fight this battle and he left Saudi Arabia with no

(1) A speech on September 5, 1963; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal Speaks (Ministry of Information, 1963), p. 114.

alternative but to defend itself through supporting the Royalists.

Faisal was convinced that morally and legally, Saudi Arabia was in the right. The Egyptian intervention was a full-fledged invasion of Yemen.

You all know the strong relations and ties which bind this country and its sister state, the Yemen. Brothers, we have no ambitions in the Yemen. Events of history and you yourselves bear witness that we have no economic, political or military ambitions there. When the recent ill-fated revolution broke out in the Yemen, we did not interfere, hoping that the people of Yemen would be left alone to determine their fate by themselves. Before a day or two had passed, naval and air fleets started to carry Egyptian forces to the Yemen, not to help the Yemenis but to enslave and rule them. (1)

In contrast, Saudi Arabia was merely helping the legitimate government which was exposed to external aggression.

You all know that there is a treaty between this country and the Government of His Majesty the Imam. According to international law, as long as his Government exists, its right stands.... We therefore supported the lawful Government of the Yemen. (2)

Prince Faisal was undoubtedly aware that King Saud's decision to intervene provided Nasser with a pretext for his own intervention. Yet Faisal by now had reached the conclusion that with or without Saud's support of the Royalists, Nasser

(1) A speech on January 25, 1963; Ibid, p. 29.

(2) Ibid.

would have sent his troops. He came to think of the Saudi intervention as quite different from that of Egypt. Because it was on a much smaller scale it could hardly even be considered intervention.

Friends, with what do we help our brothers in the Yemen? If we are helping some of them with food and with other things to enable them to preserve their lives, would that be considered as assistance? We did not send fleets, planes and tanks to burn villages, houses, children and aged people. (1)

Faisal did not attach as much importance as Saud to the opposition at home. The pilots he considered as "worthless"; the Ministers simply panicked. Faisal believed that Saud's misrule had caused some legitimate concern and led to a decline in the level of support. This he intended to deal with by announcing and gradually implementing a programme of wide-ranging reforms.

While Faisal never doubted that some risks would be involved in continuing to intervene in Yemen, he thought he had no choice but to accept these risks. "If we have to die, let us die in honour."⁽²⁾ Faisal was sure, however, that Nasser would not dare to attempt an invasion of Saudi Arabia.

Having formed the government, Faisal decided that Saudi Arabia must intensify its aid to the Royalists by giving more subsidies and supplying them with better and heavier weapons. The Prince, however, stuck to the principle that no Saudis should

(1) Ibid, p. 30.

(2) A speech on March 4, 1963; Ibid, p. 35.

participate in the fighting. He was as anxious as Saud to avoid a direct clash with the Egyptians. It was with this in mind that he asked Jordan to withdraw its aircraft.

Early in November, Faisal was prepared for a bitter and protracted struggle. With Egypt so deeply involved, no end to the conflict was in sight. Egypt's bombardment of Saudi territory and the subsequent severing of diplomatic relations indicated the extent of deterioration in Saudi-Egyptian relations. Yemen became the battlefield of the undeclared war. Faisal was not over optimistic, but of the final outcome he had no doubt.

Some Theoretical Implications

The limitations of the case-study are too well-known to be elaborated here. Many features of a situation are unique to it and generalizations can be misleading. The dangers of uncritical analogies have been frequently - and rightly - emphasized. Nonetheless, a case-study could offer clues to some working propositions that might have an applicability transcending the particular case. Nine such propositions are discussed below. No claim is made that they have been "proved"; the study has merely drawn attention to them. They must be reality-tested many times before even a limited applicability can be established.

While many civilians were engaged in opposing the Yemeni regime, the 1962 revolution was primarily a military takeover carried out by officers in the regular army. No civilians participated. The post-revolutionary government was dominated by officers. Just like the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and the Iraqi revolution of 1958, the Yemeni revolution demonstrated that the army was the most serious threat facing a monarchical regime.

1. In undemocratic, underdeveloped monarchical states a potential revolutionary situation always exists in the army. The army is considered the only force capable of challenging the status quo and some army officers inevitably think of themselves as future leaders. Such officers are, for the most part, in their twenties and thirties. It is doubtful that even the most efficient security measures on the part of a monarchical regime could succeed in purging the army of its revolutionary potentialities.

The Yemeni officers were emboldened to act by widespread popular discontent with the Imamite regime. Important demands were unfulfilled. The regime's efforts to stimulate support fell short of their aim. The Shafis as a whole harboured grievances.

2. A potential revolutionary situation is transformed into a bid to take power only if an erosion of support for the regime is perceived. While the reasons for the decline of support vary in every case, a perceived popular dissatisfaction is present in all revolutionary attempts to destroy an established regime.

Because of Yemen's backward conditions, and particularly in view of the conservative outlook of the Zaidi tribes, Yemeni revolutionaries feared that no revolution would succeed in Yemen. The collapse of the attempts of 1948 and 1955 showed that a revolution did not have much chance without external support. The Yemeni officers would probably have not carried out the 1962 revolution had they not been reasonably sure of Egyptian intervention on their behalf. 3. In a country where previous attempts at revolutionary change have failed, the revolutionaries would not undertake the next attempt unless they perceive probable external support. Thus, while in most cases intervention is prompted by a civil war, in some cases the expectation of intervention encourages the revolution which triggers the civil war. External calls for revolution can be effective insofar as they lead uncertain revolutionaries to expect external support.

President Nasser believed that the failure of the revolution in Yemen would be a victory for the "reactionaries" who, in collaboration with the Imperialists, were bent on isolating and destroying his regime. King Saud believed that President Nasser instigated the revolution which he was convinced would give a hostile Egypt a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula and encourage subversion. Thus, both perceived a threat. 4. Threat-perception is a necessary prerequisite to intervention. While to an outside observer no threat is apparent, to the decision-makers involved

the reality of threat is never in question. They might argue that the threat is indirect or long-range, hence not so obvious. Decision-makers invariably characterize their interventions as, and probably genuinely believe them to be, defensive measures undertaken in response to hostile, provocative actions.

There is no evidence that either the Soviet Union or the United States were involved, respectively, in the Egyptian and Saudi decisions to intervene in Yemen. These decisions were taken by the small powers concerned for local considerations hardly connected with global strategies. 5. Allowing for the difference in scope, small powers are as capable of intervening as great powers. Subsequent developments in Yemen have shown that in relative terms the Egyptian involvement in Yemen was greater than the American involvement in Vietnam; and that proportionately the aid given to the Royalists by Saudi Arabia was larger than the aid received by North Vietnam from the Soviet Union. Being less worried about nuclear confrontations and having fewer international commitments, small powers can in certain circumstances enjoy a greater capacity to intervene than great powers. While the active opposition of a great power might discourage a small power from intervening, no encouragement, active or otherwise, is needed by a small power to start an intervention.

The Egyptian and Saudi interventions cannot be understood except in view of the confrontation that had been going on for almost a year before the revolution between the U.A.R. on the one hand, and Yemen, Jordan and Saudi Arabia on the other. The confrontation itself was the climax to suspicions generated during the interactions of the fifties. 6. Intervention is never an isolated, independent incident; rather, it is a link in a chain

of events. Intervention is more of a symptom than a disease; any analysis of intervention must devote as much attention to the background of hostility and fear as to the incident of intervention itself. As far as intervention is concerned, day-to-day routine decisions may turn out, in the final analysis, to be as important as the more dramatic decisions to actually intervene.

Neither the U.A.R. nor Saudi Arabia thought solely in terms of the effects of the Yemeni revolution on Yemeni-Egyptian or Yemeni-Saudi relations. President Nasser was worried about the "reactionaries" achieving a victory, and King Saud was alarmed by the prospect of Yemen being turned into a subversive Egyptian satellite. 7. Intervention is rarely a function of a relationship between the intervening and inviting states; at least one third party is usually involved. Each confrontation means a potential intervention. Thus, the more confrontations there are in the world, the more will be the incidents of intervention. Conversely, a de-escalation in any confrontation implies that the chances of a potential intervention have decreased.

Neither President Nasser nor King Saud was able to predict the course of events in Yemen. Both expected the side they supported to win in a few months' time. Neither could foresee how deeply involved his own country would be. 8. Decision-makers in an intervening state tend to overestimate the strength of the side they support and to underestimate the costs of intervention. They are able to persist in this belief by perceiving minor victories as turning-points and ignoring the victories scored by the enemy. Decision-makers in an inviting state, who are anxious to maintain external support, contribute to this process by continuing to promise a speedy and favourable conclusion to the war.

Some expected that with Faisal taking over as Prime Minister, Saudi Arabia would stop its aid to the Royalists. This expectation was based on the well-known caution of the Prince. As it turned out, however, Saudi Arabia continued to intervene on a larger scale and more efficiently. 9. A change of government at an early stage of intervention does not lead to an abandonment of the policy of intervention unless the perceptions of the new decision-makers are radically different from the perceptions of those who decided to intervene in the first place. In a non-democratic country a peaceful transfer of power is less likely to interrupt intervention than a violent overthrow of a government.

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