

**ion of New Govern- with Saudi Arabia - relations with South orces**

Yemeni head of state, 1980, Dr Abdel Karim Ali in place of Maj. Abdel is post since 1975—see following enlarged and

Chairman Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Deputy Prime Minister for Internal Affairs Foreign Affairs Interior Economy and Industry Works Electricity, Water and Drainage Waqfs and Guidance

Local Administration Social Affairs Agriculture and Fish Resources Civil Service and Administrative Reform Education Communications and Transport

Justice Information and Culture Municipalities and Housing Finance Supply and Trade

Development and Chairman of the Central Planning Organization

Health Minister of State and Legal Adviser Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Minister of State and Chairman of the Petroleum and Mineral Resources Organization Minister of State for the Affairs of the Constituent People's Assembly

Additional responsibility.

who had studied in the United States. and Development from 1976 to Education portfolio until May 1979. He had held the Agriculture portfolio [see page 30201] following which he was chairman of the Central Planning

Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs. Mr al Thor had previously, latterly that of Minister of Developmental Planning Organization to which he was appointed in 1979 [see page 30201]. (The removal of Mr al Arashi as Minister of Information and Public Relations was a gesture of goodwill towards Saudi Arabia. Elements in North Yemen who had been too radical; their predecessors prior to the formation of the National Front Organization—Mr Abdullah al Asnaq and Mr Ahmad al Asnawi—had on the other hand been opposed to the proposed merger between North and South Yemen. The Saudi Arabian position—

was allocated different responsibilities. The Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs held the Justice portfolio and Lt. Col. al Asnawi held the Interior. On Jan. 15 Lt. Col. al Asnawi was returning to Sana'a by gunmen while returning to Sana'a. One gunman was killed and

another was reportedly arrested but it was not revealed what their motives for the killing had been. No immediate successor to Lt.-Col. Khamis was named.

Dr al Hamadani had been responsible for Economy from May 1978 [see 29291 A] until March 1979 [see page 30201].

The offices hitherto held by Lt.-Col. al-Kilabi and Mr al-Hubayshi were, respectively, Minister of State and Adviser to the Prime Minister for Information Affairs and Minister of State and Adviser to the Presidency and Cabinet. The portfolios of Electricity, Water and Drainage, Local Administration and Minister of State for the Affairs of the Constituent People's Assembly had not been included in the previous Cabinet, while the Finance portfolio had previously been held by the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs.

A further presidential decree, also of Oct. 15, appointed as Vice-Presidents Maj. Abdel Aziz Abdel Ghani (the outgoing Prime Minister) and Qadi Abdel Karim al-Arashi (the Speaker of the Constituent People's Assembly)—the latter having first been appointed in July 1978 [see page 29292].

**Relations with Saudi Arabia - Soviet Military Aid to North Yemen - Continued Efforts towards Unity with South Yemen - Reported Defeat of NDF**

Contrary to the impression given by Saudi Arabian sources in March 1980 that there had been a reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and North Yemen after the latter had agreed to phase out Soviet military advisers [see page 30199], it became apparent in the course of the year that relations between the two countries remained strained in view of (i) the continued presence of Soviet advisers in North Yemen and further deliveries of Soviet weapons, and (ii) the continuation of moves made by North and South Yemen to unite [see 30197 A and also 30745 A].

Saudi opposition to the unification plans and the new arms agreement concluded between North Yemen and the Soviet Union in mid-1979 (which had been prompted by Saudi Arabia's reluctance to build up North Yemen's military capacity after it had announced its intention in March 1979 to merge with Marxist South Yemen) had led Saudi Arabia to suspend economic and military aid in late 1979 and early 1980 [see page 30199]. (According to an *International Herald Tribune* report of June 5 aid to North Yemen from the Saudi Government and royal family amounted to an estimated \$250,000,000 annual contribution to the budget while a similar amount was allocated to development projects and "discreet payments" to ministers, officers and tribal sheikhs.)

The tension between North Yemen and Saudi Arabia had been underlined by the occurrence of a number of border clashes—although the incidents were played down by both countries, which continued to describe their relations as good.

The *New York Times* of May 8, 1980, gave details of a skirmish which had occurred in the first week of February when a Saudi patrol searching for smugglers in the border area had clashed with a unit of the North Yemeni Army and which was described as "one of a series of border incidents supposedly to have involved smuggling". Later that month Saudi Arabia was understood to have made an aerial attack on a North Yemeni border village, it being noted that members of the Hashed tribal confederation—to whom the Saudis had paid large subsidies to retain their loyalty—had sided with the North Yemeni armed forces in this incident.

With regard to North Yemen's continued receipt of arms from the Soviet Union and retention of Soviet military advisers, reports in the Western press described this as a reflection of North Yemen's determination to build up its armed forces from whatever sources were available (the size of its Army having moreover quadrupled since the introduction of a military service law on Sept. 9, 1979) rather than a move towards the Soviet Union; it was also seen as an indication of North Yemen's desire to reduce its dependence on Saudi Arabia which controlled North Yemen's supply of arms from the United States).

A number of North Yemeni envoys had held talks with Saudi officials in 1980 with a view to assuring them that military co-operation with the Soviet Union did not indicate a change in North Yemen's traditional policy of non-alignment with the Soviet Union having moreover been a supplier of arms to North Yemen since the 1950s—see 15717 C). However, according to a June 5 report in the *International Herald Tribune* the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of North Yemen had said in recent, separate interviews that these assurances did not include a specific promise to ask Soviet military advisers to leave.

There were an estimated 200-300 Soviet military advisers in North Yemen (where they reportedly kept a low profile). The number of US military personnel there had, according to US press reports, dropped from about 70 in 1979 to only eight—including two instructor pilots—in the first part of 1980, with about 12 civilian technicians [see also page 30198]. (There were in addition a number of Taiwanese pilots and technicians in North Yemen—ibid.)

The delivery of US arms to North Yemen had been held up since the end of the border war between North and South Yemen in the first part of 1979 [see page 30199]; in contrast, Soviet weapons, which according to *Le Monde* of March 26 included fighter-aircraft, anti-aircraft cannon and T-55 tanks, were generally delivered promptly and were supplied on a long-term credit basis. Moreover, North Yemeni soldiers were on the whole said to prefer the Soviet weapons (to which they were accustomed) to the often more complicated US models, and the Soviet Union furthermore offered numerous scholarships and training schemes to North Yemeni students and officers.

In addition to giving Saudi Arabia assurances about the presence of Soviet military advisers and arms on its territory, North Yemen also sought to convince the Saudis that its proposed merger with South Yemen did not mean the development of a "Soviet-oriented alliance" with that country. In an interview on March 18, 1980, Maj. Abdel Ghani, the then Prime Minister, stated that unity between the two Yemens would have to be approved by a referendum in both countries, would be based on an "Islamic system" and would not "open the door to communism in North Yemen". In what was seen as a further gesture towards Saudi Arabia (and also to the conservative northern tribes) the Oct. 15 cabinet reorganization had, as stated above, included the removal of Mr al Arashi as Minister of Information and the replacement of Dr Makki as Minister of Foreign Affairs, both of whom had been considered by Saudi and pro-Saudi circles as being too radical.

Despite Saudi opposition, North Yemen had nevertheless continued discussions with South Yemen on unification measures, a number of agreements being reached in 1980 on ways of achieving economic unity [see 30745 A], and had also entered into negotiations with the South Yemeni based opposition National Democratic Front (NDF), which had spearheaded the invasion from South Yemen into the north in February 1979 [see 30197 A]. In February 1980 a co-operation agreement had, as stated on page 30199, been signed between the North Yemeni Government and the NDF, providing for the participation of the front in elections and its inclusion in the Government (although this had not been fulfilled in 1980), while at the same time South Yemen reduced its backing for the NDF and withdrew its Army from the border region where it had given "psychological support" to NDF guerrillas.

This "squeeze" imposed by South Yemen on the NDF led guerrillas to move in increasing numbers into North Yemen, where they succeeded in infiltrating certain northern tribes (notably the Bakil) which were traditionally opposed to the Saudi-backed Hashed confederation, supplying some with arms and urging them to oppose the North Yemeni Government. The front was also understood to have wrested control of several villages in the south of the country from traditional ruling sheikhs and to have begun running them along South Yemeni lines.

The growing NDF presence in North Yemen gave rise to a series of frequently violent clashes with the North Yemeni Army which had reportedly been ordered to deal harshly with the guerrillas since they could no longer draw support from the South Yemeni Army (which, as stated above, had been withdrawn from the border). Despite these developments the NDF said that it was still willing to continue reconciliation talks with the North Yemeni Government, that its relations with South Yemen remained good and that it supported the merger plans.

According to a report in *The New York Times* of June 7-8, 1980, there had been sporadic fighting since the beginning of May in which the North Yemeni Army had suffered more than 100 killed or wounded. Few details of these and other bouts of fighting were given, although an NDF communiqué released in Aden (the capital of South Yemen) on Nov. 14 and reported in the Iranian capital later that day "confirmed" that "fierce battles have been taking place for the past 15 days" between the Army and the NDF in the border area south of the North Yemeni capital, Sana'a. The front accused the military governor responsible of refusing to accept a ceasefire and of "setting on fire the houses and fields of people living in the region who supported the front". (Earlier, according to *The*