

Royalist Offensive. - Saudi Arabian and Persian Aid to Royalists.

The civil war in Yemen, which in July threatened to lead to war between the United Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia, was ended by an agreement between President Nasser and King Faisal signed in Jeddah on Aug. 24. Details of the cease-fire agreement and of the political and military developments leading up to it are given below under cross-headings.

Between January and July the royalist forces took the offensive on all fronts, occupying large areas previously held by the republicans.

The royalists achieved two major successes in January, when they captured Jebel Razeh (in north-western Yemen, near the Saudi frontier) and Belt Maaran (about 20 miles north-east of Sana'a). Royalist claims that about 1,500 Egyptians had been killed in these two battles were denied by the Egyptian authorities; Field Marshal Amer, Vice-President of the U.A.R., stated in the National Assembly on Feb. 24 that Egyptian casualties since 1962 totalled 105 officers and 1,502 men killed. [Egyptian casualties were placed at a much higher figure by dissident republican spokesmen, however—see below.]

Mr. Hashem bin Hashem (Information Minister in the royalist Government) alleged on Jan. 23 that 260 people had been killed two days before by gas bombs dropped by Egyptian aircraft in the Belt Maaran area. The charge that the Egyptians were using gas bombs was repeated on Feb. 1 by dissident republicans who had recently fled to Aden. The International Red Cross Committee was reported on Feb. 9 to have refused a royalist request to inquire into these charges, on the ground that the use of gas was not forbidden by any International Red Cross convention.

Fighting broke out in the Kholan area of south-eastern Yemen in January, culminating in the capture of Harib (near the frontier of the South Arabian Federation) by the royalists on March 10, after a day's hand-to-hand combat with heavy casualties on both sides; Harib had previously been held by the republicans since March 1963. Egyptian and republican forces were reported on April 19 to have occupied the Al Haqla mountain pass (about 25 miles north of Harib), but it was subsequently reported that the counter-attack had failed in the face of strong royalist resistance.

Fighting meanwhile continued in northern Yemen. Egyptian attempts in March and again in May to cut the royalists' supply routes from Saudi Arabia failed because of the mountainous nature of the terrain, which is unsuited to armour and wheeled vehicles. A strong royalist offensive near Harad (in north-western Yemen, near the Saudi frontier) was reported on June 7 to have been repulsed, however, and U.A.R. sources claimed on June 14 that 49 royalists had been killed and large quantities of arms seized in an unsuccessful attempt to infiltrate into Yemen from the north and east.

During the spring and summer the royalists took the offensive throughout eastern Yemen and around Sana'a. The cutting of the road between Sana'a and Al Hazm (the strongest Egyptian post in north-eastern Yemen) in May was followed by a heavy Egyptian counter-attack. Sirwah (between Sana'a and Marib) was captured by the royalists on May 24, and Marib (about 70 miles east of Sana'a) on July 15; Sirwah had been held by the

republicans throughout the war, and Marib since February 1963. The garrison of Marib retreated north-westward to Al Hazm, the only airfield in eastern Yemen still in republican hands, which was itself almost entirely surrounded by royalist tribes. Majadh (15 miles north-west of Sana'a) was taken by the royalists on June 25, and Jahanna (about 30 miles south-east of the capital), around which fighting had been in progress since May, also fell to the royalists on July 24. The *Guardian* commented on Aug. 1 that the royalists' claims suggested that they had "in the past two months or so taken over as much as a third of the total area once occupied by Egyptian forces."

The royalists' successes were attributed largely to increased military and financial aid which they were reported to be receiving from Saudi Arabia, Persia, and the principalities of the South Arabian Federation.

In statements issued in June King Faisal confirmed that Saudi Arabia was actively assisting the royalists, although in September 1964 he had agreed to cease to do so in return for the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces from Yemen; he maintained that as the U.A.R. had not observed this agreement he also was not bound by it. The republican Government was reported on July 26 to have lodged a complaint with the U.N. and the Arab League, accusing Saudi Arabia of setting up supply bases for the royalists at many points near the Yemeni frontier, and claiming that without Saudi support the royalists would have been defeated long before.

Reports of large-scale Persian aid to the royalists became increasingly frequent from February onwards; *Le Monde* reported on July 30 that Persia had supplied the royalists with several light bombers, and that they also disposed of unlimited credits from non-Arab sources. [The ex-Imam's family and the Zaidi tribes of northern Yemen, like the Persians, are Shi'ite Moslems, whereas the Shafii acronym="yem" class="nation" id=""/acronym/p

The republicans meanwhile were weakened by dissensions between the supporters of President Sallal, who was backed by the U.A.R., and his opponents, who advocated the ending of foreign aid for both sides and a negotiated peace settlement. The dissident republicans enjoyed wide support among the tribal leaders, the trading class, and the intellectuals. Sheikhs of the two largest Zaidi tribal confederations, the republican Hashid and the royalist Bakil, were reported on April 2 to have issued a joint ultimatum to the U.A.R. calling on her to begin withdrawing her troops by April 21, failing which they would take action against them.

In an attempt to rally dissident republican support, the royalist Government adopted in January a "National Charter" demanding the withdrawal of the U.A.R. forces and self-determination for Yemen, and promising to establish a constitutional monarchy. After the death of the present Imam, Mohammed al Badr, future Imams would be elected, and there would be a Council of Ministers with executive powers and a nominated Consultative Assembly. The charter also promised a general amnesty, equality before the law, and freedom of speech and publication within the limits of the law and Islamic belief.

Mr. Mohammed al Zubeiri, the most prominent of the dissident republican leaders, was assassinated in north-eastern Yemen on April 1. While Sana'a Radio attributed responsibility for the crime to the royalists, the circumstances and background of the murder remained completely obscure; Mr. Zubeiri, who had entered Major-General Jaifi's Cabinet in May 1964 as a Deputy Premier, had resigned in December as a protest against "corruption and arbitrary repressive methods," and had subsequently formed an organization called "Allah's Party" to work for a peaceful settlement.

The republican Prime Minister, Major-General Amri, resigned on April 15, whereupon President Sallal asked Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Nooman to form an Administration.

Mr. Nooman, a veteran opponent of the monarchy, led the "Free Yemeni" movement for many years before the 1962 revolution, became Minister of Local Government in President Sallal's first Cabinet, and subsequently represented Yemen at the Arab League. He was appointed president of the Consultative Council in May 1964, but resigned at the same time as Mr. Zubeiri, whose views he shared.

Mr. Nooman agreed to form a Government on condition that a peace conference was held, that the post of President was replaced by a Presidential Council, and that he had complete freedom in choosing his Ministers. These terms were accepted by President Sallal, who on April 20 appointed a Presidential Council of six members, with himself as chairman, to "plan, direct, and supervise the execution of State policy." The other members of the Council were Major-General Amri (the Vice-President), Mr. Abdul Rahman al Iriani (a political associate of Mr. Nooman and Mr. Zubeiri), Sheikh Mohammed Ali Osman, Sheikh Nooman Ben Qaid Ben Rajeh, and Mr. Mohammed Nooman (son of the new Premier).

Mr. Nooman formed his Cabinet on April 24, its most prominent members being Mr. Muhsin al Aini (previously Yemeni representative at the U.N.)—Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Abdullah Ben Hussein al Ahmar (paramount chief of the Hashid tribe)—Interior; Dr. Mohammed Said al Attar —Economy; Mr. Mohammed Abdou Said—Finance; Colonel Mohammed al Riani—War; Mr. Ahmed al Marwani—Information; Mr. Hussein al Maqdami—Health; and Mr. Abdullah al Khorshumi—Public Works.

Whereas all previous Governments had contained a large majority of Zaidis, the new Cabinet consisted of nine Zaidis and nine Shaffis, Mr. Nooman himself being the first Shafii to become Prime Minister. Mr. Aini, Mr. Marwani, Mr. Maqdami, Mr. Khorshumi, and two deputy Ministers were regarded as sympathetic to the *Baath* Party, which had a considerable following among the younger officers and intellectuals.

In a policy statement, Mr. Nooman said that he would work for peace and stability by extending the hand of reconciliation to all Yemeni elements. Other points in his programme included the consolidation of the republican system; the formation of a Consultative Assembly; preparations for elections to a Legislative Council and local government bodies within two years; the formation of a national army, with the assistance of military experts from Arab countries; the economic development of the country through scientifically prepared plans; the speedy implementation of agreements for co-operation with the U.A.R.; and non-alignment in international affairs. Although he called for "support for the people of Southern Yemen," his Cabinet, unlike previous Governments, did not include a "Ministry for Occupied Southern Yemen Affairs"—an indication that he wished to improve relations with the South Arabian Federation.

A national peace conference of 5,000 tribal leaders and other leading personalities was held at Khamer (in the Hashid tribe's territory, about 20 miles north of Sana'a) on May 2-5, with Mr. Iriani in the chair; the republican tribes were widely represented, but the royalists had refused an invitation to attend. Addressing the conference, Mr. Nooman said that the Government was "prepared to extend the hand of understanding" to Saudi Arabia for the sake of peace. The conference approved a number of proposals for the restoration of peace, including the formation of a permanent committee composed of five tribal and four religious leaders which would make contacts with the royalist tribes, the sending of delegations to all Arab countries to seek their co-operation in ending the war, and the formation of a "People's Army" 11,000 strong which would gradually relieve the Egyptian forces. It also called on the Government to amend the Constitution.

President Sallal approved on May 8 an interim Constitution along the lines proposed by the conference, which apparently replaced that adopted in April 1964. Its main provisions were as follows:

(1) Yemen was an independent and sovereign Islamic Arab republic with parliamentary democracy, forming part of the Arab nation.

(2) Islam was the religion of the State and Islamic laws the source of all legislation.

(3) Equality of all, freedom of expression, publication, and assembly, and independence of the judiciary were guaranteed.

(4) A Consultative Assembly of 99 members would act as the supreme legislative body, and would prepare a permanent Constitution, which would be submitted to a referendum at the end of a two-year transition period.

(5) The Consultative Assembly would nominate the President and the members of the Republican Council, and would have power to withdraw its confidence from the Government and from members of the Council by a two-thirds majority.

(6) General elections to a new Consultative Assembly would take place after two years.

(7) The Republican Council, headed by the President, would act as the Head of State, and would have the right to submit Bills to the Government for study and for presentation to the Assembly for approval.

(8) A single party, to be called the National Congress, would be formed. [This provision superseded a decree issued by President Sallal on Jan. 25 establishing a single party called the Yemeni Arab Union, on the model of the ruling in the U.A.R. and Iraq.]

Mr. Nooman's peace policy and the new Constitution, which greatly limited the President's powers, speedily brought him into conflict with President Sallal's faction. Major-General Amri resigned as Vice-President and as a member of the Presidential Council on May 12, nominally for health reasons; he was promoted at the same time to the rank of general. It was thereupon announced that the Presidential Council had been dissolved and replaced by the Republican Council envisaged under the new Constitution, which would consist of President Sallal, Mr. Iriani, and Sheikh Rajeh.

Mr. Abdul Kawi Hamim and Mr. Kassem Ghaleb (Foreign Minister and Education Minister respectively in General Amri's Government) arrived in the South Arabian Federation on May 17 and asked for political asylum.

Mr. Hamim alleged that the Government had first tried to arrest and murder them, and when this failed had sent troops to the town of Rahida (near the Federal border) on the previous day "to destroy our homes and our town." He also claimed that Mr. Nooman had misused the Khamer Conference to secure tribal support for his Government and wanted to establish a one-man tribal system of government, whereas they wanted a "national, democratic, and progressive" regime. It was subsequently reported that Mr. Hamim, who returned to Yemen after Mr. Nooman's resignation [see below] had been killed on Aug. 23 in a gun battle in southern Yemen.

Mr. Nooman and Mr. Aini began talks to facilitate the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces on May 13 with General Fathi Abdul Ghani (commander of the Egyptian forces in Yemen) and Mr. Ahmed Shukri (the U.A.R. Ambassador). A delegation led by Mr. Iriani, and including Mr. Aini and Mr. Mohammed Nooman, left on May 15 for a tour of the Arab countries to explain the resolutions of the Khamer Conference, visiting Kuwait, Lebanon, and Syria.

The Jordanian Prime Minister, Mr. Wasfi Tell, said on June 6 that King Hussein was working for a settlement of

the Yemeni problem, and that his initiative had led to preliminary agreement between the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia on basic principles. In a letter of June 14 to President Nasser and King Faisal, King Hussein proposed the establishment of a joint republican and royalist Administration under a neutral leader, which should rule until the people had expressed their wishes through a referendum; the replacement of all foreign forces in Yemen by an inter- Arab peace force; and the establishment of an inter- Arab fund to finance the reconstruction of the country's economy. President Ben Bella of Algeria also sent a special envoy who, after talks with Mr. Nooman, President Nasser, and President Aref of Iraq, said in Baghdad on June 12 that a peace plan had "crystallized."

A mediation mission from Kuwait, headed by the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Sabah al Salem al Sabah, arrived in Riyadh on June 12 for talks with King Faisal, at the Yemeni Government's request. A joint communique issued on June 15 stated that the two sides had agreed to endeavour to find means that would pave the way to a settlement in Yemen. Mr. Mohammed Nooman announced on June 17 that King Faisal, after his talks with the Kuwaiti mission, had agreed to receive a Yemeni republican delegation. Discussions on the various peace proposals put forward were expected to take place at the Afro-Asian Conference, which was due to open in Algiers on June 28, but this was prevented by the postponement of the conference.

President Sallal, whose relations with Mr. Nooman were reported to have been strained ever since the formation of the latter's Government, precipitated a political crisis on June 27, when he appointed a Supreme Council of the Armed Forces without consulting the Cabinet and sent armed guards to force Sana'a Radio to broadcast his order. After the President had ignored the Cabinet's protests, Mr. Nooman submitted his resignation on the following day, stating that he had been "surprised by acts and resolutions in total contradiction to the letter and spirit of the Constitution," and afterwards left for Cairo. According to unconfirmed reports from Aden, President Sallal sent troops to arrest Mr. Nooman, but was finally persuaded to allow him to leave the country as a result of Mr. Shukri's intervention.

In addition to the tension between President Sallal and Mr. Nooman caused by the latter's attempts to limit the President's powers, it was believed that Mr. Nooman had offended the U.A.R. by his support for the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces from Yemen, the inclusion of suspected Baathists in his Cabinet, the sending of a delegation to Syria and the decision to establish diplomatic relations with that country, and the establishment of a party other than that formed under Egyptian auspices. In consequence, the U.A.R. was reported to have supported President Sallal against Mr. Nooman on military issues, and to have refused to finance the proposed People's Army.

The committee set up to implement the Khamer Conference's decisions, which was functioning in the place of the proposed Consultative Assembly, asked Mr. Nooman on July 1 to remain in office pending discussions. A delegation of 31 tribal, religious, and other leaders headed by Mr. Iriani arrived in Cairo on July 4, but failed to persuade him to withdraw his resignation.

On July 6 President Sallal himself formed a Government consisting of 13 officers and two civilians, with General Amri and Major-General Jaifi as Deputy Premiers, but on July 9 the President suddenly withdrew his order setting up the new Government and left for Cairo; he was believed to have made this decision under pressure from the U.A.R. High Command in Yemen, who feared that his Government would not obtain popular support.

After prolonged consultations in Cairo between the republican leaders, President Sallal announced on July 18 a compromise agreement whereby General Atari was asked to head a new Government and the resolutions of the Khamer Conference were reaffirmed. General Amri accordingly formed a Cabinet consisting of 13 civilians and six officers on July 20. Although three members of the previous Government accepted office, most of Mr.

Nooman's leading supporters declined; Dr. Attar refused an invitation from President Sallal to become president of the Bank of Yemen, as a protest against "the arrests and other measures taken against my colleagues and the intellectuals." [It had been reported on July 6 that, when President Sallal himself assumed the Premiership, at least 40 of Mr. Nooman's supporters had been arrested, most of them young intellectuals suspected of Baathist sympathies.]

Sheikh Rajeh, Sheikh Ahmar, and 35 other leading republicans arrived in the South Arabian Federation on July 20 with about 200 of their followers. Royalist spokesmen subsequently revealed that they had been allowed to pass through royalist-held territory, as the royalists, despite their political differences, regarded them as "brothers fleeing from the Egyptian invasion." Aden Radio reported on July 21 that Sheikh Ahmar had sent cables to the Arab League and the United Nations appealing to them to ensure the withdrawal of the U.A.R. forces from Yemen, the fulfilment of the resolutions of the Khamer Conference, and the reinstatement of Mr. Nooman's Government.

Mr. Maqdami, who had also left Yemen, said in Beirut on July 26 that "the Yemeni people can no longer tell the difference between the present republican regime and the Imam's reactionary regime," and called for a conference of republicans and royalists to end the war, the ending of Saudi aid to the royalists, and the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces. Mr. Mohammed al Fuseil (secretary of the Khamer Conference), who accompanied him, stated that between 80,000 and 100,000 Yemenis and between 5,000 and 8,000 Egyptians had been killed in the war.

A delegation of the republican tribal chiefs who had taken refuge in the South Arabian Federation left for Riyadh on July 23, and were received on July 30 by King Faisal. Talks afterwards took place at Taif (King Faisal's summer capital) between the delegation and royalist leaders, who reached agreement on Aug. 13 on the following programme: (1) Yemen would be a "Moslem State," this formula avoiding the use of the term "republic" or "monarchy"; (2) a Presidential Council would act as Head of State, and would be assisted by a Council of Ministers; (3) an Advisory Council representing all the tribes and the leading personalities of the country would be set up; (4) the people would be called upon to choose between a monarchy, an imamate, or a republic.

President Sallal immediately denounced the republicans who had taken part in the talks as "traitors." This charge was repudiated by Mr. Iriani, who, however, insisted that a settlement must be based on the maintenance of the republic and the permanent removal of the Imam and his family. The U.A.R. made no official comment on the Taif talks, but Mr. Iriani's statement received great prominence in the Egyptian Press.

President Nasser had talks on July 20 at his own request with Mr. Omar Sakkaf, the Saudi Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who was visiting Cairo. In a speech on July 22 the President said that the U.A.R. had reopened negotiations with Saudi Arabia and had a plan which, with Saudi co-operation, would enable her to withdraw her troops from Yemen in six months' time or even less. The U.A.R. troops, however, would not tolerate indefinitely attacks by British and Saudi "mercenaries," and if the negotiations failed the U.A.R. would have to "liquidate the points of aggression," which would develop into direct armed conflict with Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Hassan Sabri al Kholi, President Nasser's personal representative, visited Riyadh on July 29-Aug. 1 for discussions with King Faisal, who was reported to have warned him that Saudi Arabia was not prepared to negotiate under threats; before returning to Cairo Mr. al Kholi also met the dissident republican leaders. The situation remained tense throughout the next few days; General Amri declared on Aug. 2 that all Yemeni republicans were prepared to wage "a decisive war with Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni people's only enemy," and on Aug. 4 it was reported that over 10,000 Saudi troops were massed on the border in readiness to invade Yemen

in the event of an Egyptian attack. A State Department spokesman in Washington said on Aug. 4 that the U.S. Government hoped that the U.A.R. would not commit acts of aggression against Saudi Arabia and would withdraw her troops from Yemen, and commented that "our policy has always been to oppose energetically any use of force or threat of armed intervention in the Middle East."

Mr. Mohammed Ali Reda (the Saudi Ambassador to the U.A.R.) arrived in Cairo on Aug. 8 on a special mission from King Faisal, and flew back to Tail on Aug. 11 with a message from President Nasser. According to Cairo press reports, the President offered to meet the King in either the U.A.R. or Saudi Arabia, but rejected a suggestion that they should meet at sea because he did not wish "to deal with King Faisal as an enemy and a stranger." Mr. Reda returned to Cairo on Aug. 16 with the King's reply, inviting President Nasser to meet him in the Saudi port of Jedda.

Before leaving to meet King Faisal, President Nasser had talks in Alexandria on Aug. 18 with Yemeni leaders, including President Sallal, General Amri, Mr. Nooman, Mr. Iriani, and Mr. Aini. It was reported that the talks had been heated, and that President Nasser had accused Mr. Nooman of having formed a Government composed entirely of anti-Egyptian elements; Mr. Nooman afterwards stated, however, that he was convinced that the U.A.R. was determined to bring the war to an end.

President Nasser arrived in Jedda on Aug. 22 and immediately began talks with King Faisal, which were described by Mecca Radio as "friendly and brotherly." At the conclusion of the talks an agreement was signed on Aug. 24 which provided for an immediate cease-fire, the ending of Saudi aid to the royalists, the withdrawal of the U.A.R. forces by September 1966, the establishment of a provisional Yemeni Government, and the holding of a plebiscite in November 1966. The terms of the agreement were as follows:

- (1) The people of Yemen would decide the form of government they desired through a plebiscite, to be held not later than Nov. 23, 1966.
- (2) The period up to the plebiscite would be considered a transitional period.
- (3) With the co-operation of Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R., a conference of 50 representatives of all the national forces and leading personalities of Yemen would meet at Harad on Nov. 23, 1965, to decide the system of government during the transitional period, form a Provisional Government, and determine the form and nature of the plebiscite.
- (4) Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. undertook to respect the decisions of the Harad Conference and to co-operate to ensure their successful implementation. They agreed to form a joint committee to organize the plebiscite if the conference considered it necessary.
- (5) Saudi Arabia would immediately stop military aid of all kinds and forbid the use of her territory for operations against Yemen.
- (6) The U.A.R. would withdraw all her forces from Yemen within the 10 months beginning on Nov. 23, 1965.
- (7) Fighting in Yemen would end immediately, and Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. would form a joint peace commission to supervise the cease-fire and control the frontiers and ports. Food aid would continue under the commission's supervision. The commission would be entitled to use all transport facilities within Yemen and to move through Saudi territory if necessary.

(8) Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R. would form a joint force, to be used by the commission when necessary to prevent any violation of the agreement or any action intended to obstruct it or provoke disorders.

(9) President Nasser and King Faisal would remain in direct contact to overcome any difficulties in carrying out the agreement.

The agreement was welcomed by Government leaders in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, but was violently attacked in Syria, where the Baathist organ *Al Thawra* accused President Nasser of "fouly murdering" the Yemeni revolution. The U.N. Secretary-General, U Thant, sent identical messages on Aug. 25 to President Nasser and King Faisal expressing his gratification at the agreement, which was also welcomed by the U.S. State Department and by the Soviet Communist Party organ *Pravda*.

The royalist headquarters announced on Aug. 25 that it had ordered its forces to stop fighting, but to maintain their present positions until the Harad Conference. The Egyptian troops began withdrawing on Aug. 26 from their positions on the Saudi frontier. The Cairo Press reported on Sept. 5 that it had been agreed that the joint Saudi-Egyptian force, which would man border observation posts not later than Sept. 25, would consist of an infantry brigade from each side and a fighter and bomber squadron, and would be commanded by Saudi and Egyptian officers in alternate months.

The agreement was followed by a reconciliation between President Sallal and the dissident republicans. It was reported on Sept. 4 that President Sallal would lead the Yemeni delegation to the Arab summit conference in Casablanca, which would include Mr. Nooman; that the President had made a declaration of friendship towards the republicans who had taken part in the Taif negotiations; and that the dissident republicans who had been arrested would be released.

President Nasser ordered on Aug. 26 that the sequestration of Saudi property in the U.A.R. (mostly owned by members of the royal family), which had been imposed in 1962, should be lifted. King Faisal paid a visit to Cairo on Sept. 10-12, at the conclusion of which he and President Nasser issued a joint communique reaffirming their support for the Jeddah Agreement and their intention to develop economic, cultural, and other co-operation between their two countries.—(Times Daily Telegraph - Guardian - Le Monde - New York Times) (Prev. rep. 20529 A.)