

## **Continuation of Civil War. - Partial Evacuation of Egyptian Forces. - Royalist Offensive and Republican Counter-offensive. - Peace Proposals.**

Military activities in Yemen in the first five months of 1967 were virtually confined to sporadic raids on royalist villages by the Egyptian Air Force, which also bombed the Saudi Arabian towns of Najran and Jizan in May. In June, however, a large section of the Egyptian forces was withdrawn from Yemen because of the war with Israel, and the royalists took the opportunity to occupy a number of towns which had been evacuated by their garrisons. A counter-offensive by the Egyptians and republicans regained much of the lost ground in July. Proposals for a peace settlement were put forward by the United Arab Republic at the Khartoum conference of Arab Foreign Ministers on Aug. 1-6 [see 22192 B], and despite protests by President Sallal discussions on the problem continued between the Arab Governments throughout August. Details of military and political developments in Yemen during this period are given below.

Little ground fighting was reported before the beginning of June, but the Egyptian Air Force carried out in May a series of raids on royalist villages in which poison-gas bombs were reported to have been dropped. The use of gas in a number of these raids was subsequently confirmed in reports issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross [see 22204 A].

The Saudi Arabian Government stated on May 13 that Egyptian aircraft had bombed the frontier town of Najran within the previous 48 hours, and on May 14 that the port of Jizan had been bombed that morning, one woman being killed and 11 women and children injured. Major-General Abdel Salam Tewfiq, the Egyptian Chief of Staff in Yemen, was reported on May 16 to have claimed that a rocket base in Saudi Arabia had been bombed; he was believed to be referring so Khemis Mishayt, the only known rocket base in the area, where British contractors had installed 35 *Thunderbird* ground-to-air missiles. A U.K. Foreign Office spokesman said on May 18 that the British Government deeply deplored the bombing of Najran and Jizan, but that it had no information about any raid on Khemis Mishayt.

The Egyptian Government's military policy in Yemen and its political results were analysed in *Le Monde* on May 13 by a French journalist, M. Eric Rouleau, who had recently spent nearly three weeks in the royalist-controlled areas of Yemen and had stayed at the headquarters east of Sana'a of Emir Abdallah Ben al Hassan, commander of the royalists' "southern front."

Despite the concentration of most of the Egyptian forces in the area between Sana'a, Hodeida, and Taiz, M. Rouleau stated, "all the towns and ports in Yemen are in the hands of the republicans or their Egyptian allies. The Emir Abdallah himself estimates that two-thirds of the population are entirely outside the royalists' control. The Sana'a regime has restored to the tribes, which have always resisted any central Government and still more any foreign occupation, the autonomy for which they have fought. In exchange for this, it is understood that they must abstain from assisting the supporters of the former sovereign, the Imam Badr.... Those which stay out of the civil war or, better still, collaborate with the central Government, receive subsidies, food, and arms. This is the case with the majority of the tribes of the great Hashid confederation, in the west and north of the country, which are

required only to avoid hindering communications with the northern town of Saada, near the Saudi frontier. On the other hand, those tribes which allow convoys intended for the royalist guerrillas to pass or help them in any way are periodically bombed.

“The Egyptians seem to use coercion with calculated restraint. . . . Confirming our impressions, the Emir Abdallah told us: ‘The Egyptians do not carry out intensive bombing; they attack minor localities apparently of no strategic importance and spare centres of population. The main aim seems to be to inspire fear without alienating the Yemenis too much.’ According to Sheikh Ghader, supreme chief of the Khawlan tribes, the air raids have claimed about 5,000 victims in 4 1/2 years, a number which seems exaggerated when one has seen how thinly peopled this part of the country is. In any case, this is far from the figure quoted by the Imam Badr's Government of 1,500,000 dead, wounded, and homeless, or one-third of the entire population of Yemen.

“In Saudi Arabia as among the Yemeni guerrillas, the royalist leaders did not conceal from us their uneasiness at the effects of the policy pursued by the Egyptians. By withdrawing they have effected a double economy, in men and money. They no longer pay except for services rendered, which assures them the support of a growing number of tribes whose equivocal attitude is contributing to the distintegration of the royalist camp. . . .”

The republicans remained seriously divided during the early months of 1967 between supporters and opponents of President Sallal's Government. The Yemeni Charge d'Affaires in Lebanon, Mr. Abdallah Salem al Hamed, and the Second Secretary of the Embassy announced on Dec. 26, 1966, that they had resigned in order to join the “free republicans,” and accused the newly-appointed Ambassador, Dr. Abdul Rahman al Baidani, of abusing his authority. Dr. Baidani, on the other hand, alleged on the following day that he had suspended the two men for illegal currency transactions and diversion of funds.

Great surprise was caused by Dr. Baidani's appointment. After acting as Vice-President of the Republic he was dismissed by President Sallal in 1963, and a few months later violently attacked the republican regime; he was subsequently deprived of his Yemeni nationality and held under house arrest for a time in Cairo [see pages 19297, 19308, 19893].

At a press conference in Aden organized by the South Arabian Federal Government, a certain All Ahmad al Dhubah claimed on March 24, 1967, to be a member of the council of a “Yemen Revolutionary Front” formed at a conference held on March 3–8, which had been attended by representatives of the Hashid and Bakil tribes and by disillusioned republican officers and officials. He asserted that the Front had adopted resolutions condemning both the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia as responsible for the war, and the detention in Cairo of Major-General Amri and other dissident republican leaders; petitioned the U.N. Secretary-General to form a neutral committee to investigate the Egyptians' “barbaric crimes” in Yemen; and formed a “Yemen Liberation Army” of 30,000 men which was fighting a guerrilla war against the Egyptians. *The Times* commented that “the credentials of the new front are difficult to assess, especially as al Dhubah declined to name any other members.”

In a report in *Le Monde* on May 14 M. Rouleau analysed the attitude of the various dissident republican groups.

A number of intellectuals who had fled from the republican areas, and who claimed to be “convinced royalists,” had defined their views as follows to M. Rouleau: “Once the Egyptians have been expelled we shall try to keep the republican system. We shall be supported by the people, for they have not forgotten the tyranny and cruelty of previous monarchs. The State and religion must be separated. It will then be possible to choose a religious Imam, a purely spiritual leader, and a President of the Republic elected by universal suffrage, who might be chosen from among the enlightened members of the royal family, provided that they renounce their claim to the

throne.” M. Rouleau added that “according to some of those we talked to, the majority of the tribes which do not collaborate with the Sana’a regime share this viewpoint.”

King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, M. Rouleau continued, “opened the doors of his kingdom and his coffers to the various groups of dissident republicans before integrating them into a ‘patriotic front’ in which most of the royalists participate half-heartedly. Only the ‘Independent Yemeni Republicans,’ whose representative in Europe is Dr. Said al Attar, have refused to take shelter under the banner of the Riyadh Government. Their thesis is that the struggle must be conducted on two fronts at once, against Egypt and Saudi Arabia. King Faisal’s initiative is skilful. On the one hand, he tries to rally the sections of the Yemeni people who are distrustful or hostile towards the Hamiduddin dynasty, whose political influence no longer seems to him to offer any guarantee of success. On the other, he attributes to the resistance a ‘national’ character more attractive than an ideological struggle which would set royalists and republicans, reactionaries and progressives, against one another....”

King Faisal’s policy led to a serious split among the royalists in March, when the Emir Abdallah Ben al Hassan and two other members of the royal family announced their intention to suspend all military activities as a protest against the inclusion of dissident republicans in the royalist Government-in-exile.

In an interview with M. Rouleau, published in *Le Monde* on March 22, the Emir Abdallah declared that “the Saudis grant us less power than the Egyptians grant Marshal Salla’s republican Government.... We feel more and more that we are taking part in a war which has nothing to do with us, a war which Saudi Arabia and Egypt are fighting on our soil. We are tired of fighting for other people....” M. Rouleau reported that “the supreme chief of the Khawlan tribes, Sheikh Ghader, has hastened to associate himself with the rebel princes, and a degree of anarchy... has begun to appear in the Yemeni mountains, where the Imam’s authority is openly challenged.”

A settlement was reached on April 10, when a new Government-in-exile was formed. The Emir al Hassan Ben Yehya (an uncle of the Imam and father of the Emir Abdallah) and the Emir Abdel Rahman Ben Yehya (another uncle of the Imam) retained the Premiership and the Vice-Premiership respectively, and the Emir Abdallah was appointed Minister of the Interior. Other important portfolios were distributed as follows: Mr. Ahmed Ben Mohammed al Shami—Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Sala al Masri—Defence; Mr. Ibrahim Ben Mohammed Ibrahim—Finance. It was not stated whether the new Cabinet included any dissident republicans.

It had previously been announced on Dec. 5, 1966, that the Imam had handed over virtually all his powers to a Council of the Imamate, consisting of six members presided over by himself. After consulting the Cabinet, the Council would have full powers to nominate to high appointments, subject to the Imam’s approval.

Cairo Radio reported on Dec. 17, 1966, that a series of bomb explosions had taken place in Saudi Arabia in the palaces of the royal family and at military bases controlled by U.S. and British experts; that thousands of Yemenis and others had been arrested; and that the police had seized large quantities of leaflets which had been distributed in the main towns by an organization called the “Union of People of the Arabian Peninsula.” The Saudi Ministry of the Interior confirmed on Jan. 10, 1967, that a number of “saboteurs” had been arrested, and alleged that they had confessed to having carried out acts of sabotage under the direction of the Egyptian command in Yemen. The Egyptian Press reported on Jan. 14 that over 750 people had been arrested in Saudi Arabia during the previous fortnight, including 85 Yemenis, 43 Sudanese, 15 Omanis, and seven citizens of Bahrain.

A statement issued by the “Union of People of the Arabian Peninsula,” which was broadcast by Cairo Radio on Jan. 24, claimed that further explosions had taken place in Saudi Government offices, and declared that the

organization intended to wage a terrorist campaign against the U.S. and British military advisers in Saudi Arabia similar to that in the South Arabian Federation. According to reports in *Le Monde*, explosions had taken place near a hotel in Riyadh where members of the U.S. military mission were living and at the aerodrome at Dahran, which was run by U.S. military experts, but the low-power bombs used had caused little damage and no casualties.

The Saudi Ministry of the Interior announced on March 17 that 17 Yemenis had been found guilty of sabotage at a secret trial in Riyadh, and had been publicly beheaded immediately after sentence was passed. Eleven of the accused were alleged to have confessed to causing bomb explosions in Riyadh, and the other six to preparing to commit acts of sabotage.

In a letter condemning the executions, which was published in *Le Monde* on March 26, Dr. Attar, representative of the Independent Yemeni Republicans, said: "The news which we have received from Jedda, Riyadh, and other Saudi Arabian towns, where about 200,000 Yemenis live and work, indicates that the Saudi Government has arrested thousands of our compatriots. It is true that almost all the Yemeni emigrants do not conceal their republican sympathies and refuse to collaborate with the ex-Imam Badr, despite the strong pressure to which they are subjected...."

The executions provoked strong protests in the Arab world. The Egyptian National Assembly adopted a resolution denouncing them as "an odious crime"; in Beirut a stick of dynamite was thrown into the garden of the Saudi Arabian Embassy, four Yemeni students being later arrested; and in Aden protest demonstrations took place on March 19. The Yemeni Government sent a Note to the Arab League on March 26 calling for an immediate inquiry into the executions, and for "urgent measures to save the lives of thousands of Yemenis who are suffering the worst tortures in Saudi prisons because of their refusal to join the ranks of the mercenaries who are fighting against their country."

Among those who condemned the executions was ex-King Sand of Saudi Arabia, who with President Nasser's permission had settled in Cairo in December 1966. In a broadcast on March 20, 1967, he denounced King Faisal's policy of "co-operating with imperialism and continuing the war in Yemen," and also "the murder of 17 Arab Moslems in the sacred month of the pilgrimage." It was announced on March 28 that ex-King Sand had sent a message to King Faisal advising him to recognize the Yemeni Republic.

Ex-King Saud visited Sana'a on April 23–25, and was welcomed on his arrival by President Sallal, who greeted him as "the legal King of Saudi Arabia." He announced in reply that he recognized the Yemeni Republic "on my own behalf and on behalf of my people in Saudi Arabia." At a mass meeting on April 24 he expressed his hopes for a republican victory, and presented a gift of \$1,000,000 to the Republic.

The ex-King told the Egyptian press agency on April 24 that "I left Saudi Arabia in order to avoid bloodshed, but the presence of foreign mercenaries in that country and the control of power by the Americans and the British oblige me to re-examine this question. I am convinced that a large number of tribes have remained loyal to me, and that the Saudi people condemn the present situation...."

An Egyptian soldier and a Yemeni were killed when two bazooka shells were fired at an ammunition dump in Taiz during the night of April 25. Two officials of the U.S. aid mission were arrested on the following day on a charge of firing the shells in an attempt to blow up the dump and destroy the city, and about 3,000 demonstrators stoned and broke into the aid mission's offices, destroying cars, furniture, and other property. The U.S. State Department described the charge on April 28 as a "total fabrication," and announced that all foreign aid officials

and their dependants would be withdrawn from Yemen. The property of the mission, estimated at between \$4,000,000 and \$4,500,000, was subsequently confiscated by the Yemeni Government.

Sana'a Radio announced on May 13 that the two officials had been committed for trial by a State security court, and stated on the following day that if convicted they would be liable to the death penalty. Following representations by the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, however, they were released on bail on May 16, and allowed to leave the country the following day.

The Middle Eastern crisis in May and the outbreak of war between Israel and the U.A.R. on June 5 produced a profound transformation of the situation in Yemen. At first it appeared possible that the crisis would unite all factions in a common opposition to Israel. On the one hand, it was reported on June 1 that the royalist Government-in-exile had appealed to the U.A.R. to withdraw its forces from Yemen and send them to the Israeli front; according to later reports, the royalists had been tacitly prepared to withhold their attacks while the U.A.R. was at war with Israel. On the other, Sheikh Abdullah Ben Hussein al Ahmar (the paramount chief of the Hashid, who had joined the dissident republicans in 1966-see page 21892) and the paramount chief of the other great tribal confederation, the Bakil, arrived in Sana'a on June 13 to assure President Sallal of their support and to pledge themselves to fight Israel under President Nasser's leadership.

The U.A.R. was reported on June 16 to have withdrawn 15,000 men, 150 tanks, and all its heavy artillery from Yemen during the week June 5-12. [Estimates of the number of Egyptian troops in Yemen before this withdrawal varied between 40,000 and 70,000.] Apparently as a warning to the royalists not to take advantage of the partial evacuation of the Egyptian forces, a number of villages were bombed on May 28-29 and June 5-6; royalist sources alleged that poison-gas bombs were dropped during these raids.

The Egyptian garrisons were withdrawn from a number of towns during June, including Hajja, Harad, and the port of Maidi in the north-west; Barat (south-east of Sana'a) and Marib (70 miles east of Sana'a), both of which had been occupied in April after a number of tribes had defected from the royalists; and Harib, 45 miles south of Marib on the Beihan frontier. The royalists claimed to have ambushed the Egyptians withdrawing from Hajja on three occasions on the Hodeida road, killing over 200 of them; other sources, however, stated that the tribes which had harassed the retreating Egyptians were anti-Egyptian rather than royalist, and after their evacuation Hajja was occupied not by the royalists but by the Hashid. The royalists subsequently occupied Harad and Maidi and advanced down the coast towards Hodeida; the coastal town of Al Luhayyah was cut off, and about 700 of its population evacuated to the British-administered island of Kamaran. According to other reports the royalists occupied Marib and Harib, and the Egyptians came under heavy attack in the Rada area, 80 miles south-east of Sana'a.

The Egyptian and republican forces launched a counter-offensive at the beginning of July; it was announced in Cairo on July 6 that Major-General Abdel Kader Hassan had been appointed commander of the Egyptian forces in Yemen in place of General Talaat Hassan. The number of Egyptian troops in Yemen, which was believed to have been reduced to 10,000 or 15,000 during the war with Israel, was reported on July 21 to have been again increased to about 25,000.

The royalist Government's headquarters at Ketaf (near the Saudi border) was bombed on July 1, in the first bombing attack since June 6, and other air raids on royalist villages followed, in some of which royalist sources alleged that gas bombs had been used. It was reported on July 20 that the Egyptians and republicans had recaptured Maidi and Harad and relieved Al Luhayyah, but that an attack on Hajja had been repulsed after a three-day battle in which the Egyptians had lost 50 killed. Royalist sources alleged that after their defeat the

Egyptians had dropped gas bombs on Hajja on July 15, killing 150 people and injuring 357, and on July 30 Aden Radio claimed that the Egyptians and republicans had suffered 100 casualties in another unsuccessful attack on Hajja. The republican radio reported on July 20 that serious fighting was also taking place in north-Eastern Yemen, where the royalists had attacked posts with greatly improved modern equipment. *The Guardian* commented on July 21 that “if these reports are true (and news of the Yemeni war, emanating from one interested source or the other, is notoriously unreliable), they would indicate more ground fighting than at any time for two years.”

Brigadier Ali Salih Fidama, a royalist officer who had served in the German Army in the Second World War, was shot dead on July 3 in an ambush about 100 miles from Aden. He had been broadcasting anti-republican propaganda for the past three years over Aden Radio, which was controlled by the South Arabian Federal Government, and at the time of his death was believed to be on his way to Yemen through Beihan.

Following the Egyptian proposal for the revival of the Jedda Agreement [see below], few reports of military activity by either side were received during August. The royalist radio stated on Aug. 28, however, that the Egyptians had recently made further bombing raids on royalist strongholds, and that in consequence the royalists had resumed their attacks, mainly in the area around Sana'a.

Major-General Abdallah Jizailan, the republican Deputy Premier, left Sana'a on Aug. 1 at the head of a large delegation for a visit to Moscow, during which he proposed to discuss Soviet military and economic aid to Yemen. All foreign aid to Yemen had previously been channelled through Cairo—an arrangement which had led to friction between the republicans and the U.A.R. [see page 21891]—and it was believed that one object of General Jizailan's visit was to persuade the Soviet Government to supply aid directly to Yemen.

The semi-official Cairo newspaper *Al Ahram* reported on Aug. 2 that the Egyptian delegation to the conference of Arab Foreign Ministers in Khartoum [see 22192 B] had proposed that the Jedda Agreement of 1965 should be put into force, and that any difficulties should be referred to the arbitration of three Arab countries, of which one would be nominated by the U.A.R., one by Saudi Arabia, and one by the Foreign Ministers' conference. The Yemeni Foreign Minister, Mr. Selim, however, said in Cairo on Aug. 6, while returning from Khartoum, that the holding of a plebiscite to determine Yemen's future form of government, as envisaged in the Jedda Agreement, would be “interference in Yemen's affairs and trespassing on its independence,” and stated that the Yemeni delegation at the conference had expressed reservations about the U.A.R.'s proposal. In an interview with the *Agence France Presse*, President Sallal declared on Aug. 16 that “the people of Yemen reject the Jedda Agreement in letter and spirit,” and that “the people have decided to establish a republican regime and will not accept any change.”

The Saudi Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Omar Sakkaf, said in a broadcast on Aug. 8 that Saudi Arabia's conditions for a settlement were: (1) the withdrawal of all Egyptian forces from Yemen and the ending of all military assistance to both republicans and royalists; (2) the formation of an organization to control the Saudi frontier and confirm the ending of all Saudi aid to the royalists after the complete evacuation of the Egyptian forces; (3) the organization of a free consultation of the Yemeni people in order that they might decide their own future. King Faisal declared on Aug. 18 that the *sine qua non* for new talks with the U.A.R. on Yemen would be the evacuation of the Egyptian forces, adding that “on that condition we shall stop our aid to the Yemeni royalists.”

The Sudanese Prime Minister, Mr. Mahgoub, announced during a visit to Cairo on Aug. 24 that President Nasser had accepted Sudanese proposals for ending the war in Yemen which King Faisal had already approved

in talks with himself, and that the President and King Faisal would meet in Khartoum to discuss the details.—(Le Monde - Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian - New York Times) (Prev. rep. 21981 A; 22192 B; 22204 A.)

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