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THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC, 1958-1961
THE NORTHERN REGION: SELECTED ASPECTS
OF THE IMPACT OF UNION ON THE NORTHERN REGION

by
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PREFACE

The present study constitutes an attempt to investigate the impact of the Union between Syria and Egypt on the Northern Region. The interest behind this investigation is to find out why the Syrians seceded from a union which they themselves had strongly advocated. To that end, we have selected and examined certain aspects which were the central problems of the Union and which were decisive for its failure. But it was felt that, in order to adequately understand the impact of the aspects under discussion, it was essential to stress on the background of Syria (Chapter One). Likewise, a general picture of the Union was necessary before selecting some of its aspects (Chapter Two).

The focus is on political developments within the Syrian Region; when social and economic developments are discussed, it is only because of their political implications.

Though the attitude of the Syrian groups is discussed throughout the study of the selected aspects, it is discussed more fully separately because it was the actions and reactions of these groups which ultimately determined the fate of the Union.

The study was handicapped by two difficulties encountered while writing it. The first is that we are still too near in time to the subject; we are still living this experience. Though much was said about it, yet much more remains to be disclosed. That is why we have refrained from making final conclusions or from presenting alternatives. The second difficulty is caused by the often misleading information and the unreliability of certain facts. To illustrate: Nasser has maintained that, before the proclamation of Union, the Syrian Treasury was in deficit and that, during the Union, he paid millions to balance it. On the other hand, the Syrians have claimed that their Treasury was not in deficit and that Egypt was indebted to Syria before the Union. As both claims were expressed by official spokesmen, the task of any objective study is rendered very difficult. Consequently, the general tendency in this thesis is to describe and expose the views and attitudes of most of those concerned in the Syrian Region, with only tentative suggestions and conclusions when necessary.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SYRIAN POLITICAL SCENE BEFORE

UNION

A. Internal Setting

1. The Parliamentary Era and its Aftermath (1946-1954)

Since its independence in 1946, Syria has tried several forms of government. In turn it experienced parliamentary democracy, military dictatorship, and the presidential system; and it is currently ruled by one Party.¹ So far, none has succeeded in giving Syria a durable system of government. Various reasons are presented in explanation of this problem, some of which will be discussed below; but no final conclusion has yet been reached as to why the Syrians were unable to establish solid democratic institutions, and political observers still invariably speak of instability when referring to Syria's political life. In that respect, however, it is relevant to remind oneself of Dankwart A. Rustow's notion of instability -- which, he says, "in so far as it implies randomness, caprice and unpredictability . . . reveals not so

¹The Ba'th, the actual ruling force since March 8, 1963.

much a quality of the phenomena studied as our own incapacity to comprehend them."²

The following factors are only suggested in an attempt to approach certain aspects of a problem whose complexity is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

Syria's social structure (with its sectarian, tribal and family loyalties, together with the existence of several ethnic, social, and religious minorities³) made it difficult for any government to draw a broad national policy which could rally most of the existing forces in Syria. These differences were exploited by the Mandatory Power (France) which divided Syria into artificial states (such as the Government of Jebel Druze and the Government of the 'Alawis⁴), thus accentuating a localism which had existed under Ottoman rule; when the French departed, Syria was a precarious entity.

²Dankwart A. Rustow, Politics and Westernization in the Near East (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Princeton University, 1956), p. 38.

³Albert H. Hourani, Minorities in the Arab World (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 75-90.

⁴Georges Haddad, Fifty Years of Modern Syria and Lebanon (Beirut: Dar al-Hayat, 1950), pp. 68-70. Also, Sate' al-Husri, Al-Iqlimiyyat, Juzouriha wa Buzouriha (1st ed.; Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin, 1963), pp. 174-76.

The fact that Syria's first attempt to establish representative government was carried under the Mandatory Power is also largely responsible for its chronic political disturbances and for the failure of its parliamentary democracy. Arbitrary measures by the French Authorities (such as the purge in administrative services, and the prohibition of the political meetings, of January 1941;⁵ the arrest of political leaders on March 1945; and the shelling of the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, on May 29, 1945) dissipated the energies of the Syrian politicians, distracted their attention from the country's urgent problems, and left them unprepared when time came for self-government.

Moreover, the Mandate has left an impact on the Syrians' attitude towards authority. The negative attitude which the Syrians adopted while fighting the French, had not fully disappeared when a national government took over. Analysing the problems of Syrian society, Adib Nassour (a former Syrian deputy) wrote in 1950 that patriotism was equated by the Syrians with opposition to the Authorities⁶.

⁵Keesing's Contemporary Archives. Weekly Diary of Important World Events, Keesing's Publications Limited (of London) Bristol, Vol. IV (1940-1943), p. 4539. Cited hereafter as Keesing's . . .

⁶Adib Nassour, Qabla Fawat al-Awan, 1948-1955 (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin, 1955), p. 44.

Another factor, was the absence of proper means to channel public opinion. With irresponsible political parties and a partisan press, the Syrian masses found no other means to express their dissatisfaction than strikes and demonstrations, a situation which transformed the democracy of the forties into near-anarchy.

During the late forties and throughout the fifties, two major developments disrupted Syrian political life: The Palestine war and the consequent involvement of the Army in politics -- it is noteworthy to mention that a similar development occurred in most of the Arab States --, and increased foreign pressures on Syria. To all these factors, one must add Syria's geographic position, which rendered it more than once a battle-ground for inter-Arab rivalries and for foreign interventions.

Syria's political actualities are best reflected in the nature and the behavior of its political parties.⁷ The numerous parties that crowded the Syrian scene were still at their formative stage when independence was attained, having had no previous experience with the parliamentary process. Despite an apparent similarity in their programmes, their policies were irreconcilable, a fact which rendered any

⁷See Dar ar-Rawad (ed.), Al-Ahzab as-Siyassiyat fi Suriyat (Damascus: Dar ar-Rawad, 1954).

constructive co-operation among them impossible. When a party was not fascist (the Syrian Social National Party, S.S.N.P.) or fundamentalist (the Muslim Brotherhood) or progressist (the Ba'th and the Communists), it was a loose alliance between opportunists, much nearer to a pressure group than to an organized political party.

Few political parties advocated the preservation of the actual Syrian frontiers. Most of them considered Syria a part of something else. For the Ba'th and the majority of the other parties, Syria was part of the Arab World. To the Syrian Social National Party, Syria originally meant Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan, and part of the Sinai Peninsula; but it was stretched after 1947 to include Cyprus, Iraq, and Kuwait as well.⁸ After thirty years of existence, the Syrian Communist Party discovered suddenly in 1955 that the Arab nation has become "complete"; and Khaled Bakdash, leader of the Party, spoke of "Arab Syria."⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood view Syria as part of the Islamic World. With such missionary tasks -- though these were not channelled through well

⁸Antoun Sa'adé, At-Ta'alim as-Suriyat al-Qawmiyat al-Ijtima'iyat (n.p., 1955), pp. 29-30.

⁹Khaled Bakdash, "Khitab Khaled Bakdash fi al-Mahrajan al-Intikhabi al-Kabir al-Ladhi Uqima li-Murashihi al-Ittihad al-Watani," Damascus, Sep. 10, 1954.

organized party-system --, Syrian political parties were inevitably led to seek recognition and support beyond the Syrian frontiers.

Syrian political parties can roughly be classified under Right which included the National Bloc or al-Kutlat al-Wataniyat, out of which two parties were formed: the Nationalists and the Populists; Extreme Right which comprised the Syrian Social National Party and the Muslim Brotherhood; Left which included the Social co-operative Party, the Arab Socialist Party, and Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi; and Extreme Left which included the Communist Party.

The Nationalist Party (Hizb al-Watani, 1949) was made up of some former members of the Kutlat. Among its leading figures were President Shukri al-Quwatly, Sabri al-'Assali, Mikha'il Ilian, Sa'dallah al-Jabri, and Lutfi al-Haffar. The Party presented a vague programme and lacked discipline over its members, who were mainly preoccupied with immediate electoral interests.

The Populist (Hizb al-Sha'b, 1948), an amalgamation of the Liberals of Aleppo and the Liberals of other cities, was the largest party in Parliament. It represented the rich bourgeois class. The Party was led by Aleppo leaders such as Rushdi al-Kikhya, Nazem al-Qudsi, Mustafa Barmada, as well as the Atassi's of Homs. Its pro-Iraqi policy produced and

provoked more than one coup d'état in Syria.

Originating in Lebanon and spreading to Syria, the Syrian Social National Party (al-Hizb as-Suri al-Qawmi, 1932, renamed al-Hizb as-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i in 1947), belongs to that category of parties described by Duverger as having a "totalitarian hold" upon the life of its adherents.¹⁰ Its leader, Antoun Sa'adé, claimed to be able to raise 50,000 men in case of any fighting.¹¹ Due to its subversive activities, this militant party has been the object of reprisal by both the Syrian and the Lebanese governments.

The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, 1935) is a religious movement with a socio-political platform and a para-military organization. Islam for it is a religion and a state,¹² while the Arab nation is part of the Umma¹³ (the Muslim Community).

Two parties, Akram al-Haurani's Arab Socialist Party (1945) and Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi of Michâl 'Aflak and Salah ed-Din al-Bitar (1940) were separately following similar

¹⁰Maurice Duverger, Les Partis Politiques (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1961), p. introduction.

¹¹Dar ar-Rawad, Al-Ahzab . . ., p. 90.

¹²Ibid., p. 27.

¹³Naji 'Alloush, Al-Thawrat wa-l-Jamahir (1st ed.; Beirut: Dar at-Tali'at, 1962), pp. 28-32.

policies till they finally merged in 1954 to form the Arab Social Resurrection Party.¹⁴ 'Aflak's socialist and revolutionary ideas attracted students and intellectuals; but it was Haurani with his opportunism and dynamism who gave the Ba'th its rapid rise. Haurani was swift at shifting alliances : a former member of the Syrian Socialist National Party, he would campaign with the Kutlat for the 1943 elections to end by 1957 in co-operation with the Communists. His main success resided in his anti-feudal policy which won him the support of the peasants, mainly at Hama.¹⁵ Haurani had many friends among Army officers. This enabled him to participate at least indirectly in the various regimes which were instituted during the military period. Having been for a while Za'im's political adviser, he broke away from him; and it was reported, by one of the officers who overthrew Za'im, that Haurani offered them his support.¹⁶ After Hinnawi's coup, Haurani was given the Ministry of Agriculture. But when he alone of his electoral

¹⁴For the Ba'th activities since independence see Nidal al-Ba'th fi Sabil al-Wahdat, al-Hurriyat, al-Ishtirakiyat: Waka'eq Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi al-Ishtiraki (6 Vols.; Beirut: Dar at-Tabi'at, 1963-1965) cited hereafter as Nidal al-Ba'th . . .

¹⁵Gordon H. Torrey, Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945-1958 (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 61.

¹⁶Fadlallah Abu-Mansour, A'asir Dimashq, Mukakarāt 'an Khafaya al-Inqilabāt as-Suriyat al-Arba'at (Syria :1959), pp. 95-96.

list won in the November 1949 elections, he joined the opposition against Hinnawi. As Shishakli was Haurani's friend, it was believed that the latter was behind the new coup. His collaboration with Shishakli -- as Minister of Defense -- was shortlived, for, once Shishakli had strengthened his own position, he became less ready to tolerate his old supporters. It was another of Haurani's friends, Captain Mustafa Hamdoun, who overthrew Shishakli in 1954.¹⁷ From then on, the merged Ba'th started its rise to power which culminated in the proclamation of the United Arab Republic.

Communist activities in Syria and Lebanon started around 1922 but the Syrian-Lebanese Communist Party was not formed until 1937. On July 23, 1944, the Party was separated into two independent parties, one for Syria and one for Lebanon.

Led by Khaled Bakdash, the Syrian Communist Party has operated throughout its illegal existence more or less openly, though it was occasionally forced underground. The Communists were ready to collaborate with any faction likely to help them along the road to power. In its early days, the Party concentrated its efforts on university students and mob behaviour;

¹⁷For some of Haurani's involvements during the military period, see Riad Tah, "Asrar wa-Tajareb," Al-Ahad (Beirut weekly), Dec. 31, 1961, p. 5; Jan. 14, 1962, p.8; Feb. 11, 1962, pp. 8-9; Feb. 18, 1962, pp. 3,5; April 15, 1962, p.5; and May 13, 1962.

but at Haurani's success among the peasants, the Communists began to pay more attention to these latter, in whom they saw a reliable agitator against the big landowners. It was not until 1955-1956, however, that the Party started to acquire some influence on the Syrian political scene.

Other parties, now extinct, played a minor role in Syrian politics.

Parties were unable to conduct the struggle for power under the banner of ideology; leaders and personalities could secure voting support better than party tickets. This explains the existence of a great number of independents in Parliament, as illustrated below:¹⁸

Elections Year :	1947	1949	1953	1954
Independents :	69	50	28	66
<hr/>				
Total No.of Deputies:	136	114	82	142

The parties failed to become political schools where the Syrian electorate, whose majority was illiterate and showed voting apathy, could have been trained. This was reflected in Parliament whose representation was on sectarian and geographical

¹⁸These figures were furnished to the writer by Prof. Ralph Crow. 53 of the 1953 deputies were members of the Arab Liberation Party.

basis. The same applies to Cabinets whose crises and scandals became frequent. Disillusionment with parliamentary life was widespread. Parliament appeared to some Syrians as a veil that protected feudalism, capitalism, exploitation, and corruption.¹⁹ Others saw in their deputies "agents of imperialism", and attributed the disintegration of the democratic system to the socio-economic and political motivations characterized by feudalism, tribalism, religious fanaticism, and localism.²⁰ Moreover, constitutionally, the Executive was powerful, and it was often in conflict with the Legislature.

Discontent with civilian incompetence and corruption reached a climax after the Palestine disaster. The Mardam Cabinet was charged with malversations of Army funds, a Cabinet crisis ensued; strikes and demonstrations spread all over the country and a state of emergency was declared; and economic collapse added to the tension. What was needed at that time has been described by a Syrian ex-deputy as the substitution of the idea of "personality" by that of "law."²¹ There was a general conviction that democracy could not suit Syria (though

¹⁹ Ahmed 'Abdel-Karim, Adwa' 'ala Tajribat al-Wahdat (Damascus: Maktabat Atlas, 1962), p. vi.

²⁰ 'Abdel-Karim Zouhour et al., Fi al-Fikr as-Siyasi (Damascus; Dar Dimashq lit-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr, 1963), Vol. II, pp. 169, 174.

²¹ Adnan al-Atassi, Azamat al-Hukm fi Suriyat (Damascus: 1954), p. 69.

democracy was given only three years to build a state) and that some other system was to replace it. The change was to occur at the hand of the Army.

The Syrian Army, like other armies in the Arab World, could not forgive the civilian government for having involved the Army into a war for which it was unprepared.²² In order to avoid further disasters, the Syrian Army felt it imperative to act. The first to move was the Army Chief-of-Staff, Colonel Husni al-Za'im, who imposed martial law and put an end to the country-wide rioting.

The 'Azm Cabinet was not luckier than its predecessors and when it attempted to cut down Army expenditure, Za'im stepped into the Capital on March 30, 1949 and took over the situation in a bloodless coup.

This was the first successful Post-War military coup in the Middle East. It opened a new era for Syria and the Arab World as well where the Army entered the political scene.²³ So that up to 1954, the Bourgeois Parliament and the military

²²Fayez A. Sayegh, "The Entry of Detachments from the Armed Forces of Five Arab States into Palestine on May 15, 1948," unpublished Essay, pp. 38, 43-49.

²³For further reading on the role of the Army of the Middle East see Sydney Nettleton Fisher (ed.), The Military in the Middle East. Problems in Society and Government (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), pp. 53-69; and, M. Berger "Les régimes militaires du Moyen-Orient," Orient (Paris), No. 15 (3e trimestre, 1960), pp. 28-31.

coup became two complementary aspects of the Syrian crisis of government.²⁴

The Army intervention replaced one kind of chaos by another. Za'im's short dictatorial rule (four months) irritated various circles; his suppression of political parties and his censorship of the press alienated even his initial supporters -- such as the Ba'th, whose leaders, 'Aflak and Bitar, he put in prison.²⁵ The Populists, who were the opposition party before the coup, welcomed Za'im; but when this latter adopted an anti-Iraqi policy, they drew away from him. His arbitrary dismissal of several army officers and their replacement by foreign "experts"²⁶ gathered against him strong opposition within the Army. The Syrian Social National Party never forgave him for the death of Antoun Sa'adé, whom he handed over to the Lebanese government, which executed him. The Communists condemned Za'im's coup as "fascist."²⁷ Za'im's foreign policy was also criticized.²⁸ Finally when Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi overthrew Za'im, in August 1949, it was "to save Syria

²⁴Zouhour, Fi al-Fikr . . ., p. 169.

²⁵Nidal al-Ba'th . . ., Vol. I: Min Ma'rakat al-Istiqlal ila Ma'rakat Falastine wa-l-Ingilab al-Askari al-Awal, 1943-1949, pp. 285-87.

²⁶Abu-Mansour, A'asir Dimashq . . ., pp. 49-50, 60.

²⁷Communist pamphlet, Nidal al-Sha'b, joint Committee of the Syrian-Lebanese Communist Party, April, 1949.

²⁸He concluded an agreement with Tapline and another with the French.

from anarchy" and to restore to the Army its dignity."²⁹ It soon became obvious that Hinnawi's prime target was a pro-Iraqi policy. This gathered against him the Nationalists (who boycotted the elections of November 1949), the Ba'thists (who failed in the said elections), Haurani and his friends, the anti-Iraqi Union officers (such as Shishakli and Shawkat Shoucair), and the Republican Bloc.

When he overthrew Hinnawi on December 19, 1949, Colonel Adib al-Shishakli did not capture power immediately : he stayed behind the scenes, where he soon reduced Parliament to a toy in his hands, supporting one faction against another. Shishakli used this tactic throughout his three years of power to balance the forces that opposed his regime.³⁰ Clashes and conflicts spread within and outside Parliament. The drafting of a new

²⁹Muhammed Khalil; The Arab States and the Arab League. A Documentary Record, Vol. I: Constitutional Developments (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), pp. 528-29. Text of the "Proclamation No. I, August 14, 1949, Brigadier S. Hinnawi, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and of the Armed Forces."

³⁰Shishakli supported the Liberal Republican Bloc (40 members made of some Populists), Haurani's Arab Socialist Party, the Islamic Bloc, and the S.S.N.P. This Bloc was opposed by the Populist faction in Parliament led by Dr. Nazem al-Qudsi. Shishakli used this tactic of balancing one faction against another till he succeeded to abolish all political parties and establish his own. P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1961), pp. 152-53.

constitution, the distribution of portfolios, Cabinet crises and the long debated issue over the status of the internal security forces (whether to incorporate them within the Army or leave them under the Ministry of Interior³¹) were all causes of dissent. It was the opportune time for Shishakli to realize his ambitious aspirations. The casus belli for Shishakli's second coup was the giving of the Defense Ministry, held usually by a military, to a civilian. He justified his intervention as being "an attempt to save democracy and constitutional republican rule from erroneous application."³² But he soon proved an unsuccessful reformer and a shortsighted statesman. His increasing involvement in politics antagonized both politicians and Army officers. Dissatisfaction was widespread, his suppression of the 1950 Constitution and the drawing of a new one caused "anxiety among the people."³³ "Abnormal conditions" prevailed due to his terrorist measures.³⁴ The loss of civil liberties,

³¹Torrey, Syrian Politics . . ., pp. 170-77, 191.

³²Khalil, The Arab State . . ., Vol. I: Constitutional . . ., "Statement by Brigadier Adib al-Shishakli when submitting the New Draft Constitution, June 21, 1953," p. 561.

³³Ibid., "Hashim al-Atassi's Letter to Brigadier Adib al-Shishakli, June 20, 1953," p. 559.

³⁴Ibid., "Statement by the National Congress Addressed to the Syrian People, July 4, 1953," p. 566.

the dissolution of political parties and their replacement by his Arab Liberation Movement fostered a feeling of insecurity and alienated the ruler from the ruled.³⁵ Within the Army, according to Captain Mustafa Hamdoun, dissatisfaction was due to his neglect of the Army interest and to the transformation of the Deuxième Bureau into an extensive espionage system.³⁶ Opposition to Shishakli from both Left and Right led to his ouster on February 25, 1954 by another coup, the fifth in less than four years.

Like democracy before it, military dictatorship failed to give Syria an efficient government. What has in fact taken place, was a change in the system of government. None of the two military dictators -- Hinnawi's episod was characterized by a certain dualism where both civilians and Army officers shared power -- could be termed social revolutionary. Zai'im's achievement fell short of his claims,³⁷ he could neither

³⁵ Ibid., "Joint Statement by the Leaders and Members of the Syrian Political Parties and Independent Personages Addressed to the Chief of the General Staff of the Syrian Army, Brigadier al-Shishakli, as the Person Primarily Responsible for the Situation in Syria, June 20, 1953," pp. 556-58.

³⁶ Ibid., "Statement by Captain Mustafa Hamdoun on Behalf of the Aleppo Garrison announcing a new movement against Brigadier Shishakly, February 25, 1954," p. 593.

³⁷ Ibid., "First Public Statement by the Syrian General Commanders of the Army and of the Armed Forces, following Brigadier H. al-Za'im's coup, March 30, 1949." See also "Proclamation n°1" and his statement of March 31, 1949, pp. 521-22.

abolish exploitation nor was he able to establish a sound democratic government. As to Shishakli, his sole aim was to reach the Presidency.

The successive military puches were temporary coalitions of military officers and civilians supported in some cases by foreign Powers. They unseated governments but were unable to become a strong independent force capable of carrying out reforms. This was not due to the weakness of the Syrian Army as held by Manfred Halpern,³⁸ since the Syrian Army was not unanimous in its support of the regimes established by those military dictators. The incompetence of these latter as leaders, and their narrow personal goals account largely for their failure. When evaluating any system of government in Syria, one must always remember the "restless character"³⁹ of the Syrian masses which is due to the individualism of the Syrians,⁴⁰ a fact which made it difficult even for a dictator to subdue them. One has to remember also the ever present foreign intrigues aiming at unseating Syrian governments and replacing

³⁸John J. Johnson (ed.), The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 296.

³⁹Camille Chamoun, Crise au Moyen-Orient (Paris, Gallimard, 1963), p. 354.

⁴⁰Syria, 1957, The Directorate General of Information (Damascus, 1957), p. 150.

them by more friendly ones,⁴¹ though there is a tendency to believe that Za'im's coup was not supported by any foreign or Arab state.⁴² This is confirmed by the fact that the Palestine war, as already stated, had determined the Army to enter the political scene.

With the end of the military period, a new formula was needed; it came in the form of a parliamentary regime in which politicians held apparent power but where Army officers had the upper hand in State affairs.

⁴¹At the Mahdawi Court, Col. Daghestani, an ex-deputy Chief of Staff and one of the chief accused, recognized the interference of Iraq in Syria's affairs. See Iraq, Muhamakāt al-Mahkamat al-'Askariyat al-'Ulya al-Khasat. Al Mahader ar-Rasmiyat lil-Jalsat al-Lati 'Aqadatha al-Mahkamat li-Muhakamat al-Muta'amirin 'ala Salamat al-Watan wa Mufsidi Nizam al-Hukm, the Ministry of Defense, the General Command of the Armed Forces (23 Vols.; Iraq; Hayat at-Tansiq fi al-Mahkamat al-'Askariyat al-'Ulyat al-Khasat, 1958-1962), Vol. I, p. 271. The Court was presided by Col. Fazel 'Abbas al-Mahdawi. This work will be referred to hereafter as Mahdawi's Court... see also Rashed al-Brawi, Mushkilāt al-'Alam al-'Arabi (Cairo: Maktabat an-Nahdat al-Misriyat, 1950), pp. 86-88.

⁴²Alford Carlton, "The Syrian Coup d'Etat of 1949," Middle East Journal, Vol. IV (January, 1950), p. 4.

2. The Army and the Politicians (1954-1958)

After the overthrow of Shishakli, the parliamentary system was reinstated. But it differed from what it had been before 1949. New forces came to dominate the Syrian political scene. The contest for power was no longer between conservative parties, but between these latter and the new ascending progressive forces. The change was due to the Conservatives outmoded social order which could not satisfy the aspirations of the new generations who were attracted by the Ba'th, the Communists or any progressive front. It was also due to international crises which affected power relationship in Syria after 1954.

The new trend was clearly manifested at the 1954 elections which were the most decisive for Syria. They meant the end of the traditional political forces and their replacement by progressive elements exemplified by the Ba'th.⁴³

The Ba'th appeared as "une force qui vient"⁴⁴ (a coming force), it did not gain all the seats lost by the Conservatives, yet from two seats in the 1949 elections, it won sixteen with

⁴³Simon Jargy, "La Syrie d'hier et d'aujourd'hui," Orient (Paris), No 20 (4e trimestre, 1961), pp. 67-76.

⁴⁴Pierre Rondot, "Tendances particularistes et tendances unitaires en Syrie," Orient (Paris), No. 5 (1er trimestre, 1958), p. 144.

some sympathisers. This success can be explained partly by the revolutionary and anti-western Ba'thist platform which attracted the new generations, as already mentioned, and partly by Army intervention. Haurani had allied himself with influential Army officers like 'Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraj, Head of the Intelligence Service and the strong man of the Army. The Ba'th had also a great influence on the masses.⁴⁵

The Communist Party came out of the elections as a "moving force."⁴⁶ Though the Party, won one seat in the person of its leader, Bakdash, yet the elections threw light on the Party's powerful foundations in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. Bakdash won 16,500 votes while the two other candidates got each 9,000.⁴⁷

The Parliament that came after the 1954 elections appeared as divided as the Syrian people, lacking a majority

⁴⁵Simon Jargy, "Le déclin d'un Parti," Orient (Paris), No. 11 (3e trimestre, 1959), p. 23.

⁴⁶S. (Suheil) Ayub, Al-Hizb al-Shuyu'i fi Suriyat wa Lubnan, 1922-1958 (Beirut: Dar al-Hurriyat, 1959), p. 175.

⁴⁷Elias Murkos, Tarikh al-Ahzab al-Shuyu'iyat fi al-Watan al-'Arabi (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'at, 1964), p. 71

of any party. A coalition government was formed of five Populists, three Nationalists, two independents, and one tribal representative.⁴⁸ But differences and discussions made power slip slowly outside Parliament. Once more, Syria could not find in the free play of political parties, a means to the solution of its urgent political problems.⁴⁹

In order to strengthen their position, the divided politicians sought support among Army officers to such a extent that civilian-Army boundaries were lost in the intricate struggle of the pre-Union years.⁵⁰ International events such as the Baghdad Pact, February 24, 1955; the Czech Arms Deal, September 27, 1955; and others which will be discussed in the sequent, were responsible also for the Army's increased interest in politics. Since the end of Shishakli and up to 1958, Army involvement in politics was no longer in the form of coup d'état; it was manifested in the pressures exercised by Army

⁴⁸Keesing's . . ., Vol. IX (1952-1954), p. 13889.

⁴⁹Pierre Rondot, Destin du Proche-Orient (France: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1959), p. 41.

⁵⁰Patrick Seale, "Syria and Arab Unity: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958" (in the press, 1964, reference is made here to the typescript), chap. xviii, p. 10.

officers on the politicians. As more and more officers became party affiliates, different groups of officers tended to support the party to which they respectively belonged. Such a situation was bound to become explosive, as it did in fact become. Nasser said that he found the Syrian Army in 1958, "divided into sects and parties."⁵¹

Rivalries for position and influence became just as prevalent in the Army as among civilian politicians. Unlike the Egyptian Army, the Syrian Army did not carry out a social revolution; it was said, that instead of curing the ills, the Syrian Army merely reflected them.⁵² Despite its shortcomings, the Army was the most powerful institution in Syria; that is why the attempts made by conservative circles to curb its power were ineffective.

The Ba'th and the Communists drew their strength not so much from their respective numbers as from their disciplined

⁵¹Speech, Sep. 28, 1961, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, 1961, Information Department (Cairo, U.A.R., 1961); p. 245. Cited hereafter as Speeches, 1961 . . . It was for that reason that Nasser put as one of the conditions for Union, the non-interference of the Syrian Army in politics.

⁵²Johnson, The Role of the Military . . ., pp. 296-97.

organization. It is true that the Ba'th was torn internally -- Haurani being for an alliance with the Communists, and 'Aflak preferring an independent policy --, but a general split was prevented by the turmoil in the Middle East and in Syria in particular.⁵³

The Ba'th and the Communists were following for some time a similar policy namely the overthrow of the traditional forces. The "Malki Affair"⁵⁴ and the various "plots"⁵⁵ that followed in 1956-57, gave the Ba'th, the Communists, and their allies free hand to eliminate the Syrian Social National Party and many other political foes. Prime Minister Sabri al-'Assali declared in the Chamber of Deputies that Malki's assassination had been a part of a plan to stage a coup

⁵³W.Z.L., "Syria on the Move. Ascendancy of the Left Wing," The World Today, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (January, 1957), pp. 17-26.

⁵⁴The assassination of Col. 'Adnan Al-Malki, a Deputy Chief-of-Staff and a Ba'th sympathiser. He was assassinated while attending a football game in Damascus. His assassin was a member of the S.S.N.P. Twenty six executive members of that Party were sentenced to death after that assassination. Keesing's . . ., Vol. X (1955-1956), p. 14315.

⁵⁵An Iraqi plot at the end of 1956, and an American plot in 1957.

d'état with the aid of a foreign power.⁵⁶

The Conservatives were a majority⁵⁷ in Parliament, but they did not dare oppose the progressive forces which presented a relatively more cohesive front,⁵⁸ and which had the advantage of being supported by the masses and the strong elements within the Army.

The Conservatives' last political act before the Union, came in the form of a National Front where all the political parties accepted to participate in a national rule. A national Pact drawn with the consent of all existing groups was to become the guiding light of a new policy. Though advocated by Conservative politicians, the Pact reflected progressive ideas -- mainly Ba'thists -- such as neutrality between East

⁵⁶The Syrian Republic, The Official Gazette, Parliamentary Minutes, 1955, 14th Sess., April 26, 1955, pp. 635-36. Official Gazette will be referred to as O.G. Most of the official documents titles will be directly translated from Arabic.

⁵⁷It was made of the majority of Nationalists, most of the Populists, Munir al-'Ajalni's Constitutional Bloc, the nine-man Tribal Bloc, the Muslim Brotherhood, and some Independents.

⁵⁸Made of Ba'thists, Khaled al-'Azam who represented the Communists, left-wing of both Nationalists, and Populists, some Independents with pro-Egypt, pro-Sa'ud and pro-Soviet inclinations. Torrey, Syrian Politics . . ., pp. 314-15.

and West, the strengthening of the Army and a unified defense policy with Egypt.⁵⁹

The Ba'th justified its participation as being a necessity imposed by the dangers, both internal and external, that threatened Syria.⁶⁰

The Communist participation in the National Union was a natural outcome of the general change in their attitude. After the Czech Arms Deal, Bakdash began to speak of "Arab Unity", "the parliamentary way", and "peaceful co-operation."⁶¹ It was also an opportunity for them to legalize their position; as soon as they joined the National Union, the Communists formed with Khālad al-'Azm and the Ba'th, the Progressive Bloc. But unity of ranks was more apparent than real. Soon the various political groupings drew apart from each other; division was not only due to the struggle for power between politicians, it was also a clash between different outlooks toward the world, it was, as Bitar said, a by-product of the new socio-political and intellectual currents.⁶²

⁵⁹Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. I: Constitutional . . ., The Syrian National Charter, Dec. 1956, pp. 597-99.

⁶⁰Nidal al-Ba'th . . ., Vol. III; Al-Qiṣr as-Suri, 1954-1958, pp. 204-205, 184.

⁶¹Murkos, Tarikh al-Ahzāb al-Shuyu'iyat . . ., p. 90.

⁶²Salah ed-Din al-Bitar, As-Siyasat al-'Arabiyyat Bayna-l-Mabda' wa-t-Tatbiq (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'at, 1960), p. 35.

The year preceding the Union (1957) saw an intense political activity in Syria. Struggle for power was so intricate that it was difficult to evaluate with certainty the strength or even the attitude of the contending forces.

The Ba'thists held two key positions in the coalition government (Foreign and Economic Affairs) and drew much influence from their alliance with Sarraj, the strongman of the Army, despite the fact that Brigadier Tawfiq Nizam ed-Din, a Conservative sympathiser, has become the Army Chief-of-Staff since July 1956.

The Communists, though not participating in the Government, had strong supporters within the Army and among civilian politicians. The Party prestige was enhanced by the friendly attitude of the Soviet Union toward Syria and the various economic agreements that were concluded between these two countries, a development which upset the Western Powers.

The last reaction from the Conservatives was an attempt to transfer some extreme leftwing officers to less important positions, a move doomed to failure. Without consulting Defense Minister Khaled al-'Azm, Chief-of-Staff Nizam ed-Din in connivance with President Quwatly and Prime Minister Sabri al-'Assali (a left-wing Nationalist who shifted later to the Ba'th-Communist camp) and together with some officers, issued orders on March 16, 1957, transferring Garrison Two Chief

Colonel Sarraj to Cairo, and Garrison Three Chief Colonel Nabih as-Sabbagh to Amman to head the combined Arab Command while the moderate Colonel Faysal al-Atassi was appointed as Commander of the Homs Military Academy. Colonel 'Afif al-Bizri, pro-Communist, was shifted to Garrison One while Garrison One Chief, Lieutenant-Colonel Amin an-Nafouri, was put in charge of an armored brigade to ward off any possible coup.

Most of the officers refused to submit and retaliated by a decree from Defense Minister 'Azm dismissing Chief-of-Staff, Nizam ed-Din. Constitutionally 'Azm's order could come into effect ten days after its signature even if not signed by the President. Syria was in the mid of a constitutional and a politico-military crisis.⁶³ The Army was split over the issue into two opposed forces. A third force, the moderate "Damascenes"⁶⁴ entered the scene. They tried to dominate the Army but were soon overcome by extremist officers. These latter formed, towards the end of May, the Revolutionary Command Council which included Sarraj, Bizri, Ahmed 'Abdel-Karim and Nafouri, who had shifted to Sarraj. The Command included also leftist politicians such as Haurani, al-'Azm, and Fakher al-Kayyali, a former Nationalist. This group controlled Syria up till 1958.

⁶³Torrey, Syrian Politics . . ., pp. 347-50.

⁶⁴Made of : Col. Daghestani, Col. Bashir Tal'at, and Col. Mahmud Shawkat.

The discovery of an "American plot"⁶⁵ allowed the Revolutionary Command Council, for security purpose, to strengthen its hold and to carry a general purge within the Army, the Police, and the Administration. The Communists and the progressive national elements managed to secure key posts for themselves; the chief winners were the Communists who were living, what was called, their "golden age."⁶⁶ Bizri was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General and became Chief-of-Staff, while his brother headed the Popular Resistance Organization.⁶⁷

The Ba'th started to realize the danger of the growing Communist influence and having ended their alliance with the Communists, they attempted to find allies among the Populists to support them in the speakership race against 'Azm, the Communist candidate. Haurani's success as President of the Chamber made him an important figure, but this could not assert the Ba'th supremacy over the Communists who formed

⁶⁵On August 3, 1957, Damascus Radio announced that a plot, prepared by the U.S. and which aimed at overthrowing the Government, was discovered.

⁶⁶Ayub, Al-Hizb al-Shuyu'i . . ., p. 181.

⁶⁷Due to external threat on Syria, the population was armed; and trenches were dug. That Popular Organization was to co-ordinate and organize the masses in case of a foreign invasion of Syria.

by that time the best organized and, relatively, the strongest and the most cohesive political party in Syria. The Populists were suspicious of the Ba'th and were unwilling to co-operate with them any further as they had done in the speakership race. So the Ba'th were left alone to stand against the Communists. This decided them to boycott the municipal elections, proposed for November 15, unless they were postponed. The Ba'th were not alone in this attitude. The Populists announced a similar position, the Nationalists were split over the issue. Other conservative circles were also for a postponement. The Conservatives had still in mind their defeat at the partial elections of May 1957 when they lost three out of the four parliamentary seats.⁶⁸

The Communists alone were in favour of elections, both municipal and legislative.

The few months preceding the Union were a period of confusion and doubt for the rival factions; Syria was torn between Haurani, Bakdash, and Sarraj, together with their respective supporters.⁶⁹

⁶⁸On May 4, 1957, partial elections to fill in the four seats left vacant by the deputies that were implicated in the Iraqi plot of Jan. 1957.

⁶⁹Ahmed Abul-Fath, L'Affaire Nasser, (Paris: Plon, 1962), pp. 257-58.

Domestic rivalries were only one side of the picture; foreign pressures which will be discussed below, did much to darken a picture already dark.

B. Foreign Pressures on Syria

No investigation of the internal situation of Syria is complete unless it is related to the external pressures exerted on Syria.

Syria's strategic importance and its location between hostile neighbours and neighbours with acquisitive purposes, endangered its security more than once. Its common frontiers with Jordan and Iraq, have tempted the Hashemite dream of a Hashemite hegemony,⁷⁰ and were it not for the Egyptian and Sa'udi Arabian manoeuvres, it is doubtful whether Syria could have survived in its early days of independence. The conflicting policies of the Arab States were reflected among Syrian politicians and officers. Za'im declared himself pro-Egyptian and attacked Jordan and Iraq for concentrating troops along the Syrian frontiers.⁷¹ Hinnawi's overthrow, as already mentioned, was

⁷⁰This was disclosed at the Mahdawi's Court. . ., particularly in Vol. I, pp. 352-56, where the lawyer of defense, Daoud as-Sa'di said that Iraqi interest in Syria's affairs was forty years old.

⁷¹Marcel Colombe, "L'Egypte et le nationalisme arabe de la Ligue des Etats Arabes à la République Arabe Unie, 1945-1948," Orient (Paris), No. 5 (1er trimestre, 1958) p. 117.

mainly due to his pro-Iraqi policy. The end of Shishakly revived the Populist's dream for union with Iraq,⁷² while with the success of the Egyptian Revolution, the Syrian progressive forces drew closer to Egypt. These regional rivalries became more dangerous when the Western Powers pledged during the fifties to organize the defense of the Middle East against a threat which they thought was coming from Communist Russia. This led the Western Powers to interfere in Arab domestic policies, a policy which alienated Arab nationalists who saw in this attitude, an "imperialist" attempt aiming at transforming the Middle East into an area of influence and mainly an American effort to fill in the "vacuum" left by the British and the French. For the Arabs there is but one danger, namely Zionism.

As Syria was the target for rival Arab states, it consequently became the center of conflicting international policies to such an extent that it was rightly said that the battle over the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine were fought on the plane of Syrian internal politics.⁷³

⁷²At the Mahdawi's Court . . ., Vol. III, p. 1097, Iraqi ex-Premier, Fadel al-Jamali acknowledged that soon after Shishakli's overthrow, Iraq contacted several Syrian leaders with view to bring about union between these two countries.

⁷³Seale, "Syria and Arab Unity . . .," p. introduction.

If the Baghdad Pact was a turning point in the history of the Middle East,⁷⁴ it was more so in that of Syria. By its rejection of the Pact, Syria antagonized Iraq and its allies, and inaugurated for itself another era of pressure and intrigues. But each move to bring pressure on Syria resulted in the tightening of the grip of progressive elements on Syrian politics, since a pro-Iraqi Populist government or a hesitant Nationalist one, could no more satisfy the majority of the Syrians who were opposing the Baghdad Pact. Consequently, Syria drew closer to Egypt and Sa'udi Arabia who were also opposing the Pact for different reasons -- Sa'udi Arabia, out of jealousy of a Hashemite leadership; and Egypt because it viewed any pact outside the Arab Collective Security Pact as an "imperialist penetration."⁷⁵

The refusal of Syria to adhere to a Western sponsored Pact was by no means a sign that it was turning Communist. As early as 1951, Syria rejected the Allied Middle East Command and adopted neutralism in its foreign policy. Syrian neutralism was a reaction to Western policies which attempted to

⁷⁴Nasser's interview granted to a group of Chinese Journalists on Jan. 24, 1957, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, Part I: 1952-1958, Information Department (Cairo, U.A.R., 1958), p. 640 (Arabic). Cited hereafter as Speeches, 1952-1958 . . .

⁷⁵"The Egyptian Government Reply to Prime Minister Nuri as-Sa'id's Radio Speech on Dec. 16, 1956," Khalil, The Arab States . . . , Vol. II: International Affairs, p. 281.

continue in one form or another, western influence, if not control.⁷⁶ This was especially true after the Partition of Palestine and the subsequent attitude of both East and West, an attitude which determined many politicians to adopt a neutralist policy between the two blocs.⁷⁷ After the Bandung Conference Syria adopted Positive Neutralism⁷⁸ which was not only a policy of non-alignment in the cold-war but also a positive policy of co-operation with friendly nations.

If in 1957 Syria showed more friendship to the Soviet Union, this was motivated by what Syria believed to be its national interest. Diplomatic relations between Syria and the Soviet Union were raised to embassy status, November 1955.

⁷⁶George J. Tomeh, "Syria and Neutralism," The Dynamics of Neutralism in the Arab World, ed. Fayez A. Sayegh (San Fransisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964), p. 136.

⁷⁷Michel 'Aflak, Fi Sabil al-Ba'th (2d ed.; Beirut: Dar at-Tali'at, 1963), pp.323-24. See also 'Aflak on Neutralism, Jan. 27, 1951 and al-Bitar on Neutralism, Feb. 24, 1951, in Nidal al-Ba'th . . ., Vol. III : Al-Qitr as-Suri, 1954-1958, pp. 90-91. For other than Ba'thists see "Communiqué issued by the Syrian Foreign Minister, Faydi al-Atassi on Syrian Policy at the Arab League Conference, Feb. 8, 1955," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, p. 237.

⁷⁸F. Sayegh, "Anatomy of Neutralism -- A Typological Analysis," The Dynamics of Neutralism . . ., pp. 11, 64-70.

This was followed by Syria's recognition of Communist China on July 3, 1956 and the conclusion of economic agreements with the Soviet Bloc.⁷⁹ Political, military and cultural delegations were exchanged between Syria and the Soviet Union.⁸⁰ The Soviet funds that found their way into some Syrian newspapers misled many Western observers, who were convinced that Syria was turning into a Soviet Satellite.⁸¹ The United States expressed its "serious concern"⁸² and thought to rescue the

⁷⁹Recueils des Accords Commerciaux entre la Syrie et divers Pays, 1951-1956, La Chambre de Commerce d'Alep (/Syria/, 1956), p. 191, Commercial Agreement with Poland, Dec. 18, 1955; pp. 125-34, Commercial Agreement with Popular China, Jan. 21, 1956; pp. 135-49, Commercial Agreement with East Germany, Jan. 21, 1956; pp. 151-60, Commercial Agreement with the U.S.S.R., Jan. 21, 1956. Syria has signed with the U.S.S.R. an economic agreement on Nov. 16, 1955 and an Economic and Technical Assistance Agreement, Oct. 28, 1957.

⁸⁰President Quwatly in Moscow, Oct. 30-Nov. 4, 1956; Mr. Shepilov, Soviet Foreign Minister in Syria, June 23-24, 1957. A Syria delegation, headed by Khaled al-'Azm, in Moscow July 24 - August 17, 1957, and another one left Syria to Moscow on August 28, 1957. See Keesing's . . ., Vol. XI (1957-1958), pp. 15705, 15746, 15811.

⁸¹Jean-Pierre Alem, Le Moyen-Orient (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 106.

⁸²"Address by President Eisenhower on Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Oct. 31, 1956," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, p. 802.

situation by the Eisenhower Doctrine.⁸³ But far from easing tension, this measure was responsible for the successful policy of the Soviet Union in the area.

Viewed by the Syrians, the Eisenhower Doctrine was a new "imperialist scheme."⁸⁴ The Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Salah al-Bitar, rejected it because it involved the linking of the policy of the countries accepting it with that of the United States and because it made the granting of aid under it conditional upon the major political stipulation of opposing International Communism.⁸⁵ This meant a departure from the policy of positive neutralism and this has prompted the Syrian government to reject it and to turn to the East which granted Syria loans for its development projects without any strings.

⁸³In a special message to Congress on Jan. 5, 1957 President Eisenhower proclaimed the U.S. determination to protect any Middle Eastern state requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by International Communism.

⁸⁴Haurani's speech on Nov. 18, 1957, 'Abdel-Mouneim Shmeiss, Suriyat (Cairo: Dar al-Qahirat li-t-Tiba'at, 1957), p. 52.

⁸⁵Al-Bitar, As-Siyasat al-'Arabiyat . . ., pp. 106-107.

Anti-Western feelings were heightened in Syria when an American plot was discovered August 1957. Syria accused the United States' "several attempts . . . to overthrow" the Syrian Government;⁸⁶ and when Israel, Iraq, and Turkey threatened its security, Syria turned to the Soviet Union for support. This latter reproved the Israeli raids of September 1955 on Syria and Jordan and stood by the side of Syria in its contest with Iraq and Turkey.

The deteriorating relations with Iraq reached a breaking point at the discovery of an Iraqi plot, on November 23, 1956, aiming at the overthrow of the Syrian Government⁸⁷; and when

⁸⁶"Déclaration officielle sur un complot américain tendant à renverser le gouvernement syrien, 12 Août 1957," Cahiers de l'Orient Contemporain (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Islamiques de l'Université de Paris. Centre d'Etudes de l'Orient Contemporain et Direction de la Documentation, publié avec le concours du centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Documents, Vol. XXXVI (August, 1957), pp. 195-98. Cited hereafter -- this applies to other volumes as well -- as Cahiers de l'Orient . . .

⁸⁷"Mémorandum du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères du gouvernement syrien au gouvernement iraquien, 13 février 1957," Cahiers de l'Orient . . . Vol. XXXVI, pp. 185-89. At the Mahdawi's Court . . . Colonel Daghestani recognized that he contacted Shishakli during July 1956 and gave him money for the overthrow of the Syrian government, Vol. I, pp. 271-88. At the said Court, ex-Chief of Staff Rafic 'Aref said that Nouri and 'Abdallah wished to bring about a syro-Iraqi union at any price, and he recognized that arms and money were sent to Syria, Vol. II, pp. 418-43. Similarly, Amin Bakr, former member of the Iraqi Intelligence Service said that his mission was to contact the Syrian tribes and to win their support in an eventual coup in Syria, Vol. VI, p. 2299. Ahmad Moukhar Baban, an ex-Premier expressed similar things, Vol. IV, p. 1522.

Iraq sent armed troops along the Syrian frontiers.⁸⁸ Iraq denied the existence of such a plot in which it saw a "mise en scène" by the Syrian Tribunal and accused "Communist and "Zionist" subversive activities in Syria.⁸⁹

Things went worst along Syria's northern frontiers where Turkey was concentrating its troops.⁹⁰ Turkey had not ceased to intervene in Syria's affairs either through recriminating notes,⁹¹ movements of troops or official statements. Zorlu the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs declared in 1958 that Turkey would not oppose Arab Unity provided it is done within the Western Camp.⁹² This intervention in Arab problems was followed by more serious ones when frontier incidents occurred

⁸⁸Nasser's interview granted to the Italian Tempo correspondent, Dec. 11, 1956, Speeches, 1952-1958 . . ., pp. 634-39. This was later confirmed at the Mahdawi's Court . . ., Vol. II, pp. 428-29, by Rafic 'Aref who said that the Official reason given was that the Iraqi troops were sent to Jordan at the request of this latter to protect against Israel.

⁸⁹"Note iraquienne au gouvernement syrien 18 fev., 1957" Cahiers de l'Orient . . ., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 190-95.

⁹⁰New York Times, April 30, 1957, p. 3.

⁹¹"Syrian Government Statement on its Attitude towards Turkey. Damascus, March 22, 1955," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, p. 241.

⁹²Benoist-Méchin, Un Printemps Arabe (Paris: Albin Michel, 1959), pp. 547-48. An interview of the author with Fatima Zorlu in 1958 after the proclamation of the U.A.R.

between Syria and Turkey in October 1957. Turkey denied any massing of its troops or any other aggressive policy and accused Syria of having allowed itself to be turned into an "armament depot," to be used by others.⁹³

The situation reached a crucial point when Syria took its case to the United Nations on October 7, 1957 and accused the Fifth Fleet of violating its territorial waters.⁹⁴ In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs reported that an "actual military threat" was directed against the security of Syria.⁹⁵ Everybody agreed that Syria was threatened but there was a general disagreement as to the nature of the threat.

According to Egypt, Syria's trouble stemmed from the fact that Syria refused to "kneel" before the American influence.⁹⁶

⁹³New York Times, Oct. 6, 1957, p. 3.

⁹⁴Al-Bitar, As-Siyasat al-'Arabiyyat . . ., p. 128, Bitar's speech in the U.N. on Oct. 7, 1957.

⁹⁵"Complaint about Threats to the Security of Syria and to International Peace: Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria (al-Bitar) to the Secretary-General of the U.N. (Hammarskjold), Oct. 15, 1957," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 342-43.

⁹⁶Nasser's interview granted to M. H. Haykal, ed. of Al-Ahram, Sep. 8, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958 . . ., p. 724. Nasser's interview granted to Columbia Broadcasting System of New York, April 7, 1958, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, 1958, Information Department (Cairo, U.A.R., 1958), pp. 277-88. Cited hereafter as Speeches, 1958 . . .

The Soviet Communist Party charged Turkey and the United States with creating a "dangerous situation" that might develop into a "large conflagration."⁹⁷ Gromyko, the Soviet representative at the United Nations, declared in the General Assembly that the Turkish forces amounted to 50,000 men and that the Soviet Union will not leave Syria alone.⁹⁸ The United States rejected such allegations as being "absurd", attacked "Communist infiltration" in Syria,⁹⁹ and ascribed the "War scare" created by the Soviet Union in the area as the reason for the Turkish defense activities.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷"Message du Comité Central du Parti Communiste de l'Union Soviétique au Comité Directeur du Parti Socialiste Français (SFIO) sur la situation dans le Proche-Orient, 15 oct., 1957," Cahiers de l'Orient . . ., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 4-8.

⁹⁸"Letter from the Head of the Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the U.N. (Gromyko) to the Secretary-General of the U.N. (Hammarskjöld), New York, Oct. 16, 1957," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, p. 344.

⁹⁹"Statement by the U.S. Representative (Lodge) to the U.N. before the General Assembly, Oct. 18, 1957," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 345-46.

¹⁰⁰"Statement by the U.S. Representative (Lodge) to the U.N. before the General Assembly, Oct. 25, 1957," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 346-50.

The situation in Syria became critical, Egyptian troops landed in Latakia on October 13, 1957, to help Syria defend its territory while the Syrian representative to the United Nations requested the General Assembly to send a commission to investigate conditions along the Syrian frontiers.¹⁰¹ Sa'udi Arabia offered to mediate between Turkey and Syria, but nothing came out of this mediation; nor did the United Nations reach any final decision from its discussion of the Syrian complaint, which was finally shelved unsolved.

By the end of 1957, no immediate attack on Syria had developed; but as the Syrians still had in mind the recent events, the Popular Resistance Organization was building up its defense.

Meanwhile, the solidarity which existed for a while between Syria, Sa'udi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt was shaken, but Syria tightened even more its relations with Egypt.

C. The Idea of Arab Unity in Syria

When Syria's security was threatened in the pre-Union years, Nasser declared that Egypt will stand with Syria "without conditions and with no limits."¹⁰² This attitude made

¹⁰¹"Projet Syrien de Résolution à l'O.N.U., 30 Oct. 1957," Cahiers de l'Orient . . ., Vol. XXXVI, p. 203.

¹⁰²Interview granted to Wynn, director of the Associated Press in Cairo, Sep. 17, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., p. 725.

many think that the Union was formed solely out of fear for Syria's security. Nasser himself, when the polemic between him and Qassem reached its climax, denounced the Communist conspiracy which made the Syrians "rush through" union with Egypt.¹⁰³ Following Secession, Nasser declared that the Syrian delegation which came to Cairo to discuss the modality of union, confided to him that the merger was the only way to save Syria.¹⁰⁴ Vice-President Haurani also spoke of Syria's difficulties and of the international tension in the midst of which the Union took place.¹⁰⁵

If the external pressure exerted on Syria was a threat to its security, yet it was not a prime mover behind the Union, but rather a catalyst. Had pressure been a major factor behind the merger of Syria and Egypt, it would not have necessarily led

¹⁰³ Interview granted to R.K. Karanjia ed. of Blitz (India) April 17, 1959, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, 1959, Information Department (Cairo, U.A.R., 1959), p. 536. Cited hereafter as Speeches, 1959 . . .

¹⁰⁴ Speech, Sep. 29, 1961, Speeches, 1961 . . . pp. 263-64.

¹⁰⁵ Haurani's speech at the inauguration of the International Fair of Syria, Etude Mensuelle Sur l'Economie et les Finances de la Syrie et des Pays Arabes (Damas, R.A.U.: Centre d'Etudes et de Documentations Economiques, Financieres et Sociales), No. 8 (September, 1958), pp. 9-10. This monthly will be referred to as Etude Mensuelle . . . followed by the appropriate number.

to unity; friendly relations between Syria and Egypt would have continued as long as it seemed expedient. History is full of examples of alliances between two or more countries against a common enemy. Arab Unity may serve as a "shield"¹⁰⁶ to protect the Arab World, yet for Arab nationalists, Arab Unity is more than a defense measure; it is motivated by economic, social, and cultural factors as well. Syria has always been a stronghold of Arab nationalism. The desire for Arab Unity was manifested in Syria on both the popular and the Governmental levels. Most of the Syrian political parties despite their differences advocated Arab Unity. The Ba'th asked for union with Egypt as early as April 1956.¹⁰⁷ The successive Syrian Governments have all championed the idea of Arab Unity. Instances of their support for Arab Unity are numerous: In his National Day speech on April 17, 1946, President Quwatly declared that "the free skies of the liberated Arab Homeland should be dominated by a single flag, that of an all embracing Arab Unity."¹⁰⁸ During the talks on the formation of the Arab League in 1943, The Syrian Premier expressed his government's readiness to accept any form that may lead to Arab Unity. A similar desire was expressed by the Syrian Premier in 1944, when the

¹⁰⁶ Nasser's address to the Syrian delegation in Cairo, Feb. 11, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., p. 641.

¹⁰⁷ Nidal al-Ba'th. . ., Vol. III: Al-Qitr as-Suri, 1954-1958, p. 171.

¹⁰⁸ Abdel-Qader al-Bandari, Falsafat al-Kifah al-'Arabi Nahwa'l-Wahdat wa-t-Taharur (Egypt: Maktabat an-Nahdat al-~~al-Ba'thiyya~~, 1960), p. 199.

Alexandria Protocol was written.¹⁰⁹ Again in 1946, the Syrian Foreign Minister announced in the Syria Parliament that Syria has always worked to achieve the unity of Arab countries.¹¹⁰ Husni al-Za'im spoke of a possible union between Cairo, Damascus, and Ryad.¹¹¹ Hinnawi was for union with Iraq. The first formal request for Arab Unity was presented by the Syrian Premier, Nazem al-Qudsi in his plan for an Arab federation, January 23, 1951.¹¹² At the Arab League Conference February 8, 1955, Faydi al-Atassi, the Syrian Foreign Minister, reasserted his government desire for Arab Unity.¹¹³ It was not unusual to hear interpellations in Parliament requesting the government to work

¹⁰⁹Fayez A. Sayegh, Arab Unity. Hope and Fulfilment (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1958), pp. 184-85.

¹¹⁰"Statement by the Syrian Acting Foreign Minister in the Chamber of Deputies Concerning Syrian Unity, Nov. 23, 1946," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II; International Affairs, pp. 28-29?

¹¹¹Al-Bráwi, Mushkialat al-'Alam al-'Arabi . . . pp. 83-84. Colombe, Orient (Paris), No. 5, p. 117.

¹¹²"The Syrian Qudsi Project submitted to the Political Committee of the Arab League for Establishing an Arab Federation, Jan. 23, 1951," Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 40-46.

¹¹³Supra, n. 77.

for Arab Unity.¹¹⁴ The first move toward the formation of the United Arab Republic came from Syria. The Secessionist Government of September 1961 presented a plan for Arab Unity,¹¹⁵ while the first decision taken by the Ba'th after the coup of March 8, 1963 was to request Egypt and Iraq to join them into a federation.¹¹⁶ Finally the Syrian Constitution of September 5, 1950 stated in its Preamble that the Syrian people are part of the Arab nation.¹¹⁷ The same thing was provided in Article 1(2) of the Syrian Provisional Constitution of 1964.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴The Syrian Republic, O.G., Parliamentary Minutes, March-April 1956, Deputy Ihsan al-Jabri presented a plan for union of the Arab States, 16th Sess., April 23, 1956, p. 550.

¹¹⁵Syria, Wahdatuna al-Kubra fi Zil al-Hurriyat wa-l-'Adalat, The Ministry of Culture and Orientation (Damascus, November, 1961).

¹¹⁶See Mahader Muhadaat al-Wahdat (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Ahram, 1964). This is the Tripartite Unity Talks between Syria, Iraq, and Egypt for establishing a federal Union between them, it will be referred to hereafter as Unity Talks...

¹¹⁷For the text of the Syrian Constitution 1950, see Khalil, The Arab States . . ., Vol. I: Constitutional . . ., pp. 535-55.

¹¹⁸The Syrian Provisional Constitution, 1964, Dirasat 'Arabiyat (Beirut monthly), No. 1 (November, 1964), p. 74.

Arab Unity was not, for the Syrians, an escape from their internal problems as maintained by René Aggiouri.¹¹⁹ The opposite is nearer to reality, since it was the urge for Arab Unity which was and still is responsible for all sorts of upheavals in Syria. Clashes between proponents and opponents of the Fertile Crescent, competition between pro-Iraqi and pro-Egyptian, conflict between federalists, unionists and Arab League advocates were common features of Syria's political life. When Nasser said that Syria has always been the "heart"¹²⁰ of the Arab Nation and the "Center" which diffused Arab Nationalism,¹²¹ he was not far from the truth.

D. Rapprochement with Egypt

The way for the United Arab Republic was paved during the fifties, yet actual negotiations for the modality of Union took place rather suddenly since, as late as March 1957, Nasser had no plan for any type of Union.¹²²

¹¹⁹"Faits du jour," L'Orient (Beirut), 15 oct.1963, p.1.

¹²⁰Nasser's speech, Feb. 24, 1960.

¹²¹Nasser's address to the Egyptian National Assembly; July 22, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958. . . . p. 697.

¹²²Interview granted by Nasser to Karanjia, March 10, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958. . . . p. 647.

The rapprochement¹²³ between Syria and Egypt can be traced back to the Czech Arms Deal when Nasser appeared to the Arabs as the leader and the liberator of the Arab World. So that when he asked them to give him their hearts instead of written documents,¹²⁴ he has already conquered that of many Syrians. Good feeling was reciprocal. Speaking of the Syrian youth, Nasser said they "are the soldiers of the Arab nation".¹²⁵

Solidarity between Syria and Egypt was not only a matter of feeling. Affinity, to a certain extent, was reflected in their constitutions, their principles and their foreign policies. Both constitutions made provisions for Arab Unity, both established republican regime, both advocated social justice and accepted the welfare state. A major dissimilarity resided in the fact that in the Syrian Constitution, individual and public freedoms came before economic and social principles, while the opposite was expressed in the Egyptian Constitution.¹²⁶

¹²³Muhammed 'Abdel-'Aziz Ahmed and Wafiq 'Abdel-'Aziz Fahmi, Tajribat al-Wahdat Bayna Masr wa-Suriyat (Cairo : Ad-Dar al-Qawmiyat li-t-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr (1962), pp. 59-70.

¹²⁴Nasser's address to the Lebanese of Egypt, Feb. 2, 1955, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., p. 237.

¹²⁵Nasser's address to the Syrians of Egypt, Jan. 11, 1956, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., p. 437.

¹²⁶Constitution of the Republic of Egypt, January 1956 (Mimeographed by the Public Administration Department, American University of Beirut, 1957). Munzer Fayek Anabtawi, Arab Unity in Terms of Law, Ph.D. Thesis at the State University of Groningen, July 6, 1962 (Groningen, Netherlands: Drukkerij Pasmans, 1962), p. 184.

Nasser probably had this difficulty in mind when he made Union conditional upon the dissolution of Syrian political parties and the removal of the Syrian Army from politics, yet it was thought that the overwhelming tide for Union would overcome other considerations.

The same principles, non-alignment and non-conditional co-operation with any foreign power, were guiding their foreign policies.¹²⁷ Both Syria and Egypt adopted similar attitudes against the Baghdad Pact, and during the Suez War; they both rejected the Eisenhower Doctrine, and presented a United front in the face of Turkish and Israeli threats.

Co-operation between them was intensive and became "unlimited" in 1957.¹²⁸ Several agreements were signed between Syria and Egypt.¹²⁹ The first of these was the Mutual Defense

¹²⁷ Supra, n. 77. See also the Syrian National Charter, Khalil, The Arab States. . ., Vol. I: Constitutional. . ., p. 597. Nasser's speeches of August 21, 1954 and March 31, 1955, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., pp. 208-290.

¹²⁸ Unity Talks. . ., 3rd phase, 2nd meeting, Nasser's statement, p. 174.

¹²⁹ Oct. 20, 1955, Mutual Defense Pact. Sep. 2, 1956, Economic Agreement for Industrial Co-operation. Nov. 2, 1956, Syria places its Armed Forces under Egyptian Command. March 15, 1957, Arab Cultural Unity Agreement aiming at unifying educational methods and enhancing cultural co-operation between the contracting states. Sep. 3, 1957, Syria and Egypt agreed to set up a joint committee to work out within three months measures for economic unification of the two countries. Nov. 13, 1957, Economic agreement signed to facilitate the transfer of funds was concluded. The above dates are taken from the Deadline Data, Deadline Data on World Affairs (New York; Deadline Data Inc.), Syria, 1955-1958.

Pact,¹³⁰ October 20, 1955, which they concluded in reaction to the Baghdad Pact,¹³¹ a Joint Military Command was established and it was in virtue of this Pact that the Egyptian forces landed in Latakia on October 13, 1957.

The rapprochement between Syria and Egypt, and their subsequent policies had their repercussions in the rest of the Arab world. Iraq was discredited in the eyes of the Arab masses; even the Syrian pro-Iraqi elements would not dare take position with Iraq.

Jordan and Sa'udi Arabia were wavering between their commitments to the West and their alliances with Syria and Egypt.¹³² Sa'udi Arabia and Jordan joined Syria and Egypt in

¹³⁰"Egyptian Syrian Mutual Defense Pact, Oct. 20, 1955" Khalil, The Arab States. . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 242-45. For negotiations of that agreement see pp. 239-40.

¹³¹Nasser's interview granted to a group of Chinese journalists, Jan. 24, 1957, Speeches, 1952-1958. . ., p. 641.

¹³²In fact several agreements were signed between these countries: March 6, 1955, Egypt, Syria and Sa'udi Arabia, drew a new military agreement; Oct. 27, 1955, Egypt and Sa'udi Arabia signed a Mutual Defense Pact; March 6-13, 1956, Nasser, Sa'ud, and Quwatly concluded a military agreement to coordinate their defense; April 21, 1956, Egypt, Sa'udi Arabia, and Yemen signed a military pact (see Khalil, The Arab States. . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 250-53); May 31, 1956, Jordan and Syria reached a military agreement; Oct. 25, 1956, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed a military agreement for a Unified Military Command; Nov. 2, 1956, Major General 'Amer was appointed Commander in Chief of the Joint Arab Command; Jan. 19, 1957, Egypt, Sa'udi Arabia, and Syria signed a Ten-Year Agreement with Jordan to replace the British subsidy by paying Jordan \$ 33,000,000 (Khalil, The Arab States. . ., Vol. II. . ., pp. 287-88); June 4, 1957, Syria, Jordan, Sa'udi Arabia and Yemen signed agreement in Cairo for economic development of the Arab countries.

order -- said the Communiqué -- "to face Israel' and counteract attempts exerted through the Baghdad Pact" to bring pressure to bear upon Arab countries,¹³³ but it is more certain that they did it under pressure from Arab Nationalists at home and also, in the case of Sa'udi Arabia, out of fear of Iraqi leadership. But this alliance was shortlived ; it came to an end with the declaration of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Syria was isolated from its immediate Arab neighbors, but this was counterweighed by its growing co-operation with Egypt. The Syrian Parliament approved unanimously the Government decision to carry negotiations with Egypt with a view to federating their two countries.¹³⁴

The Ba'thists were very active, at all levels, in preparing an eventual union with Egypt. They saw in that union a "necessary" national goal for the realization of which they participated in the government.¹³⁵ In fact, they claimed to have joined the "national rule" -- manifested in the National Charter -- because the Egyptian Government refused to discuss any plan for union unless there was total agreement about it

¹³³"Communiqué Issued by Egypt, Sa'udi Arabia and Syria, March 2, 1956," Khalil, The Arab States. . ., Vol. II: International Affairs, pp. 247-49.

¹³⁴The Syrian Republic, G.G., Parliamentary Minutes, June-August 14, 1956, 9th Sess., June 5, 1956, pp. 152-70.

¹³⁵Michel 'Aflak, Ma'akat al-Masir al-Wahed (3rd ed.; Dar al-Adab, 1963), pp. 74, 81, 193-94.

among all factions in Syria.¹³⁶ Thus when the National Charter was written, it consecrated the Ba'th's dearest aim at that time, namely the establishment of closer relations with Egypt.¹³⁷ It was held that the Ba'th advocated union with Egypt out of fear of the Syrian Communist Party.¹³⁸ A similar observation was made about the traditional elements by President Quwatly.¹³⁹ But it is doubtful whether the Communist Party could have had the upper hand in Syria. Khaled al-'Azm, the Communists' candidate for the presidency, declared that Syria's political actualities did not allow any party to rule alone.¹⁴⁰ He probably was thinking in terms of the parliamentary system which existed in Syria before Union and right after Secession and he did not

¹³⁶Nidal al-Ba'th. . . . Vol. III: Al-Qitr as-Suri, 1954-1958, p. 207.

¹³⁷The Syrian National Charter, Khalil, The Arab States. . . . Vol. I: Constitutional. . . . p. 597.

¹³⁸Jargy, Orient (Paris), No. II (3e trimestre, 1959), p. 24. This, however was rejected by 'Aflak who said that it is untrue that the Ba'th have worked for Union under any threat whether external or internal, 'Aflak, Ma'rakat al-Masir. . . . p. 198.

¹³⁹Méchin, Un Printemps. . . . pp. 320-21, his interview with Quwatly.

¹⁴⁰Prime Minister Khaled Al-'Azm's declaration, Al-Ayyam (Syria), Dec. 23, 1962, p. 2.

forsee the methods used by the Ba'th Party to maintain itself in power since 1963. Even if force was used by the Syrian Communist Party, this latter could not have mastered the Syrian political scene, for one has to remember that the Bourgeoisie was shaken but was yet neither beaten nor dead, moreover, the independents would not have sided with the Communists, and the Ba'th were nevertheless a force. However petty politics and external factors should not overshadow the fact that the majority of the Syrians welcomed a union with Egypt as a first step towards Arab Unity.

Informal discussion between Syria and Egypt for an eventual union between them started in 1957.¹⁴¹ President Quwatly went twice to Cairo in less than three months, June-August 1957.

Union became imminent when on November 17, 1957, in a joint session,¹⁴² the representatives of the Syrian Parliament and the delegation from the Egyptian National Assembly, headed by Anwar as-Sadat, invited their respective governments to carry out the necessary steps for the formation of a "federal union"¹⁴³ between Syria and Egypt. In his address during the

¹⁴¹ Nasser's interview granted to the Lebanese daily Al-Kifah, Jan. 3, 1958, Speeches, 1952-1958. . . , p. 771.

¹⁴² The Syrian Republic, O.G., Parliamentary Minutes, Oct. 14, 1957 - Feb. 5, 1958, 11th Sess., Nov. 17, 1957, pp. 368-83.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 383.

joint session, Haurani, President of the Syrian Parliament, welcomed the projected union as being a "foundation stone" for Arab Unity.¹⁴⁴ Anwar as-Sadat expressed his government's readiness to render total support to Syria.¹⁴⁵

Official negotiations started in January 1958 when a Syrian delegation headed by Chief of Staff, 'Afif al-Bizri went to Cairo. In the absence of official documents, we cannot reach a definite conclusion as to the why the Union, which was initially intended to be federal, became unitary. All members of the Syrian delegation that went to Egypt were for total merger, except Khaled al-'Azm who wanted a federal union. The reason for the change as stated by 'Aflak during the tripartite negotiations of April 1963, was to simplify the problems of the Union; while Bitar said that it was hoped that after the merger, a constitution would be drawn which would transform the union into a federation.¹⁴⁶ Another explanation was stated in the Memorandum of the Military High Command of the Syrian Armed Forces which the military delegation presented to Nasser, January 11, 1958, namely that a complete merger is the best guarantee for the defense and the security of the nation while

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 372.

¹⁴⁶Unity Talks . . ., 2d phase, 5th meeting, p. 114.

any other form of union would be a mere alliance between two nations.¹⁴⁷

The military delegation was soon followed by a civilian one headed by Foreign Minister Salah ed-Din al-Bitar on January 16, 1958.¹⁴⁸ Timid opposition wherever it existed within the Army or among politicians, was submerged by the strong call for union. So that when Quwatly announced in his address to the Syrian Parliament the birth of the United Arab Republic,¹⁴⁹ he expressed the realization of the dearest dream of the majority of the Syrians.

E. Summary

The intemperance of many Syrian politicians and the interference of Army officers in politics, together with the diverse and often opposing currents account for Syria's inability to solve its urgent domestic problems.

Syria's strategic position and the fact that it has been a stronghold of Arab Nationalism, made some Arab states look at it as the road to Arab leadership. This drew Syria into Arab as well as foreign Powers conflicting policies.

Syria's domestic problems were not a cause for union, they were rather ills which Syria brought to the Union. Nor

¹⁴⁷ Abdel-Karim, Adwa' . . . , pp. 92-96.

¹⁴⁸ Unity Talks . . . , 2d phase, 1st meeting, p. 56.

¹⁴⁹ Syria, O.G. . . . , Oct. 14, 1957-Feb. 5, 1958, Sess. of Feb. 5, 1958, pp. 2-7.

were the external pressures exerted on Syria the decisive factor behind its rapprochement with Egypt. It was rather Syria's belief that, by 1958, the essential condition for union with Egypt was available, that made Syria ask for union, namely the readiness of the nation to unite with Egypt as a first step towards Arab Unity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC (1958-1961) BRIEF EXPOSE OF THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTHERN REGION

The proclamation of the United Arab Republic on February 1, 1958¹ was one of the most important events in the history of modern Arab nationalism. On the one hand, it proved the feasibility of Arab Unity and, on the other hand, brought into focus political, economic, and social problems over which unity might collapse. It set up the process for a series of unions and of unity plans. Yemen through then -- Crown Prince El-Badr expressed its desire to join the United Arab Republic -- which it eventually did on March 8, 1958, when it federated with the United Arab Republic into the United Arab States, an association terminated by President Nasser on December 26, 1961.² Jordan and Iraq formed the Arab Federation to counteract the effect of the United Arab Republic on their peoples. Tunisia,

¹République Arabe Unie, Annuaire 1959, Administration de l'Information (Le Caire, 1959), p. 60. Hereafter referred to as Yearbook 1959.

²Salah-ed-Din al-Munajjed (ed.,) Al-Yaman wa-l-Muttahidat Bayna-l-Ittihad wa-l-Infisal. Wata'eq wa Nusus, Part II (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al Jadid, 1962). It was said that the Imam requested union with the U.A.R. to strengthen his own position at home. Charles D. Cremeans, The Arabs and the World. Nasser's Arab Nationalist Policy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 162.

Morocco, and the National Committee of the Algerian Revolution which headed the National Liberation Front (F.L.N.) met at Tangier where they proposed a pledge and a plan for the political unification of the Arab Countries of North Africa.³ The process for union in the Arab World continued even after the secession of Syria in 1961.

The United Arab Republic was to be open to any Arab state that wishes to join.⁴ Except for Yemen, no Arab state expressed its desire to join the United Arab Republic. The official attitude in the Arab World was in general one of reserve at the proclamation of the Union between Syria and Egypt. However, this was not the case on the popular level, where Arab nationalists all over the Arab World celebrated the birth of the United Arab Republic in rejoicing.⁵

The United Arab Republic comprised 28 million inhabitants.⁶ The United Arab Republic had a strategic and military importance, it controlled the world's East-West crossroads, moreover, nine-tenth of the oil from the Middle East crossed its territories

³F. Sayegh, Arab Unity . . ., p. 189.

⁴Quwatly's speech in the Syrian Parliament, see chap. i, n. 149.

⁵Muhammed 'Izzat Darwazat, Al-Wahdat al-'Arabiyat (Beirut: al-Maktab at-Tijari, 1958), p. 695. Anis Sayegh, Al-Fikrat al-'Arabiyat fi Masr (Beirut: Matba'at Haykal al-Ghorayeb, 1959), p. 310. The Arab World: Feb. 3, 1958, pp. 3-4; Feb. 4, 1958, p.2.

⁶Yearbook 1959, p. 5.

-- either by way of Suez, or through the pipelines of the Iraq Petroleum Company and Aramco.

The general structure and policy of the new Republic was contained in the seventeen-point programme⁷ announced respectively, on February 5, 1958, by Nasser in the Egyptian National Assembly and by Quwatly in the Syrian Parliament.⁸

The Provisional Constitution, announced on March 5, 1958,⁹ was in a way an elaboration of the seventeen-point programme. No time limit was fixed for its operation and no date for its replacement by a permanent one was assigned.

The United Arab Republic consisted of two Regions: Syria, the Northern Region, and Egypt, the Southern Region.¹⁰

The United Arab Republic adopted presidential democracy as its system of government. The executive power was vested in the President. The appointed ministers were responsible to him. An Executive Council was to be established in each Region, with a president and ministers, both of whom to be appointed by the

⁷Ibid., pp. 76-77.

⁸The United Arab Republic, The Official Gazette, 1958, Sess. of Feb. 5, 1958, No. 1 (March 13, 1958), pp. 16-19. Reference to the Official Gazette will be : U.A.R., O.G. followed by the respective year. 'Abdel-Rahman al-Bazzaz, Ad-Dawlat al-Muwahadat wa-d-Dawlat al-Ittihadiyat (2d ed.; Cairo : Dar al-Qalam (1960)), pp. 62-64.

⁹Speeches, 1958. . ., pp. 423-35 (Appendix I).

¹⁰U.A.R. Provisional Constitution, Art. 58, Chap. iii, St. IV.

President of the Republic. The legislative power was to be vested in a common National Assembly, whose members were to be appointed by a presidential decree. The citizens were to form the National Union, where; it was hoped, all parties would be fused and form one political whole. The judicial power was independent. In the economic field, the Provisional Constitution provided for a planned economy.

In a plebiscite organized on February 21, 1958, the people was to express its will over the Union, and elect the President;¹¹ the result, as it was officially announced, came out with 99.99 per cent for the Union and the election of Nasser as President of the United Arab Republic.¹²

Having thus established the constitutional basis of the United Arab Republic, the responsables started the difficult task of implementing the Union.

The structure of power in the United Arab Republic was, during the lifetime of the Union, subjected to trial and error, so that when the coup d'état of September 28, 1961 broke up the Union, the fragile structure of the Union collapsed.

¹¹In a letter addressed to the Egyptian National Assembly, Quwatly nominated Nasser candidate for the Presidency of the U.A.R. For text of this letter see, 'Abdel-Latif Younes, Shukri al-Quwatly, Tarikh Ummat fi Hayat Rajol, 1908-1958 (Cairo: Dar-al-Ma'aref, 1959), p. 253.

¹²U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No.1 (March 13, 1958); pp. 13-15.

The first Presidential Decree on February 23, 1958 nominated Major-General Abdel-Hakim 'Amer as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and elevated him to the rank of Marshal --¹³ when Yemen federated with the United Arab Republic, 'Amer became Commander of the United Arab States.

One of the Presidential Decrees of March 12, 1958, appointed General 'Afif al-Bizri, Commander of the First Army -- as the Syrian Army was designated during the Union.¹⁴ Brigadier-General Jamal Faysal, Commander of the Gendarmery and former military attaché in Cairo, became Bizri's Chief-Deputy; and when Bizri resigned in late March 1958, Faysal was designated to replace him.¹⁵

President Nasser issued a decree on March 6, 1958 by which he appointed thirty-two Ministers and four Vice-Presidents for the United Arab Republic. This Government was shortlived, it was soon replaced by another one on March 31, 1958. The new Government consisted of a Central Cabinet in Cairo and of two Executive Councils, one for each Region. The Fifty-two members of a new Government were nominated on October 7, 1958; they comprised three Vice-Presidents, forty-seven Ministers, and

¹³U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 3 (March 20, 1958), p. 2.

¹⁴An-Nahar (Lebanese daily), March 13, 1958, pp. 1, 8.
The Arab World, March 13, 1958, p. 2.

¹⁵U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 10 (May 15, 1958), p. 2,
Decree of April 21, 1958.

and two Deputy Ministers.

An important Presidential decision, taken on October 21, 1959, was the investiture of 'Amer with wide powers for the Syrian Region.

The end of 1959 saw uneasiness on the Syrian political scene. The simultaneous resignation of the Ba'thist ministers was presented to Nasser on December 30, 1959. This was the first open rift in the Union Government.

A new Cabinet was announced on August 16, 1961. It was a merger of the former three Cabinets (the Central Cabinet and the two Executive Councils).

The Legislative was not established before 1960 when Nasser issued Decree No. 249 July 19, 1960 designating the six hundred members of the National Assembly.¹⁶ These were selected partly from members of the National Union and partly from members of both the previous Syrian Parliament and the Egyptian National Assembly -- as provided by the Provisional Constitution. The first meeting of the Assembly was held in Cairo on July 21, 1960.¹⁷ Anwar as-Sadat, former Vice-President of the Egyptian

¹⁶U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 161 (July 19, 1960), pp. 1394-1395. The United Arab Republic, Yearbook 1961, Information Department (Cairo: Dar at-Ta'awun li-t-Tab' wa-n-Nashr, 1961), pp. 81-120. (Arabic) cited hereafter as Yearbook 1961. The Arab World: July 19, 1960, p. 10, and July 21, 1960, p. 6.

¹⁷Presidential Decree No. 1375 of July 21, 1960 convocating the National Assembly, U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 162 (July 20, 1960). The Arab World, July 22, 1960, p. 5. For Nasser's first address to the National Assembly July 21, 1960, see President

National Assembly, was elected President of the National Assembly.

The dissolution of the political parties on March 12, 1958, and the regulation of the press on May 24, 1960 were unwelcomed in the Northern Region.

During September-November, 1958, various decisions were taken with a view to reforming land-ownership in the Northern Region.¹⁸ A law for the protection of laborers in the United Arab Republic was passed on April 11, 1959. Similarly, a Decree-Law No. 91 of 1959 was taking with a view to protecting the workers in the United Arab Republic.¹⁹ This labour Law

Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, July-September, 1960, Information Department (Cairo, 1960).
Cited hereafter as Speeches, July-September, 1960...

¹⁸For a brief account of Land Reform see, Haga'eq wa Arqam (Cairo: Ad-Dar al-Qawmiyat li-t-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr, 1963), pp. 65-96. The United Arab Republic, Al-Wahdat fi Thalath Sanawat, Information Department (Cairo: Dar at-Ta'awun li-t-Tab' wa-n-Nashr, 1961), pp. 70-84.

¹⁹The United Arab Republic, Qanoun al-'Amal al-Muwahad al-Ma'moul bihi fi al-Iqlimayn al-Shimali wa-l-Junoubi (Damascus: Mu'assasat an-Nuri li-t-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr, 1959). The United Arab Republic, Al-Marja' al-Shamel, 1952-1962. Information Department (Cairo [1963], pp. 272-78).

provided for the protection of workers from arbitrary dismissal, the limitation of the total hours of work per week to forty-eight, the requirement of contracts even in small enterprises, the establishment of mixed committees representing both employees and employers, the organization of trade unions, and the settlement of disputes through special conciliatory committees. Other laws were passed on July 19, 1961 -- Decree Law Nos. 111, 112, and 114 -- for the regulation of works in companies, the distribution of part of the profits among workers and employers, and for the equitable representation of staff and labour in the management of enterprises.

A Presidential Decree No. 166 of September 28, 1958, abolished the special law of the Syrian nomadic tribes and made the tribes equal in every respect with other citizens.²⁰ This measure was fiercely opposed by the tribes who lost, by virtue of the new decision, certain privileges which they had so far enjoyed.

It was decided on April 25, 1958 to abolish the religious schools in the Northern Region,²¹ to extend compulsory education to nine years instead of six, and to develop technical schools. Further measures, announced on October 21, 1958, were aimed at reorganizing and harmonizing higher education in the United

²⁰U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 29, bis (Sep. 29, 1958), p.2.

²¹Yearbook 1959, p. 64.

Arab Republic. A new plan was drawn on December 26, 1958 for higher education and for the creation of technical faculties.

The Decree-Law No. 124 of March 28, 1960 organizing local administration in the United Arab Republic²² was extended on August 31, 1961 in the Syrian Region by Decree-Law No. 152 of August 29, 1961.²³ Under the new administration, the United Arab Republic was divided up into muhafazats, towns, and villages. An administrative council was to be set up in each muhafazat, in each town, and in each village. Members of this council were chosen from members of the National Union and from other citizens as well. The council of the muhafazat was to prepare and execute various projects for the improvement of the muhafazat.

²²U.A.R., O.G. 1960, No. 76 (April 4, 1960), pp. 475-88. (some articles of this Law were amended by Decree-Law No. 151 of August 29, 1961, U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 197 August 30, 1961, pp. 1230-1231). U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 219 (Sep. 27, 1960), pp. 1685-1704. Yearbook 1961, pp. 126-151. Cahiers de l'Orient . . ., XLIV, Chronique et documents (September, 1960), pp. 428-42.

²³U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 197 (August 30, 1961), pp. 1234-1235. Amer's Decrees Nos. 1 and 2 of Sep. 14, 1961 organizing the procedure for selecting members of the councils, U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 223 (Sep. 30, 1961), p. 1436. Cahiers de l'Orient . . ., XLVI, Chronique et documents (August 31, 1961), p. 285. The Arab World, August 31, 1961. L'Orient, Sep. 5, 1961.

The muhafez (local governor) represented the Executive in his muhafazat. He was to supervise the general policy of the State in the muhafazat and in the towns and villages under his jurisdiction. Moreover, he had the right to control all civil servants of the muhafazat, except magistrates.

Practically none of the economic measures that were applied to the Northern Region, was welcomed by the Syrian economic circles. One of these was the decision taken by Nasser on February 13, 1958, which prohibited importation through foreign currencies; the Egyptian currency alone was to serve for such transactions.

An important measure which became one of the major factors of dissension in the Syrian economic circles,²⁴ was Decree No. 11 of February 5, 1961, which imposed exchange control on the currency market of the Northern Region such as already existed in the Southern Region.²⁵ Under this decree, the foreign

²⁴Personal interview granted to the writer by two members of Al-Sharikat al-Khumasiyat (The Five-Man Company) who preferred to remain anonymous, Beirut, June 11, 1964.

²⁵"Décret portant organisation des opérations en devises étrangères en Province Nord," Etude Mensuelle . . . , No. 38 (February, 1961), pp. 135-137. Cahiers de l'Orient . . . , Vol. XLV, Chronique et documents (Feb. 4, 1961), p. 81. Youssef Helbawi, "L'évolution du contrôle des changes en Province syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . . , No. 38 (February, 1961), pp. 26-34.

currency transactions were confined to the Central Bank, and the movement of capital was submitted to State control. In that respect, citizens of the Northern Region could not take out of that Region more than one hundred Syrian pounds (or their equivalent in foreign currency). This sum was reduced to twenty-five Syrian pounds on March 2, 1961.²⁶ This measure was designed -- according to official circles -- to steady the Syrian pound and to stop the flight of capital from the Northern Region.²⁷ In fact, much of the country capital had left the country to be nest-egged elsewhere.²⁸ The flight of capital had led to the rise of exchange rate of hard currency in the Northern Region, consequently, a rise of prices on imported goods has ensued.²⁹ Fear of monetary unification, ever present

²⁶L'Orient (Beirut), Jan. 10, 1961.

²⁷Speeches, 1961: speech; Feb. 21, 1961, pp. 22-26; speech, Nov. 25, 1961, p. 402; speech, March 3, 1961, p. 85.

²⁸The Economist, Feb. 18, 1961, p. 648.

²⁹For further details on effects of currency control in the Northern Region see : Youssef Helbawi, "Implications du contrôle des changes instauré en Province Syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . ., No. 39 (March, 1961), pp. 38-48; Chafic Akhras, "Les objectifs de la nouvelle politique des changes en Province syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . ., No. 38 (February, 1961), pp. 45-50; and Negib Haddad, "Analyse des mesures récentes de contrôle des opérations de change en Province Syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . ., No. 38 (February, 1961), pp. 35-44.

since the proclamation of Union,³⁰ became persistent after the regulation of currency.

A higher Planning Committee was established on February 17, 1958 to plan the resources of both Regions. Planning for the Syrian Region were ended on March 22; the projects were said to cost 200 million syrian pounds.

It was felt that the co-ordination of importations and the unification of custom tariffs in both Regions were necessary in order to simplify trade exchange. To that effect, a ministerial delegation, formed of Vice-President Boghdadi, Zakaria Mohieddin (Egyptian Minister of Interior), and Hussein al-Shafe'i (Egyptian Minister of Work and Social Affairs), came to the Northern Region on March 31, 1958 in order to discuss with the responsables there of the problems of co-ordination.³¹

On November 25, 1958, all importation permits were abolished between the two Regions, except those on sugar, salt, and tobacco.

³⁰ Kamal Ghali, "Problème de la République Arabe Unie, la durée de la phase transitoire de l'union économique totale: L'Union monétaire," Etude Mensuelle. . . . No. 3 (April, 1958), pp. 11-12. Several assurances were given by the Authorities to appease the apprehensions of those who feared monetary unification. Vice-President Boghdadi declared in Jan. 1959 that monetary unification was premature, Etude Mensuelle. . . . No. 13 (Jan., 1959) p.3. The Arab World, July 19, 1960, p. 9, reported that Izzat Taraboulsi, governor of the Central Bank, denied the existence of any future plan for currency unification. Khalil al-Kallas, Minister of Economy, expressed similar things much before, The Arab World, Feb. 11, 1958, p. 3.

³¹ Al-Ahram (Egyptian daily) March 31, 1958, pp. 1,8.

An Economic Organization (Al-Mu'assassat al-Iqtisadiyat) was established by the Presidential Decree No. 99 of 1960³² in order to co-ordinate the works of the various public economic institutions -- a similar organization operated in the Southern Region since 1957. This Organization was enabled to establish its own companies and associations for economic development. The organization was also entitled to participate with private capital in important projects which private capital alone could not perform.

A Ten-Year Plan, 1958-1968, was announced on September 3, 1958 for the economic development of the Syrian Region, and a Five-Year Plan for industrial development was announced on November 8, 1958.³³ Efforts at creating new industries were

³²The United Arab Republic, Barnamej al-Mu'tamar al-'Am lil-Ittihad al-Qawmi fi al-Iqlim as-Suri, 20-23 June, 1960 (Damascus, 1960), p. 28, the Minister of Economy. Cited hereafter Barnamej al-Mu'tamar. . . Yearbook 1961, pp. 464-65.

³³Texte du Plan décennal, Etude Mensuelle. . ., No. 8 (September, 1958), pp. 98-102. See also in the same Volume, pp. 2-6. Yearbook 1959, pp. 161-164. Arab World Affairs (Cairo: Middle East News), Vol. II, Supplement, No. 3 (July 21, 1960), p. 26. The United Arab Republic, Yearbook 1960, Information Department (Cairo, 1960), pp. 285-91 (cited hereafter as Yearbook 1960). President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, January-March 1960, Information Department (Cairo, 1960), p. 130 (Cited hereafter as Speeches January-March 1960. . .). President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, October-December, 1960, Information Department (Cairo, 1960), p. 85 (Hereafter referred to as Speeches October-December, 1960. . .). President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews, April-June, 1960, Information Department (Cairo, 1960), p. 99 (cited hereafter as Speeches, April-June 1960. . .).

undertaken. Nasser announced at Latakia on March 4, 1959, the beginning of the execution of a "huge development plan" for Syria which was to cost "1700 million liras".³⁴ In order to finance part of the industrialization projects, Nasser resorted to foreign loans mainly from the Soviet Union and the United States.

The United States aid agreement to the Northern Region was a new event in the life of this country. The United States signed an agreement with the United Arab Republic for the delivery of 150,000 tons of United States surplus wheat and barley to the Northern Region worth \$ 9,600,000. In addition to this sale agreement, the Northern Region received a loan of \$ 700,000 from the United State Development Loan Fund for a textile factory at Damascus.³⁵ Other agreements were to follow. On April 24, 1960 it was agreed that the Northern Region would receive technical and economic aid. On August 15, 1960, the United States agreed to lend \$ 5 million to the Industrial Bank of Syria for private industrial projects. Still another agreement was concluded between the United States Development Loan Fund and the United Arab Republic on October 12, 1960 by which \$ 2.5 million loan was to be given to the Northern Region for the development of its telecommunication system. While on January 19, 1961, the

³⁴Speeches, 1959. . . . p. 615 .

³⁵Al-Ahram, Nov. 13, 1959, p. 1.

United States Development Loan Fund announced a \$ 1.3 million loan to the United Arab Republic to help it establish a telecommunication system between the two Regions.

Most of the development projects were still in the realm of "announcements", "plans", "agreements" or "decisions" when the Coup of 1961 occurred.

Some projects which started before the merger, were, however, achieved during the Union, such as the opening of the Homs oil refinery on August 12, 1959 which has an annual capacity of a million tons.

Nasser inaugurated on February 18, 1960 the first phase of the project for a railroad between Aleppo, Latakia, Deir-Ezzor, and Hasaka.

A step which was to be the precursor of the nationalization measures in the Northern Region, was the announcement by the Executive Minister of Economy, Khalil al-Kallas, of a Law, No. 196 of September 2, 1959, "arabizing" partially all banks and insurance companies in the Northern Region.³⁶ Under this

³⁶ "L'Arabisation des Banques dans la Province Syrienne," text of Law No. 196 of Sep. 2, 1959, Etude Mensuelle . . . , No. 21 (Sep. 1959), pp. 112-113. "Arabisation des Banques en Province Syrienne," Communiqué No. 472/100/53, relatif à l'application de la loi sur l'arabisation des banques, signed by the Minister of the Economy, K. Kallas, Etude Mensuelle . . . , n° 23 (Nov. 1959), p. 110. Ch. 2 (Chafic Akhras), "L'Arabisation des banques et des assurances dans la Province Syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . . , No. 21 (Sep., 1959), pp. 1-6. The Arab World: Sep. 24, 1959; Sep. 16, 1959, pp. 8-9; & Sep. 8, 1959, p. 2.

law, at least 70 per cent of all shares in foreign banks must be owned by citizens of the United Arab Republic, who must also be represented in the same proportion on the board of directors. Foreign participation was, limited to 30 per cent. However Arab participation could be limited, by a presidential decree, up to 49 per cent; in that case, the participation of the United Arab Republic citizens would fall to 51 per cent instead of 70 per cent. But this Law was followed by a more radical one, issued on March 3, 1961. The new Law arabized completely all foreign banks in the Syrian Region, thus excluding any foreign participation. Nineteen foreign banks were to be made joint-stock companies by January 31, 1962 with the Government -- represented by the Economic Organization -- owning 35 per cent of the capital, the rest to be owned by United Arab Republic Citizens, and the boards of directors made also of United Arab Republic nationals.³⁷ Arab participation was still permissible, but it was again subject to a presidential decision and was limited to 25 per cent instead of 49 per cent as under the previous law.

The July Laws threw panic in the Northern Region especially the nationalization of all banks and insurance companies in the United Arab Republic (a total of seventy-three in the Southern

³⁷Chafic Akhras, "Problèmes pratiques et conséquences de la nouvelle loi sur l'organisation bancaire en Province syrienne," Etude Mensuelle . . ., No. 39 (March, 1961), pp. 21-37.

Region and twenty-three in the Northern Region). Until then, nationalization measures had not hit Syrian businessmen, though it was assumed that everything that was applied in the Southern Region would be extended to the Northern Region. The Laws issued in July 1961 provided, besides the nationalization of banks and insurance companies, for the nationalization of important establishments; the participation of government in certain industries and enterprises; the limitation of individual share in companies; the introduction of progressive tax on income; and the limitation of income.

The various measures aiming at unifying the two Regions together with the July Laws were unpopular in the Northern Region. The principal reason for dissent, as given by the Secessionist Government, were currency regulation, loss of liberties, and nationalization. Moreover, according to Ma'moun al-Kuzbari, Syrian Premier in the first Secessionist government and Minister of both Defense and Foreign Affairs, Syrians felt that their country's wealth was being exploited by Egypt.³⁸

The first year of the existence of the United Arab Republic was a year of turmoil in the Middle East. The "Sa'udi plot,"³⁹

³⁸Deadline Data, Syria, September-October, 1961.

³⁹Nasser disclosed in his speech of March 5, 1958 that Sa'ud has attempted to instigate a coup d'état against the U.A.R.

March 5, 1958 shook Sa'ud's throne, which did not fully recover from then until the replacement of Sa'ud by Faysal in 1964. The Iraqi Revolution of July 14, 1958 led to a rupture in diplomatic relations between Jordan and the United Arab Republic, when this latter recognized the Revolution -- relations between these two States were strained since the proclamation of the United Arab Republic.⁴⁰ The Lebanese insurrection led to a break of relations between the United Arab Republic and Lebanon. Relations were not better with Turkey, which closed its frontiers with the Northern Region, while Qassem and Nasser soon became irreconcilable foes. Thus the relations between Syria and its neighbours became very similar to what they had been in 1956-957.

On September 28, 1961 Colonel Nahlawi carried his coup d'état which put an end to the merger between Syria and Egypt. The Union was formally terminated by Nasser on October 5, 1961, when he renounced all claims to Syria.⁴¹

The break-up of the Union was differently received in the Arab World and abroad. The reaction ranged from gloom, to rejoicing, via regret, surprise, reserve or denouncement

⁴⁰Fadel al-Jamali declared in March, 1958 that the U.A.R. was a "forgery, a farce, an unnatural union," New York Times, March 7, 1958, p. 3.

⁴¹Nasser's speech, Oct. 5, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., pp. 287-96.

of the Secessionist movement.

A sad episod was terminated in the life of Arab
Unity.

CHAPTER THREE
POLITICAL ASPECTS

A. The President

The Provisional Constitution of the United Arab Republic provided for a particular form of the presidential system: it made the Head of the State the actual holder of the executive power, assisted by ministers appointed by him and responsible to him,¹ while it applied the parliamentary system to the relationship between the Executive and the Legislative. This latter feature was embodied in Articles 13, 16, 17, 21, 38, which defined the legislative authority of the President; and in Articles 14, 24, 25, 26, 39, 49, which set up the power of the Assembly over the Executive. The Egyptian Constitution of 1956 had adopted a similar system.² The presidential democracy of the United Arab Republic was much nearer to the

¹This, however, was announced before the Provisional Constitution, at the Proclamation of the U.A.R. Feb. 1, 1958; and by Nasser to the Egyptian National Assembly, Speeches, 1958. . ., p. 221.

²For further information about the relationship of the U.A.R. Provisional Constitution to that of Egypt of 1956, see Muhsen Khalil, An-Nizam ad-Dustouri fi Masr wa-l-Jumhuriyat al-'Arabiyyat al-Muttahidat (Alexandria: Dar al-Ma'aref, 1959), pp. 311-524.

French presidential system³ than to that of the United States. Under this latter, the Government is independent from parliament: a vote of non-confidence cannot be cast; nor can any one of them be removed by the other. The two power holders function autonomously within their respective spheres of action, but they cooperate at pre-established points of contact.⁴

The Provisional Constitution gave the President of the Republic very broad powers at all levels. He was the head of both the State and the Government. By virtue of Article 13, the number of members of the National Assembly and their choice were to be determined by the President of the Republic. The President of the Republic had the right to summon the Assembly and to declare the closure of its sessions (Article 17); he could also determine the place and the nature (that is whether public or in camera). Article 50 endowed the President of the Republic with the right "to initiate, promulgate, and object to laws." He could promulgate any legislation or take any decisions lying within the competence of the Assembly when the latter is not in session, provided such decisions and

³Nicolas Wahl, The Fifth Republic (New York: Random House Inc., 1959), see particularly Articles 12 and 20, pp. 107-109. Maurice Duverger, "Le vrai problème du régime présidentiel," Le Monde, No. 802, Sélection Hebdomadaire (27 Février-4 Mars, 1964), p. 6

⁴Or as called by Lowenstein, "interdependence by coordination." Karl Lowenstein, Political Power and Governmental Process (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 107-108.

legislation are submitted to the Assembly, at its following meeting, for vote (Article 53). Article 38 conferred upon the President the right to dissolve the National Assembly.

The limitations on the President's Legislative authority were defined in Articles 51, 52, 53: the Assembly can reject by a two-thirds majority any legislation or decision falling within its competence (Article 53); if the President objects to a draft law but does not refer it to the National Assembly within thirty days after the date of its communication to him, it is considered law and promulgated (Article 52); and, finally, if, after he refers it back to the Assembly within the prescribed time, it is adopted a second time by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly, it is considered law and promulgated (Article 51). But during the non-existence of the Assembly (as during the period between the proclamation of the United Arab Republic and July 1960) the President is the sole legislator (Article 53). The President's legislative power was counterchecked by certain powers given to the Assembly over the Executive (Article 14) though not directly over the President. This latter was not responsible to the Assembly under the Provisional Constitution. However the ministers were accountable to the Assembly. Article 23 entitled every member of the Assembly "to address to the Ministers, questions or interpellations." Again, any twenty

members of the National Assembly could request "the discussion of a general question with a view to ascertaining the government's policy regarding such a question and exchanging views on it" (Article 25); or the Assembly could express its wishes or proposals to the government regarding public matters (Article 26). Furthermore, the Assembly could pronounce, by a majority, a vote of no confidence in a minister (Article 39). Finally Article 49 empowered the Assembly to indict a minister by a majority of two-thirds of its members.

In the exercise of his executive authority, Nasser drew, alone, the general policy of the State -- since his Vice-Presidents, his ministers and the Executive Councils were his assistants and directly responsible to him (Articles 46, 47, 49, 58). The Minister was simply "to supervise" the affairs of his ministry and to "execute" the general policy drawn by the President of the Republic (Article 47), while the power of the Vice-President was not determined (Article 46).

President Nasser was also the highest administrative authority, since he alone issued the decisions (qarārāt) necessary for the organization of the public service departments and supervised the administration thereof (Article 54).

The President was the supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (Article 55). He could declare a state of emergency (Article 57), and ratify treaties (except those of peace,

alliance, commerce, and navigation which were to be ratified by the Assembly Article 56); but, since the Assembly did not meet before July 1960, Nasser ratified also the treaties which fell within the jurisdiction of the National Assembly, and this, till the formation of this latter.

The Provisional Constitution remained silent on the question of Presidential succession. The Constitution provided for one or more Vice-Presidents, but as there were four Vice-Presidents during the first days of the Republic and seven at the time of its break-up, it was difficult to know which one would have succeeded the President had the Presidency become vacant before the promulgation of the final constitution. Thus the President appeared, and actually was, the pillar of the Republic.

Practically all important decisions were taken by President Nasser. He issued on March 12, 1958 Decree n° 1⁵ conferring upon himself all powers previously vested, by legislation in the Egyptian and Syrian Regions, in the President of the Republic of Syria, in the President of the Republic of Egypt, in the Syrian Prime Minister, and in the Syrian Council of Ministers (Decree No. 4 of 1958 abolished the term Council of Ministers wherever it occurred and replaced

⁵U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 1, bis (March 13, 1958), p. 2. The Arab World, March 13, 1958, p. 2.

it by that of President of the Republic⁶). Article 2 of Decree No. 1 stipulated that the President would issue decisions in relation to the questions which, under previous legislation or according to past practice in Syria, required administrative or ordinary decrees. Article 3 of that same Decree authorized the President to delegate his powers to his Vice-Presidents and his Ministers. And, finally, Article 4 specified that the Syrian administration and public institutions would be regulated by presidential decrees.

By Decree No. 55 of 1959,⁷ Nasser established the Council of State, which was an independent judicial-administrative body attached to the Presidency (Article 1 of Decree No. 55). Members of that Council were to be appointed by a Presidential decree (Article 58 of the said Decree). The Council started to function on March 23, 1959.

It was a Presidential decree that formed and convoked the National Assembly. Other Presidential decrees regulated the Agrarian Reform, organized the National Union, and launched the socialist revolution of July 1961.

It was this concentration of power in the hands of Nasser

⁶U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 1, bis (March 13, 1958) p. 4.

⁷U.A.R., O.R., 1959, No. 33, bis, special issue (February 21, 1959), pp. 10-21. Yearbook 1961, pp. 176-85. Cahiers de l'Orient . . . , Vol. XXXIX (Jan.-April, 1959), pp. 99-106.

that became a target for his opponents' criticisms. Dr. Mustafa Baroudy, the Syrian Minister of State for Propaganda, Information, Radio and Television after the Coup of September 28, 1961, stated that the Presidential system would succeed only if the President's powers were limited to federal executive matters, and if autonomy in local problems was left to the component states. His attack upon the Executive of the United Arab Republic was threefold: first, the presidential system, namely the powerful President, was applied in a unitary state, the United Arab Republic; second, no due respect was paid to the Legislature; and third, the presidential system was reduced to the "dictatorship of one man."⁸ This last criticism was shared by other Syrians. Nizar 'Arabi, a Syrian lawyer, wrote a virulent attack against Nasser's rule in Syria, and so did Ahmed 'Abdel-Karim, an ex-Minister for Municipal and Rural Affairs from the establishment of the Union until 1960.⁹ The Regional Congress of the Ba'th Party published a pamphlet on September 16, 1962 in which it attacked Nasser for having kept all power in his own hands.¹⁰ During the Tripartite Unity Talks of April 1963,

⁸ Salah ed-Din al-Munajjed, Suriyat wa Masr bayna al-Wahdat wa-l-Infisal. Watha'eq wa Nusus, Part I (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1962), p. 216.

⁹ Nizar 'Arabi, Madha Yajri fi Suriyat ? Wa Limadha Fashalat Tajribat al-Wahdat (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1962), p. 207. 'Abdel-Karim, Adwa'. . .

¹⁰ "Al-Mu'tamar al-Qitri li-Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi al-Ishtiraki fi Lubnan, Sep. 16, 1962."

the Ba'th representatives expressed their apprehensions of any system of government with a strong president.¹¹ Other Ba'thist spokesmen attributed "the failure of Revolution . . . to the rule of the individual."¹²

Nasser was also criticized for having chosen Egyptians as his personal advisors for Syrian affairs. One of these was Mahmoud Ryad, the Egyptian Ambassador in Syria before the Union, who was appointed on April 7, 1958 as the President's Adviser.¹³ Another Presidential decree designated 'Ali Sabri, the Minister of State, as Secretary-General of the President in the Northern Region on May 24, 1958.¹⁴ This was interpreted as a sign of distrust in the Syrians on the part of the President, and made some Syrians speak of "Egyptian imperialism" and "control."¹⁵

¹¹Unity Talks. . ., 3rd phase, 7th meeting, pp. 229-250.

¹²Zouhour, Fi al-Fikr. . ., Vol. II; p. 48.

¹³U.A.R., O.G., 1959. . ., No. 6 (April 10, 1958), p. 13. The Arab World, Sep. 22, 1961. Rumours circulated towards the end of Union that Ryad was to rule Syria while 'Amer and Sarraj were to remain in Cairo.

¹⁴U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 12 (May 29, 1958), p. 18.

¹⁵'Abdel-Karim, Adwa'. . ., p. 131.

Nasser was also criticized for the concentration of the administration of Syria in the hands of one man, whether this man was Vice-President Field Marshal 'Amer (to whom Nasser delegated his power in Syria on October 21, 1959) or the Chief of the Syrian Deuxième Bureau, Colonel Sarraj.¹⁶

It is a fact that the nature of the presidential system allows a great personal concentration of leadership authority, yet special institutional limitations are necessary to avoid dictatorship. The United States Constitution has solved this problem by making the Congress independent of the President, and by giving its Congress power to impeach the President. But it is difficult to find valid limitations to the authority of a powerful President to whom "democracy cannot be defined by a constitution or a parliament."¹⁷ For Nasser, democracy is nothing but the eradication of feudalism, capitalism, and monopoly; and the establishment of social Justice.¹⁸ While the Syrians could not give up their interest in politics, Nasser would not admit that Syria's trouble and dissatisfaction were other than "imperialist propaganda" and an intervention of

¹⁶Anabtawi, Arab Unity in Terms. . ., p. 214.

¹⁷Speech, July 22, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 139.

¹⁸Nasser's interview granted to Dr. Hans Fleig of Hamburg T.V. on August 13, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 188.

imperialism and Zionism."¹⁹ Nevertheless, Nasser admitted in one of his interviews that popular organizations are a guarantee against the deviation of leadership.²⁰ The National Union, however, was the only political organization in the United Arab Republic, and it was organized by a Presidential decree.

After Syria's secession in 1961, Nasser elaborated a new policy which was expressed in the Charter of 1962 and in his subsequent speeches. He adopted the concept of "Collective Leadership" in order to avoid "individual deviation."²¹ This collective leadership was to be implemented by the President, the Presidential Council (which was to function till the election of the National Assembly), the Prime Minister, and the Council of Ministers. But it is doubtful whether this new type of leadership would have been more successful, had it been applied during the Union. Controversy over the percentage of Syrians in the above mentioned bodies and the degree of their effective participation would, in all likelihood, have taken the place of the dispute over the presidential power.

¹⁹Speech at Latakia, Speeches, October-December, 1960, . . . 1960, p. 33.

²⁰As-Sahafat (Beirut daily), Nov. 14, 1959, p. 2, Nasser's interview granted to Link (India).

²¹This was included in the Declaration of the Union Accord of April 17, 1963, and before that, in the Charter, Information Department (Cairo, May 21, 1962), Chap. viii.

B. The Vice-Presidents

The vice-presidents were to execute the policy drawn by the President of the Republic. They were appointed by him and directly responsible to him (Article 46 of the Provisional Constitution). If the Vice-president was at the same time a minister, he became responsible to the Assembly, since ministers were responsible to it (Articles 39, 49). No precise rule in the Constitution described the functions of the vice-presidents. These were to be determined by the President. The vice-presidents were also -- since March 31, 1958 -- ex-officio members of the Executive Councils in their respective Regions.²²

Four Vice-Presidents were designated by Nasser on March 6, 1958: Marshal 'Abdel-Hakim 'Amer, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, was appointed Vice-President and Minister of War; 'Abdel-Latif al-Boghdadi, former speaker of the Egyptian National Assembly, became Vice-President for Economy and Production; Sabri al-'Assali for the co-ordination of policy between the two Regions; and Akram al-Haurani, for Social Affairs.²³

²²Presidential Decree No. 164 (art. 1) of March 31, 1958 U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 5 (April 3, 1958), p. 3.

²³U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 1 (March 13, 1958), p. 19. The Arab World, March 12, 1958, p. 5. Kessing's . . . Vol. XI (1957-1958), p. 16085.

Decree No. 1299 of Octobre 7, 1958 nominated three Vice-Presidents, each of whom was given, in addition to the Vice-Presidency, a portfolio: 'Amer kept the Ministry of War; Boghdadi was given the Ministry of Planning; and Haurani, the Ministry of Justice.²⁴ When Haurani resigned, on December 31, 1958, Nour ed-Din Kahala replaced him by virtue of Decree No. 1338 of July 18, 1960.²⁵

Shortly before Syria's Secession, Presidential Decree No. 1315 of August 16, 1961 increased the number of the United Arab Republic Vice-Presidents.²⁶ These were : 'Abdel-Latif al-Boghdadi, for Planning; Marshal Muhammed 'Abdel-Hakim 'Ali 'Amer, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Minister of War; Nour ed-Din Kahala, for Production; Zakaria 'Abdel-Majid Mohieddin, for Public Institutions; Hussein Muhammed al-Shafe'i, for Public Institutions, Kamal ed-Din Hussein, for Local Administration; and 'Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraaj, for the Interior.

The experience of Nasser with his Syrian Vice-Presidents was an unhappy one. Two (Haurani and Sarraaj) resigned their posts and one ('Assali) was forced to resign due to his implication in a plot against Syria. Only one kept his post

²⁴U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 30, bis, special issue (oct. 8, 1958), p. 2.

²⁵U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 191 (August 24, 1960), p. 1593.

²⁶U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 188 (August 19, 1961), p. 1172.

till the break-up of the Union, namely Nour ed-Din Kahala. They complained of not sharing in government. President Theodore Roosevelt is said to have ordered that the large glass chandelier over his desk be transferred from his office to that of his Vice-President, "where the tinkling of the glass in the wind might keep its occupant awake."²⁷ Haurani would, in all likelihood, say that Nasser did not even care to keep him awake. We will examine below the functions of the Syrian Vice-Presidents and some of the events which led to the alienation of most of these Vice-Presidents.

Akram al-Haurani was given, besides the Vice-Presidency, the Presidency of the Executive Council for the Syrian Region on March 31, 1958.²⁸ Various Presidential decrees issued in April 1958 invested him with further power.²⁹ The two decrees of April 6, 1958 gave him the right to approve the appointment of lawyers for the Ministries and Public Institutions in the Northern Region. Next, Haurani was entrusted with the expenses for official ceremonies. He was also entrusted with the expenditures of the Secretariat-General of the Presidency and other secret expenses after their approval by the Minister of

²⁷Alfred De Grazia, The American Way of Government (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957), p. 298.

²⁸U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 5 (April 3, 1958), p. 6. The Arab World, April 2, 1958, p. 7.

²⁹U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 6 (April 10, 1958), pp. 5, 13. An-Nahar (Beirut daily), April 12, 1958, p. 1.

Treasury. The decree of April 7, 1958 entrusted him with all budgetary and administrative questions pertaining to the Secretariat-General of the Syrian Parliament till the meeting of the National Assembly; the same decree gave him also the right to finance the needs of political refugees in Syria. The decree of April 15, 1958 invested him with the powers of the Syrian Premier concerning the Bureau of State Inspection, the Audit Department of the Treasury, and the Disciplinary Council.³⁰

Thus Haurani became effectively powerful in the Syrian Region. But it seems that while in office, as President of the Executive Council, he had taken decisions which created, as Nasser said, "endless difficulties"³¹ such as the increase of tariffs.³² It was probably for that reason that Nasser appointed him Vice-President and Minister of Justice in the Central Cabinet of October 7, 1958. Shortly before his resignation, Haurani was designated President of the Ministerial Committee for Services and Social Affairs in the Central Cabinet, by the

³⁰U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 7 (April 24, 1958), p. 2.

³¹Unity Talks, . . . , 2d phase, 1st meeting, p. 112.

³²Ibid., 1st meeting, p. 10. However, the official reason which Haurani gave, when he increased tariffs, was the government's need for funds to finance the development projects. Akram al-Haurani, "Les Majorations douanières", Etude Mensuelle, . . . , No. 5 (June, 1958), pp. 79-80.

Presidential Decree No. 2010 of November 7, 1959.³³ But it was not enough for him : he who had played an important role in Syria's political life, could not forgive Nasser for having removed him to Cairo. Haurani felt constrained to submit his resignation on December 30, 1959.³⁴ Some of the reasons for Haurani's resignation, as stated after the Secession, were "Nasser's dictatorial rule" and the non-participation of the Syrian Ministers in the policy of the State.³⁵ Haurani's allegations were refuted by Nasser during the Unity Talks of April 1963. He said that Haurani manifested his dissatisfaction when 'Amer came to Syria on October 21, 1959.³⁶ (It can be added here that many Syrian politicians shared that feeling with Haurani.) At another meeting of the Unity Talks, Nasser rejected Haurani's claim of non-participation in government, since he used to consult Haurani in the choice of the Syrian Ministers, and this for two reasons: first, because he, that

³³U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 259 (November 26, 1959), p. 542.

³⁴Decree No. 2351 of Dec. 30, 1959 issued by Nasser accepting Haurani's resignation, U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 289, special issue (Dec. 31, 1959), p. 906.

³⁵Akram al-Haurani, "Ra'i al Ustadh Akram al-Haurani fi-al-Wahdat al-'Arabiyat," Damascus, March 20, 1962. (Pamphlet).

³⁶Unity Talks. . ., 1st meeting, p. 13.

is Nasser, considered the relationship between the President and his Vice-Presidents as a complementary one; and, second, because Haurani represented the Ba'th in Syria, and the Ba'th having been a partner in the coalition governments of the pre-Union period, was always consulted through its spokesman Haurani.³⁷

Haurani was succeeded by Nour ed-Din Kahala on July 18, 1960.³⁸ Before this appointment, Kahala had been Minister of Public Works in the Executive Council for the Syrian Region since March 6, 1958, and on October 7, 1958 had become President of that Council as well.

Vice-President Kahala was appointed Minister of Planning in the Central Cabinet on September 20, 1960³⁹ while the presidency of the Executive Council passed to Sarraj, and the Ministry of Public works to Jado 'Izzeddin.

In the Cabinet of August 16, 1961 Kahala became Vice-President of Production.

Sabri al-'Assali, the last secretary general of the National Party and the last Syrian Prime Minister before the Union, became Vice-President, on March 6, 1958, for the co-

³⁷Ibid., p. 13; and, 3rd phase, 8th meeting, p. 265.

³⁸Presidential Decree No. 1338 of August 1960, U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 191 (August 24, 1960), p. 1593.

³⁹Presidential Decree No. 1521 Sep. 20, 1960, U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 222 (Oct. 1, 1960), p. 1709/

ordination of the affairs of the Union between the two Regions, and on March 31, 1958, he became President of the Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs in the Syrian Region.⁴⁰ On April 28, 1958 Nasser delegated to 'Assali all the powers of Vice-President Haurani while this latter was outside the United Arab Republic.⁴¹

'Assali was compelled to resign on October 6, 1958 when Fadel al-Jamali disclosed at the Mahdawi's Court in Baghdad that 'Assali had committed himself to bring Syria into Union with Iraq.⁴² After his resignation, 'Assali rejected the accusations and described them as "ridiculous".⁴³ He said that, since unity of the Arab world is the cherished dream of all Arabs, he had worked for a union between Syria and Iraq before the formation of the Baghdad Pact and not after it, as reported at the Mahdawi's Court. His resignation took place without outbursts; and as one Beirut daily remarked, no tears were shed over him.⁴⁴

Sarraj's appointment as Vice-President in the Cabinet of August 16, 1961, was the prelude to the end of his political

⁴⁰U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 5 (April 3, 1958), p. 5.

⁴¹Ibid., No. 9 (May 8, 1958), p. 3.

⁴²Mahdawi's Court. . ., Vol. III, pp. 969-970.

⁴³The Arab World, Oct. 7, 1958, p. 4 Assali's statement.

⁴⁴An-Nahar, Oct. 7, 1958, p. 1.

career. His unequalled role in the Union was achieved before that date.

In the first Government of the Union, March 6, 1958, he was made Minister of Interior in the Executive Council for the Syrian Region, a portfolio which he kept till August 16, 1961. Besides this, he was given on October 21, 1959, the Directorate of Propaganda and Information.⁴⁵ But a few months later, a silent struggle started between 'Amer and Sarraj. Before examining some of its features it is pertinent to make some remarks about 'Amer's presence in Syria.

Marshal 'Abdel-Hakim 'Amer, Vice-President and Minister of War in the successive governments of the United Arab Republic, was sent to the Northern Region on October 21, 1959 with wide powers and for "an indefinite period."⁴⁶ Presidential Decree No. 1957 of October 21, 1959, determined his powers in the Northern Region.⁴⁷ First, he was to draw, to co-ordinate, and to supervise the execution of the general policy of the Union in both Regions. Second, he was to supervise the execution of the general policy of the Government in the Northern Region. In that respect he was empowered: (1) to issue decisions and orders falling within the

⁴⁵As-Sahafat, Oct. 22, 1959, p. 1.

⁴⁶Nasser's interview granted to the German Press Representatives, Speeches, January-March, 1960. . ., p. 131.

⁴⁷U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 242 (Nov. 7, 1959), pp. 442-43. Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 622. As-Sahafat, Oct. 22, 1959, pp. 1,8.

competence of the President; (2) to adopt and to supervise the execution of the necessary projects for the Syrian Region within the limits of the budgetary appropriations; (3) to examine the decisions of the Executive Council in the Syrian Region pertaining to financial questions before they are submitted to the President; (4) to supervise the administration of public enterprises and institutions in the Syrian Region. Third, the Ministers of the Executive Council for the Syrian Region were responsible to 'Amer. for everything stated in Decree No. 1957 of 1959. 'Amer had the right to convoke the Executive Council. He was responsible for his actions to the President of the Republic.

'Amer's arrival in the Syrian Region raised several controversies. It was interpreted by some as a confirmation of the uneasiness existing in Syria⁴⁸ and by others, as a blow directed against Haurani and his colleagues.⁴⁹ It was also said that 'Amer was sent as a "controller", thus reducing Sarraj, Haurani, and Kahala to the status of a "zero to the left."⁵⁰ The Lebanese Communist weekly Al-Akhbar wrote that the

⁴⁸ Marcel Colombe, "Mission à Damas du Maréchal Egyptien Abdel-Hakim Amer," Orient (Paris), No. 12, (4e trimestre, 1959), pp. 27-35.

⁴⁹ An-Nasr (Syrian daily), Sep. 27, 1962.

⁵⁰ An-Nahar, Oct. 29, 1959, p. 1; & Oct. 22, 1959, p. 1.

appointment of 'Amer as Governor general in the Northern Region was a "dangerous plot" against both Syria and Iraq.⁵¹ The official explanation, stated by Nasser in one of his speeches, was that 'Amer went to the Northern Region to organize the political situation, namely the National Union and the National Assembly.⁵²

The fact was that in the Northern Region, things were not running smoothly. The New York Times, reported that 'Amer met the Cabinet members in the Northern Region "in order to look into reasons why the vital projects of the Northern Region are lagging behind."⁵³

At that time and as already mentioned, Haurani had raised the tariffs. This antagonized merchants and businessmen who became ready to bypass Government tax and import controls. Moreover, there were rumors that goods were being smuggled from Lebanon. The landowners, who lost their estates in land reform, and the dissolved parties were growing restless. Add to all this the second successive year of drought from which the Northern Region was suffering. With such a background, 'Amer's

⁵¹Al-Akhbar, Oct. 25, 1959, p. 1, 8.

⁵²Speech, Dec. 23, 1959, Speeches, 1959, p. 509.

⁵³"Cairo is concerned at Syria's trend," New York Times, Oct. 25, 1959. This paper was quoting the Egyptian daily, al-Gumhuriyat.

mission in the Northern Region was not easy. He first tried to obtain more co-operation among the ministers; he established for that purpose a Ministerial Executive Committee and a seven-member Legislative Committee. Next, he issued Decree No. 83 on December 30, 1959 by which he appointed a Ministerial Committee for the organization of the National Union.⁵⁴ 'Amer reduced some custom duties and export taxes, he also tried to hasten the achievement of development projects. He began talks with the officials of the United States Development Loan Fund for the financing of the proposed Aleppo-Latakia railway and for an industrial bank and a grain storage plant in the Northern Region. As stories of arbitrary arrests and tortures administered to innocent citizens multiplied, 'Amer set up a special office to which citizens could complain of any injustice done to them -- a similar bureau has been established by Serraj on March 30, 1958.⁵⁵ It was reported that in less than two months, 'Amer's aid, Colonel 'Ali Shafiq, received about 7,000 grievances.⁵⁶

So far Sarraj was not much worried especially that the departure of the Ba'th made of him the strong man in the Northern

⁵⁴U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 289, special issue (Dec. 31, 1959), p. 914.

⁵⁵Al-Ahram, March 30, 1958, p. 4.

⁵⁶New York Times, Nov. 7, 1959, p. 4.

Region, after 'Amer. Sarraj became Minister of Social Affairs and Labour ad interim.⁵⁷ But the zenith of his political career was reached when the Presidential Decree No. 1521 of September 20, 1960 appointed him President of the Executive Council of the Syrian Region as well as Minister of State while keeping at the same time the Ministry of Interior and the Directorate of Propaganda and Information.⁵⁸ At that time 'Amer went for a month to Cairo, and Sarraj was the sole master of the Northern Region. Unfortunately, he made of terror his raison d'être. What was more unfortunate was the fact that Nasser did not realize the harm done to the Union by Sarraj, both at home and abroad, till August 1961. Though 'Amer came to the Northern Region to ease tension, the network of terror which Sarraj extended all over this Region was not affected till September 1961, when 'Amer attempted to dismantle the secret police. Towards these end, he issued two decrees on September 18, 1961:⁵⁹ the first called for the ceasing of all arbitrary arrests, and provided that no person was to be arrested without a warrant; the second decree was the appointment of Colonel Rashed Qattini as Director of the Criminal Investigation Department (the

⁵⁷Presidential Decree No. 2352 of Dec. 30, 1959, U.A.R. O.G., 1959, No. 289, special issue (Dec. 31, 1959), p. 907.

⁵⁸U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 222 (Oct. 1, 1960), p. 1709.

⁵⁹The Arab World, Sep. 19, 1961, p. 3; and Sep. 20, 1961. The Times (London), Sep. 28, 1961, p. 13. Cahiers de l'Orient..., Vol. XLVII (Sep.-Dec., 1961), p. 399.

security arm of the State) in replacement of Colonel Marwan as-Siba'i, Sarraj's man of confidence. This, together with Sarraj's removal to Cairo, on August 16, 1961 and his appointment to a post which was more administrative than political, meant the end of Sarraj's political career in the Northern Region.

Far from submitting to his fate, Sarraj was very actively trying to reverse the Presidential decision. He came to the Northern Region without the knowledge of the President, and there he met, on September 18, the members of the Executive Committee of the National Union, perhaps to reverse the situation. Sarraj confided to his friends that the post he held in Cairo was honorary and that he was kept prisoner with no duty whatsoever.⁶⁰

Tension grew in the Syrian Region. Army detachments were stationed at the entry of public buildings. Nasser summoned both Sarraj and 'Amer to Egypt; but the situation was not improved. When, on September 24, Sarraj was designated to preside over the Executive Ministerial Committee in order to study the administrative reforms of the Egyptian Region, he refused to take his post and kept to his room in the hotel pretending to be ill; and on the following day, he resigned.⁶¹

⁶⁰ An-Nahar, Sep. 27, 1961, pp. 4-5; and Sep. 28, 1961, p. 1.

⁶¹ New York Times, August 20, 1961, p. 14. An-Nahar, Sep. 24, 1961, p. 1, this paper reported that on Sep. 26, the Executive Ministerial Committee was to meet under the chairmanship of Sarraj to study the administrative reform.

His resignation was accepted by Nasser on September 26.⁶²

Sarraj returned to the Northern Region where he induced his subordinates to receive orders from him and not from 'Amer. But it was useless. His chief lieutenants were arrested. The situation was very tense, and tracts for secession were being distributed.

The resignation of Sarraj made the coup possible,⁶³ not because the Syrians supported Sarraj, but because the struggle for power which was going on in that Region and the conflict between 'Amer and Sarraj had confused the political scene and paralysed the information services and nets of secret agents, thus allowing colonel Nahlawi to carry out his coup d'état.

In conclusion, the Syrian Vice-Presidents' contribution to the Union was meagre. Haurani drew his Ba'th colleagues along with him, while Sarraj's rebellion encouraged the therefore submissive opposition to mutiny in its turn. President Nasser's impatience with Syrian Vice-Presidents contributed also to that failure. It was reported that he once asked them whether he had schoolboys or Ministers. Mutual lack of

⁶²Presidential Decree No. 1519 of Sep. 26, 1961, U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 222 (Sep. 28, 1961), p. 1430. An-Nahar, Sep. 26, 1961, p. 1.

⁶³This view was rejected by the High Revolutionary Arab Command (of the Secessionist movement) which maintained that the coup was not related to 'Amer-Sarraaj dispute, Munajjed, Suriyat wa-Masr. . ., p. 137.

understanding between the President and his Vice-Presidents was the root of the conflict.

C. The Executive Council

As announced in the seventeen-point programme, an Executive Council was to be set up in each Region. It was to be directed by a president (also called chairman) appointed by the President of the Republic. The president of the Executive Council was assisted by ministers appointed by the President of the Republic at the recommendation of the president of the Council. The power of the Executive Council was to be defined by the President of the Republic.⁶⁴ Article 58 of the Provisional Constitution confirmed the above provisions but with one modification, namely the absence of any mention about the role of the president of the Executive Council in the designation of the Ministers of the Executive Council.

Originally the Executive Council was to serve as an autonomous government for the internal affairs of the Syrian Region. It was one aspect of the phenomenon of decentralization within the Unitary State as manifested in Articles 70, 13, and 58 of the Provisional Constitution: Article 70 provided for a

⁶⁴Yearbook 1959, pp. 76-77.

special budget in each Region alongside the State budget until the introduction of a single budget; Article 13 stated that at least half of the members of the National Assembly were to be members of the two former parliaments (of Syria and Egypt). Article 58, however, will be discussed in the sequel.

Concurrently with the Executive Councils, there was to be a Central Cabinet, with Cairo as its seat.⁶⁵

In his capacity as Head of Government, the President of the Republic organized both the regional and central cabinets.

The first government of the United Arab Republic was formed on March 6, 1958.⁶⁶ It included two types of ministries, Joint Egyptian-Syrian Ministries, and Ministries with separate Regional Heads. In the first category were the following Ministries:

Foreign Affairs:	Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi	(Egyptian)
War:	Marshal 'Abdel-Hakim Amer	(Egyptian)
National Guidance:	Fathi Radwan	(Egyptian)
Industry:	Dr. 'Aziz Sidqi	(Egyptian)
Education:	Kamal ed-Din Hussein	(Egyptian)
Presidential Affairs:	Ali Sabri	(Egyptian)

⁶⁵Yearbook 1960, p. 95.

⁶⁶U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 1 (March 13, 1958), pp. 19-20. Kessing's . . . Vol. XI (1957-1958), p. 16085. New York Times March 7, 1958, p. 3) The Arab World, March 7, 1958, p. 2. An-Nahar, March 7, 1958, pp. 1, 8.

Religious Foundations (waqf): Ahmed Hassan al-Bakouri (Egyptian)
Ministry of State: Salah ed-Din al-Bitar (Syrian)
Deputy Minister of War: Colonel Fathi Rizq Ahmed (Egyptian)

In the second category, that of the duplicate Ministries,
there were to be one Minister for each Region :

Interior { Zakaria Mohieddin (Egyptian Region)
{ Colonel 'Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraaj (Syrian Region)

Finance { Hassan 'Abbas Zaki (Egyptian Region)
{ Fakher Kayyali (Syrian Region)

Trade and Economy { Dr. 'Abdel Muneim al-Kaissouni (Egyptian
Region)
{ Khalil al-Kallas (Syrian Region)

Agriculture { Sayed Marei (also Minister of Land Reform,
Egyptian Region)
{ Ahmed al-Hajj Younes (Syrian Region)

Justice { Ahmed Husni (Egyptian Region)
{ Dr. 'Abdel Wahab Houmad (Syrian Region)

Planning { *Hussein al-Shafe'i (Egyptian Region)
{ Hassan Gebara (Syrian Region)

Social Affairs and Labour { *Hussein al-Shafe'i (Egyptian Region)
{ Colonel Mustafa Hamdoun (Syrian
Region)

Public Works { Ahmed 'Abdo al-Sharabassi (Egyptian Region)
{ Dr. Nour ed-Din Kahala (Syrian Region)

Public Health { Dr. Nour ed-Din Tarraf (Egyptian Region)
{ Dr. Shawkat al-Qanawati (Syrian Region)

Communications { Dr. Mustafa Khalil Kamel Mustafa (Egyptian Region)
{ Colonel Amin an-Nafouri (Syrian Region)

Municipal and Rural Affairs { Muhammed Abu-Nusseir (Egyptian
Region)
{ Colonel Ahmed 'Abdel-Karim
(Syrian Region)

Supply for the Egyptian Region : Dr. Kamal Ramzi Stino
(Egyptian).

Four Vice-Presidents were appointed : 'Amer, Bogdadi, 'Assali, and Haurani.

The important Ministries in the Joint-Ministries were given to Egyptians. What might have influenced the decision of the President can be explained by any of the following reasons or by the three concurrently : the adoption of proportional distribution which might have taken into consideration the size of the population in the two respective Regions; Nasser's distrust of the Syrian politicians and his resultant preference to keep them in the Regional Ministries; finally, Nasser's determination to collaborate with a team -- namely the chosen Egyptian Ministers -- which had not caused him in the past serious governmental crisis.

At that stage the Executive Councils were not yet organized, and there were no presidents for the Regional Ministries. Most of the appointed Ministers for the Syrian Region were party affiliates: Haurani, Kallas, and Colonel Hamdoun were Ba'thists; Younes was a Ba'th sympathiser; there were two Nationalists, 'Assali and Kayyali; and one Populist, Houmad; the others were either independents or Nasserists. The absence of the Communists from the Ministries of the Syrian Region corroborated the belief that the Union was motivated by the Communists' danger in the Northern Region.

Soon after the formation of the government, Nasser met his Ministers of the Syrian Region for the first time at Damascus; present also were some Ministers of the Joint-Ministries. During those meetings, the administrative functions and responsibilities of the various Ministers were considered and a plan for the unification of ministerial actions in both Regions was discussed.⁶⁷ In that respect, Nasser issued on March 31, 1958 nine decrees for the co-ordination of work in the United Arab Republic and for the establishment of the Executive Councils for both Regions together with the ministerial committees.⁶⁸ The first Decree, No. 164 of March 31, 1958 taken in conformity with Article 58 of the Provisional Constitution, stipulated the formation of an Executive Council in each Region. These were to be made of the Ministers and the Vice-Presidents of the Region. The Executive Council of the Northern Region included the Ministers appointed on March 6, 1958 and the two Syrian Vice-Presidents, Haurani and 'Assali. It was "to study and examine" the subjects which pertain to the execution of the general policy of the Region. This made it clear that the Executive Council was not to participate in the formulation

⁶⁷The Arab World, March 13, 1958, p. 5.

⁶⁸U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 5 (April 3, 1958) pp. 3-5.
The Arab World, April 2, 1958, p. 7. Yearbook 1960, pp. 95-96.

of the policy but only to study and examine; the President of the Republic alone was to draw the general policy of the State.

The other Decrees of March 31, 1958 established four Ministerial Committees in each Region.⁶⁹ Like the committees of the Central Cabinet, they were to study the problems of their respective Region and then submit their recommendations to the President of the Republic through the Central Cabinet. The four Committees of the Syrian Region were formed as follows :

The Executive Ministerial Committee headed by Sarraj included four ministries: Finance (Fakher Kayyali), Interior (Sarraj), Social Affairs (Hamdoun), and Communications (an-Nafouri). It was to study all the executive affairs in the Region.

The Legislative Ministerial Committee headed by 'Assali included five ministries: Justice (Houmad), Planning (Gebara), Economy and Trade (Kallas), Municipal and Rural Affairs ('Abdel-Karim), and Agriculture (Younes). It was to study and examine all problems presented to the National Assembly including the financial decisions.

The Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs, headed by the Syrian Minister of Planning, Gebara, and composed of five ministries: Economy and Trade (Kallas), Finance (Kayyali),

⁶⁹U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 5 (April, 1958), pp. 3-5.

Communications (an-Nafouri), Municipal and Rural Affairs ('Abdel-Karim), and Agriculture (Younes). This Committee was to study and co-ordinate the economic policy and supply in the Syrian Region, and to discuss the pressing problems which pertained to the National Economy.

The Ministerial Committee for Services, headed by the Minister of Education (Kamal ed-Din Hussein /Egyptian/), included five ministries: Municipal and Rural Affairs ('Abdel-Karim), Social Affairs (Hamdoun), National Guidance (Fathi Radwan /Egyptian/), Religious Foundations ('Ali Sabri /Egyptian/), and Public Health (Qanawati). This Committee was to draw and co-ordinate all services in the Syrian Region.

As to the actual activities of those Committees, President Nasser declared during the Unity Talks that the Ministerial Committees possessed complete freedom and used to discuss all problems within their competence, and had only to submit their decisions to him for signature.⁷⁰

As we have seen, the primary aim of the Presidential decrees of March 31, 1958 was the co-ordination of affairs between the Regions, yet it seems that there had not been enough co-ordination. So President Nasser felt that there was a need for a strong Central Cabinet, besides the two Executive Councils,

⁷⁰Unity Talks. . ., 1st meeting, p. 13.

which would draw the policy of the State with the participation of all ministers.⁷¹ With that in mind, Nasser formed a new government on October 7, 1958.⁷²

The New Executive Council for the Syrian Region was established by Presidential Decree No. 1301 of October 7, 1958 and the next Decree No. 1302, designated its Ministers, who were :

Nour ed-Din Kahala: President and Minister of Public Works and Acting Minister of Planning
Dr. Abdel-Wahab Houmad: Finance
Khalil al-Kallas: Economy
Colonel Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraj: Interior
Colonel Mustafa Hamdoun: Agrarian Reform
Ahmed Al-Hajj Younes: Agriculture
Shawkat al-Qanawati; Public Health

Nuhad al-Qassem: Justice
To'mat al-'Awdatallah: Municipal and Rural Affairs
'Abdel-Ghani Qnout: Social Affairs and Labour
Wajih as-Samman: Industry
Muhammed al-'Alem: Communications
Amjad at-Tarabulsi: Education
Riyad al-Malki: Culture and National Guidance

We can notice that the Ministries of the Executive Council -- the same applies to that of the Egyptian Region --⁷³ had

⁷¹Mahmoud 'Abdel-Rahim, Qiyadat Hizb al-Ba'th al Murtadat (Cairo: Ad-Dar al-Qawmiyat li-t-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr /1964/), pp. 34-35.

⁷²U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 30, special issue (Oct. 8, 1958), pp. 2-4. Keessing's . . ., Vol. XI (1957-1958), p. 16455. The Arab World, Oct. 8, 1958, p. 10.

⁷³Ministers of the Executive Council of the Egyptian Region:

Dr. Nour ed-Din Tarraf: President
Ahmed Husni: Justice

their counterparts in the Central Cabinet which was formed as follows:⁷⁴

Finance: Hassan Gebara (Syrian)
Economy: Dr. 'Abdel-Muneim Kaissouni (Egyptian)
Interior: Zakaria 'Abdel-Magid Mohieddin (Egyptian)
Agriculture and Land Reform: Sayed Marei (Egyptian)
Public Health: Dr. Bashir al-'Azmeah (Syrian)
Justice: Vice-President Akram al-Haurani (Syrian)
Culture and National Guidance: Salah ed-Din al-Bitar (Syrian)

Municipal and Rural Affairs: Colonel Ahmed 'Abdel-Karim (Syrian)
Communications: Colonel Amin an-Nafouri (Syrian)
Education: Kamal ed-Din Hussein (Egyptian)
Public Works: Ahmed 'Abdo Sharabassi (Egyptian)
Planning: Vice-President 'Abdel-Latif Mahmoud al-Boghdadi (Egyptian)
Industry: Dr. 'Aziz Sidqi (Egyptian)
Social Affairs and Labour: Hussein Mahmoud al-Shafe'i (Egyptian).

Muhammed Abu-Nusseir: Municipal and Rural Affairs
Mustafa Khalil Kamel Mustafa: Communications
Hassan 'Abbas Zaki: Economy
Fathi Ri'iq Ahmed: Industry
Tharwat 'Okasha: Culture and Orientation
'Abbas Radwan: Interior
Dr. Muhammed Mahmoud Nassar: Public Health
Moussa 'Arafat: Public Works
Ahmed Nagib Hashemi: Education
Hassan Salah ed-Din: Finance
Muhammed Tawfiq 'Abdel-Fattah: Social Affairs and Labour
Ahmed Muhammed al-Mahrouq: Agriculture
Hassan Ahmed Boghdadi: Land Reform

⁷⁴ Presidential Decree No. 1299 of Oct. 7, 1958
U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 30, special issue (Oct. 8, 1958),
p. 2.

The other Ministries in the Central Cabinet were unified due to their indivisible nature:

War: Vice-President and General-Commander of the Armed Forces,
Marshal Muhammed 'Abdel-Hakim 'Ali 'Amer (Egyptian)

Foreign Affairs: Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi (Egyptian)

Supply: Dr. Kamal Ramzi Stino (Egyptian)

Presidential Affairs: 'Ali Sabri (Egyptian)

Religious Foundations: Ahmed Hassan al-Bakouri (Egyptian)

Ministers of State { Kamal ed-Din Mahmoud Rifat (Egyptian)
{ Fakher al-Kayyali (Syrian)

There were two Deputy-Ministers of Foreign Affairs:

Hussein Zulfiqar Sabri (Egyptian) and Farid Zeineddin (Syrian).

The Presidents of the two Executive Councils were ex-officio Ministers of State in the Central Cabinet.

Having designated the Ministers, Nasser issued other decrees for determining their jurisdiction. 'Amer was sent to the Syrian Region on October 21, 1959, as already mentioned. On October 26, 1958, the Presidential Decree No. 1369 assigned their functions to the Ministers of both the Central and Executive Cabinets.⁷⁵

Before analyzing the functions of the Ministers of the Executive Council of the Syrian Region -- those of the Egyptian Region were similar -- it is relevant to discuss the functions of the Central Cabinet Ministers due to the interaction between both types of Ministers.

⁷⁵U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 34 (Oct. 30, 1958), p. 11.
Muhsen Khalil, An-Nizam ad-Dustauri. . . , pp. 487-89, 491-94.

The central minister's functions were threefold: first, to supervise and execute the policy drawn by the President of the Republic (Article 1 of Decree No. 1369 of 1958); second, to present to the President the draft laws, the financial, and the executive decisions pertaining to both Regions (Article 6 /1/ of Decree No. 1369 of 1958); and third, to draw plans for the necessary projects in his ministry and then submit them to the President for his approval (Article 6 /2/ of Decree No. 1369 of 1958). In the exercise of his functions, the central minister was directly responsible to the President (Article 1 of Decree No. 1369 of 1958). According to the Provisional Constitution the central minister was also responsible to the National Assembly. It is important to notice that the central minister's power, concerning laws, decisions, and planning programmes, was simply to draw the projects which required the approval of the President for acquiring executive capacity. So we can say that the central minister was only the assistant of the high administrative authority, namely the President of the Republic. But within his own ministry, the central minister was the highest administrative authority, in the sense that he alone was to supervise his ministry and execute the general policy of the State as drawn by the President of the Republic.

As specified by Decree No. 1369 of 1958, the Executive Council minister was : first, to execute the general policy of the government and to execute the laws and regulations of his ministry (article 5); second, to execute the planning programmes for projects (drawn by the central minister for the Region and approved by the President of the Republic); and third, to present to the central minister regular reports on the progress of the executive projects of the Union (Article 6/3). This did not mean that the Executive Council minister was responsible to the central minister: he was directly responsible to the President (article 5) and to the National Assembly. Thus the minister of the Executive Council was not supervised by the corresponding central minister, and hence it can be said that he was the high administrative authority within his own ministry. When the executive minister had to present reports on the progress of the execution of projects to the central minister, it was simply to inform him of the problems of each Region, thus enabling the central minister to draw better unified projects for both Regions.

The Executive Council of the Syrian Region, by the new regulation of Decree No. 1369 of 1958, was to study and examine the subjects pertaining to the execution of the general policy of the Region. The president of the Executive Council would then submit to the President of the Republic the recommendations of the Council. The Executive Council was thus simply an

advisory body, which would not adopt any decision unless approved by the President of the Republic. Thus the Executive Council could not be considered a Council of Ministers; and, consequently, neither the Executive Councils nor the Central Cabinet affected the presidential system since the President of the Republic was the real holder of power.

The Presidential Decree No. 1369 of 1958 provided each Executive Council with four Ministerial Committees: an Executive Committee, a Legislative Committee, a Committee for Social Affairs, and one for Services. Moreover, the president of the Executive Council of the Syrian Region was given, on November 17, 1958, the right to form as many committees as were needed in the Region.⁷⁶

Compared with the Government of March 1958 that of Octobre defended the authority of the Central Government over the Executive Councils. Previously, members of the Executive Councils possessed a certain freedom of action, their powers having not been delimited. While in the October Government, their autonomy was to a certain extent hampered. To counteract this, the number of the Syrians in the new Central Cabinet was increased.

⁷⁶Presidential Decree No. 146 of Nov. 17, 1958, U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 38 (Nov. 27, 1958), p. 2.

The new Cabinets were not welcomed by the big partner of the Union, the Ba'th. There were five Ba'thists in the Executive Council of the Syrian Region and two in the Central Cabinet. The participation of a greater number of Ba'thists was interpreted at that time as a means to use the Ba'th of Syria and Iraq against Qassem and his Communist supporters.⁷⁷ But the Ba'th leaders, Haurani and Bitar, were not content with their portfolios in the Central Cabinet, they viewed their appointment as a deliberate policy to keep them away from the Northern Region with no real powers in their hands. So they preferred to resign. Those who resigned were Haurani, Hamdoun, Bitar, Qnout, and Malki. The other Syrian ministers who resigned from the Executive Council were al-'Azme^h,⁷⁸ 'Abdel-Karim, and Nafouri.

The vacancy in the Executive Council was not filled before March 17, 1960, when Presidential Decree No. 405 designated new occupants for the vacant Ministries.⁷⁹ As Nasser

⁷⁷'Abdel-Karim, Adwa'. . . , pp. 181-82. The Arab World, oct. 8, 1958, p. 4. An-Nahar, Oct. 8, 1958, p. 1.

⁷⁸The Arab World, June 13, 1960, p. 9. This daily reported that 'Azme^h declared after his resignation that when he was only a doctor, he could be useful to somebody, but his duty in the Ministry of Public Health was next to nil and was useful to no one.

⁷⁹U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 86 (April 16, 1960), p. 588. An-Nahar, March 19, 1960, p. 1. New York Times, March 19, 1960, p. 4.

did not wish a return to the politicians which might take Syria to the pre-Union years, so he preferred an executive body to a political one, especially at a time when his attention was concentrated on the economic and social development of the Northern Region. Consequently he chose four Army officers -- so as to have strong opponents against the Ba'th -- and three career civil servants to fill in the vacancy in the Executive Council. The new Ministers included the following :

Colonel Ahmed Huneidi: Agrarian Reform
Colonel Akram Deiri: Social Affairs and Labour
Colonel Jado Izzeddin: Minister of State for Presidential Affairs
Colonel Jamal as-Soufi: Supply
Dr. Husni as-Sawaf: Economy
Thabet al-'Ariss: Culture and National Guidance
Youssef Muzahem: Religious Foundations.

Most of the new comers to the Executive Council were (and still are) faithful to Nasser. The reshuffled Council comprised three new ministries (waqf, supply, and Presidential Affairs), and was formed of the following Ministers:

Nour ed-Din Kahala: President, and Minister of Planning and Public Works
Colonel 'Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraaj: Interior
Ajjad at-Tarabulsi: Education
Muhammed al-'Alem: Communications
Ahmed Hajj Younes: Agriculture
Nuhad al-Qassem: Justice
Shawkat al-Qanawati: Public Health
To'mat al-'Awdatallah: Municipal and Rural Affairs
Wajih as-Samman: Industry
Husni as-Sawaf: Economy
Colonel Akram Deiri: Social Affairs and Labour
Colonel Jado 'Izzeddin: Minister of State for Presidential Affairs
Colonel Ahmed Huneidi: Land Reform

Colonel Jamal as-Soufi: Supply
Youssef Muzahem: Waqf
Thabet al-'Ariss: Culture and National Guidance
Dr. 'Abdel-Wahab Houmad: Finance

The presidency of the Council passed on September 20, 1960 to Sarraj, while Kahala became Vice-President and Minister of Planning in the Central Cabinet. The Syrian Ministers who resigned, after the Ba'th, from the Central Cabinet were replaced on September 20, 1960 by the following:⁸⁰

Dr. Nour ed-Din Tarraf was removed from the Presidency of the Executive Council of the Egyptian Region to replace Dr. Bashir al-'Azme, Minister of Public Health; Fakher Kayyali replaced Haurani for the Ministry of Justice; To'mat al-'Awdatallah kept his Ministry of Rural and Municipal Affairs in the Syrian Region and was given also that of the Central Cabinet; Muhammed al-'Alem, Minister of Communications in the Syrian Region was entrusted also with that of the Central Cabinet in succession to Nafouri; Thabet al-'Ariss, Minister of Culture and National Guidance in the Syrian Region was given also that of the Central Cabinet in replacement of Bitar.

The Executive Councils failed to fulfill their aim, namely the fusion of the system of government while at the same time safeguarding a certain autonomy for each Region. The

⁸⁰ Presidential Decree No. 1521 Of Sep. 20, 1960, U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 222 (Oct. 1, 1960), p. 1709. An-Nahar, Sep. 23, 1960, p. 1 & 8.

Executive system was much complicated by the existence of three ministries, the minister with dual function was loosing his effectiveness while moving to and fro between the two Regions. Moreover, frictions between the Central and the Regional Ministers were frequent. Add to this the feeling of resentment which the Syrians felt for not enjoying a participation in government, as they often declared after secession. Nasser rejected such allegation and declared during the Unity Talks that the Executive Council had complete freedom of action.⁸¹

The failure of the Executive Council was openly admitted when on August 16, 1961 a single Cabinet was announced to govern both Regions. At that time, the various revolutionary steps -- land reform, National Union, the July laws, and other developments projects -- were already launched, and it was felt by the United Arab Republic authorities that a single Cabinet was necessary in order to strengthen the Union, to delimit the responsibilities in the execution of State activities, and to provide the establishments of the public sector with full capacities so as to enable them to assume their important role within the framework of the new system.⁸²

⁸¹Unity Talks. . ., 2d phase, 5th meeting, p. 112; 1st meeting, p. 13; and 2d phase, 1st meeting, p. 61.

⁸²These were the official reasons given by the U.A.R. officials for the reorganization of government and as reproduced by Anabtawi, Arab Unity in Terms. . ., p. 180.

As announced by Presidential Decrees Nos. 1315, 1316, and 1317 of August 16, 1961, the government was formed of a single Cabinet.⁸³ The members of the new Cabinet included the following:

Dr. Nour ed-Din Tarraf: Public Health (Egyptian)
Ahmed Husni: Minister of State (Egyptian)
Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi: Foreign Affairs (Egyptian)
Ahmed 'Abdo Sharabassi: Public Works (Egyptian)
Dr. 'Abdel-Muneim Kaissouni: Economy and Finance (Egyptian)
Fakher Kayyali: Minister of State (Syrian)
Dr. Kamal Ramzi Stino: Supply (Egyptian)
Dr. Aziz Sidqi: Industry (Egyptian)
Dr. Mustafa Khalil Kamel Mustafa: Communications (Egyptian)

Sayed Marei: Agriculture and Land Reform (Egyptian)
'Ali Sabri: Minister of State for Presidential Affairs (Egyptian)
Ahmed al-Hajj Younes: Minister of State for Agriculture
and Land Reform (Syrian)
Hassan 'Abbas Zaki: Economy and Finance (Egyptian)
Dr. Shawkat al-Qanawati: Public Health (Syrian)
Kamal ed-Din Mahmoud Rif'at: Minister of State and Labour
(Egyptian)
Nuhad al-Qassem: Justice (Syrian)

To'mat al-'Awdatallah: Housing and Public Services (Syrian)
Amjad al-Tarabulsi: Higher Education (Syrian)
Tharwat 'Okasha: Culture and National Guidance (Egyptian)
'Abbas Radwan: Interior (Egyptian)
Moussa 'Arafat: Aswan High Dam (Egyptian)
Dr. Ahmed Muhammed al-Mahrouq: Minister of State for Land
Reform (Egyptian)
Ahmed 'Abdallah Tu'aymi: Religious Foundations (Egyptian)
Ahmed Huneidi: Land Reform (Syrian)

Akram Deiri: Economy and Finance (Syrian)
Jado 'Izzeddin: Local Administration (Syrian)
Jamal as-Soufi: Supply (Syrian)
Thabet al-'Ariss: Social Affairs (Syrian)

⁸³U.A.R., O.G., 1961, No. 188 (August 19, 1961), p. 1172-1173. Keessing's, . . ., Vol. XIII (1961-1962), p. 18295. An-Nahar, August 18, and 26, 1961. The Times (London), Sep. 28, 1961, p. 13. New York Times, August 20, 1961, p. 14.

Youssef Muzahem: Religious Foundations (Syrian)
Dr. Muhammed 'Abdel-Qāder Hatem: Minister of State for
Information (Egyptian)
'Abdel-Muhsen Abu-n-Nour: Local Administration (Egyptian)
Farid Zeineddin: Minister of State (Syrian)
Ahmed 'Ali Farag: Minister of State for Planning (Egyptian)
Muhammed Youssef: Education (Egyptian)
Salah ed-Din Hadayat: Scientific Research (Egyptian)

Three Deputy Ministers:

Hussein Zulfiqar Sabri: Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs
(Egyptian)
Muhammed 'Ali Hafez: Deputy-Minister of Education (Egyptian)
Abdel-Wahab al-Bushry: Deputy-Minister of War (Egyptian)

Seven Vice-Presidents were appointed: Boghdadi (Egyptian),
'Amer (Egyptian), Kahala (Syrian), Mohieddin (Egyptian), Shafe'i
(Egyptian), Hussein (Egyptian), and Sarraj (Syrian).

The new Government was to have its seat in Damascus from
February to May of each year. It was also expected that the
eleven Syrian governors for local administration would be
appointed soon after the formation of the Cabinet.

The new Cabinet included all former members of the
Executive Council for the Syrian Region except three (Sawaf,
Samman, and 'Alem). So the reorganization was not directed
against the members of the Executive Council in the Syrian
Region, but was rather a new attempt to strengthen the bases
of government. There is no doubt that one cabinet is more
efficient than three functioning within a unitary state. Yet
the new Cabinet had its own shortcomings -- some lying within
it, others outside it. The Cabinet was a departure from the
Provisional Constitution and of the seventeen-point programme,

a fact which rendered the Cabinet more vulnerable to attacks. A permanent constitution should have been drawn, before the August Cabinet, which would have legalized the fusion of the Regional Cabinets into one. Next, the unified Cabinet divided up the responsibility of one ministry among more than one minister. This made the Government, technically, unpractical. It had also inherited from the previous Cabinets in the Syrian Region one of their shortcomings, namely the placing of "apparent loyalty before efficiency"⁸⁴ an attitude which resulted in the inclusion of some opportunists and in the appointment of ex-Army officers in the key posts of the executive departments. Related to that latter point is Nasser's criticism of the Union Cabinets which he described as having been "a bunch of contradictions."⁸⁵ This was an inescapable reality which the United Arab Republic authorities had to face. The majority of the Syrians were committed to one party or another: even after the dissolution of political parties and the freezing of any political activity, Syrian party affiliates were unable to renounce their past allegiance. What rendered any solution practically impossible was the suspicion developed by the Syrians towards any Egyptian in the Northern Region: if

⁸⁴Anabtawi, Arab Unity in Terms. . . ., p. 217.

⁸⁵Unity Talks. . . ., 2d phase, 1st meeting, p. 55.

of high rank, he became in their eyes, "a High Commissionaire", if of lesser rank, he was a competitor against them in their livings. The problem at hand was too complex to find a ready made solution.

D. The National Union as Mass Organization

1. The dissolution of Political Parties

One of the important problems that faced the authorities of the United Arab Republic was the political organization of the popular forces.

This was not an easy endeavour. Its tasks were three-fold: first, the overcoming of the then existing factionalism in Syria; second, the unification of public opinion in both Regions around an acceptable political organization; and third, the formation of such an organization and making it a real representative of the people.

Factionalism appeared as a major obstacle to the leaders of the United Arab Republic, so they agreed, even before the proclamation of the Union, that there would be no political parties in the new Republic. This was one of the main conditions which Nasser stipulated for participation in the Union.

Nasser distrusted all Arab political parties.⁸⁶ This feeling was due to his own experience with the political parties of pre-revolutionary Egypt⁸⁷ and with the Ba'th since 1958. He condemned the Egyptian parties for having been a "creation of imperialism"⁸⁸ and for representing the interests of big landowners.⁸⁹ Nasser did not think more highly of the Syrian political parties which were according to him, either "stained" or "reactionaries", though he did recognize that there were in Syria few "nationalist" parties.⁹⁰ Nasser said

⁸⁶Nasser's interview granted to Western German Press Representatives on Jan. 26, 1960, Speeches, January-March 1960. . ., p. 132.

⁸⁷At-Tariq lil-Dimocratiyat: al-Lajnat at-Tahdiriyat lil-Mu'tamar al-Watani lil-qiwa al-Sha'biyat (Cairo: Ad-Dar al-Qawmiyat lit-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr /1962/), p. 272, Cited hereafter as al-Lajnat at-Tahdiriyat. . . See Fayez A. Sayegh, "The theoretical Structure of Nasser's Socialism," ed. Albert Hourani, St. Antony's Papers, No. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 9-55. (Reference is made in this thesis to the typescript, pp. 110-122). As-Sahafat, Nov. 14, 1959, p. 2, a reproduction of Nasser's interview to Link (Indian).

⁸⁸Nasser's press conference in Athens, June 9, 1960, Speeches, April-June, 1960. . ., p. 133. Nasser's speech March 3, 1959, Speeches 1959. . ., p. 103.

⁸⁹Nasser's speech at the General Congress of the National Union on July 9, 1960, Speeches, July-September, 1960. . ., p. 13.

⁹⁰Unity Talks. . ., 2d phase, 2d meeting, p. 84.

once that if he were to allow parties to operate, three categories would be formed: one, made of reactionaries and feudalists, will advocate alliance with the West; a second, formed mainly of Communists, will turn to the Soviet Union; and a third which will advocate non-alignment and positive neutralism. Such situation would inevitably engender dissensions and civil war⁹¹ and would profit only the colonialists and imperialists.⁹² According to Nasser, exploitation cannot disappear and a sound democracy cannot be established unless the political parties are abolished.⁹³ For Nasser, democracy is not a matter of "sheer external form":⁹⁴ true democracy combines both political and social democracy. Nasser went even further and said that social democracy is a condition of political democracy, and that only when the former is established can equality and justice prevail among citizens and

⁹¹Interview granted to the Columbia Broadcasting System of New York, April 7, 1958, Speeches, 1958 . . ., pp. 378-88. Interview to the Columbia Broadcasting System and Television, August 28, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 219.

⁹²Nasser's speech in Syria, March 5, 1958, Speeches, 1958. . ., p. 83. His speech at the opening of the Preparatory Committee of the National Congress for Popular Powers on Nov. 25, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 396.

⁹³Speech, Feb. 17, 1960, Speeches, January-March, 1960. . .

⁹⁴Interview granted to Hamburg T.V. on August 13, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 188.

political democracy operate.⁹⁵ So the building of a "social democracy" became the primary aim of Nasser, and the dissolution of the parties appeared to him as the first step towards the achievement of that aim.⁹⁶

The dissolution of the Syrian political parties was consented to by the Syrian delegation which went to Cairo in January 1958. It seems indeed that it was more than a matter of acceptance. -- as was disclosed during the Unity Talks of 1963, where it was reported that the Ba'th requested the dissolution of political parties due to their fear of the growing influence of the Communists.⁹⁷

In terms of Syria's post-War history, the decree of March 12, 1958, which announced the dissolution of the Syrian parties, was not the first of its nature. In 1952, Shishakli issued a decree abolishing parties and all other political organizations in Syria. It goes without saying that the aims and the circumstances surrounding the two decrees vary widely.

The Presidential Decree No. 2 of March 12, 1958 stipulated the dissolution of all political parties and all other political

⁹⁵Speeches, 1959. . ., speeches of Feb. 21, p. 27; Feb. 23, p. 50; Feb. 27, pp. 78-69; Feb. 28, pp. 87-88; July 22, p. 270; and Nov. 26, p. 468. Speech, July 26, 1962, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press-Interviews, 1962, Information Department Cairo, U.A.R., 1962), pp. 170-71. Cited hereafter as Speeches, 1962. . .

⁹⁶Nasser's speech, Feb. 21, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 37. Speech, Feb. 15 and Feb. 24, 1950, Speeches 1960. . .

⁹⁷Unity Talks. . ., 2d phase, 2d meeting, pp. 72-73; 3rd phase, 1st meeting, p. 135.

organizations in the Syrian Region and forbade the formation of new ones.⁹⁸ It also prohibited the former members of dissolved parties to carry out any political activity. The funds and any other assets of the parties were to be given to the National Union. Any infraction to that decree was liable to three years of imprisonment and/or to a fine of L.S. 15,00.

All the political parties proclaimed their dissolution on February 23, 1958, except the Communists and the Syrian Social National Party which were operating underground and hence did not follow the others. However, the dissolution did not hit equally all the parties because most of them had become, by 1957, disorganized. Those whom the measure affected most were the Ba'th and the Communists, these latter, though not officially recognized as a party, saw, nevertheless, their bureaus requisitioned. But as the Ba'th was the great partner in government during the first two years of the Union, the Communist Party was the great loser.

The dissolution of parties was not welcomed by the parties' leaders, but the Communists alone proclaimed openly their dissent at that time. Khaled Bakdash left Syria on February 4, 1958 and declared after the March Decree that his Party would never accept to dissolve itself and bow to such

⁹⁸U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 1, bis (March 13, 1958), p. 2. The Arab World, March 13, 1958, p. 2. An-Nahar, March 13, 1958, p. 1.

an "undemocratic measure."⁹⁹ After Secession, however, the dissolution of parties was criticized by other Syrian leaders.

A secessionist¹⁰⁰ spokesman, Dr. Ma'moun al-Kuzbari, declared that the dissolution of parties was a deliberate act "to create a vacuum in Syria."¹⁰¹ In a defense of the multiparty system, Haurani stated that one must differentiate between "the national Right and the agent . . . and the national Left and the agent," because, he added, "national political parties are necessary to prevent the dictatorial rule."¹⁰² 'Aflak declared that he was surprised when Nasser made the dissolution of the Syrian parties a condition for his participation in the Union;¹⁰³ nevertheless he said, the Ba'th Party accepted to dissolve itself so as not to stand as an obstacle to the Union.¹⁰⁴ Bitar, however, adds the explanation that the Ba'thists were expecting the formation of a new party, where the Ba'th's "experience" would be of better use than that of any other.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹Bakdash's declaration reproduced in Cahiers de l'Orient. . ., Vol. XXXVII, chronique (Nov. 9, 1958), p. 190.

¹⁰⁰The term "secessionist" is used in this essay to designate all those who opposed Nasser's regime in Syria excluding the Ba'th and the Communists who, for convenience, are treated separately.

¹⁰¹Dr. M. Kouzbari's conference, "The Party-system one Way to Democracy," Al-Ayyam (syrian daily), Dec. 13, 1962.

¹⁰²An-Nasr (Syrian daily), Jan. 7, 1963.

¹⁰³'Aflak, Ma'rakat al-Masir. . ., p. 195. In a leaflet published on August 16, 1962, the Ba'th stated that the liberty of political parties is a condition to democracy.

The dissolution of parties was unsuccessful not only because it was unacceptable to the Syrian parties but also because the dissolution could not be effective as long as the strong parties in Syria had extensions outside Syria, through which they could find expression. Moreover, it became obvious that the absence of parties had created a political vacuum which the National Union could not fill, a fact admitted later by all concerned.¹⁰⁶ During the Unity Talks, Nasser said that the dissolution of parties should have exempted the nationalist parties which could have formed a national front.¹⁰⁷ Nasser said he was against the "reactionary parties" and not the nationalist ones, which could be allowed to operate in the future.¹⁰⁸ This concept was embodied in the Union Accord of April 1963, where it was provided that all unionist, socialist, and democratic forces of each state of the

¹⁰⁴Nidal al-Ba'th. . ., Vol. I: Min Ma'rakat al-Istiqlal. . ., p. 13.

¹⁰⁵Unity Talks. . ., 2d meeting, 2d phase, p. 73.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 1st meeting (Nasser), p. 13; 2d phase, 2d meeting, (Bitar), p. 73. Al-Ayyam, Nov. 27, 1962, and Dec. 13, 1962.

¹⁰⁷Unity Talks. . ., 2d phase; 1st meeting, p. 54, and, 5th meeting, pp. 119-20.

¹⁰⁸al-Lajnat at-Tahdiriyat. . ., p. 280. Interview granted to Columbia Broadcasting System of New York, April 7, 1958, Speeches, 1958. . ., pp. 379-88.

proposed Federation were to form a political front.¹⁰⁹ In each of the component States, the front was to be bound by the decisions of the federal leadership. But later experience demonstrated that even this new system could not have succeeded in Syria -- since the Tripartite Union of 1963 crumbled in Iraq, and especially in Syria, over disagreement between the Ba'th and the Arab Nationalists on the number of representatives which each was to have in the "political front" (or, to call the things by their names, in the government).

What can finally be said about the dissolution of the parties is that the Syrian parties never recovered since then. None of the successive cabinets that came after the break-up of the Union, allowed the parties to operate as they had in pre-Union Years. Instead, there was a general agreement on the need for a law limiting the number of parties and stipulating certain requirements to the formation of parties.¹¹⁰ But the parties were not yet organized when the coup d'état of March 8, 1963 dispersed them, never to return while the Ba'th party ruled Syria (as it currently does).

¹⁰⁹Declaration of the Union Accord. . ., chap. Political Constituents.

¹¹⁰An-Nasr, Dec. 23, 1962; Dec. 24, 1962; Dec. 27, 1962; Jan. 7, 1962.

2. The Regulation of the Press

Having abolished political parties, the next difficulty to be overcome in order to pool the popular forces, was the organization of the press in both Regions.

Before the Union, there were around a hundred daily and weekly newspapers in Syria. The reason for that great number, as given by the Syrian Directorate of Information in 1957, was Syrian's individualism and the fact that the press in Syria was generally owned and managed by individuals rather than by parties or big business firms.¹¹¹ Individualism prompted every political personage to seek a platform to express himself. It could be added that Syrian newspapers were business ventures, much in the same way as in democratic countries of the Western type. This situation could not be tolerated after the Union, especially after the dissolution of the parties.

The organization of the press was viewed by Nasser as an imperative duty and a "logical" measure, for the press, being the platform of public opinion, could no longer be left in the hands of "capitalists, exploiters or political parties."¹¹² As stated later by Nasser, the purpose of the press is to have a

¹¹¹Syria, 1957. . . , p. 150.

¹¹²Press Conference in Athens, June 9, 1960, Speeches, April-June, 1960. . . , p. 133.

"cultural mission,"¹¹³ so Nasser could not in any case allow the Syrian papers to flourish in their pre-Union licentiousness. Moreover, since the National Union was to serve as a "popular construction" where each can perform "his political work,"¹¹⁴ it was felt by the United Arab Republic authorities that the presence of political parties and the unlimited freedom of the press, were not only unnecessary but also harmful for national development.

The first measure dealing with the press in the Northern Region aimed at reducing the number of newspapers. This was accomplished by Decree No. 195 of November 23, 1958, which gave the owners of newspapers the right of giving up their publications in exchange for an indemnity.¹¹⁵ But once the ownership of a journal was renounced, the owners had no right to take it back or to start any other publication whether directly or indirectly. The aim behind this decree was to fuse two or more newspapers into one. Vice-President 'Abdel-Latif Boghdadi was sent to the Northern Region to ensure the success of that decision. It was reported, on December 11, 1958, that following the promulgation of Decree No. 195 of 1958 only six dailies were left in the Northern Region:

¹¹³Speech, Dec. 18, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 330.

¹¹⁴Nasser's speech, July 9, 1960, Speeches, July-September, 1960. . ., p. 24.

¹¹⁵U.A.R., O.G., 1958, No. 37, special issue (Nov. 24, 1958), pp. 1-2.

three in Damascus, one in Homs, one in Aleppo, and one in Latakia.¹¹⁶

Decree No. 195 of 1958 was followed by a more far-reaching one, No. 156 of May 24, 1960, which stipulated that no newspaper in the United Arab Republic whether new or already in existence could be published without a licence issued by the National Union.¹¹⁷ Only scientific and syndicalist publications, as well as those of public institutions, were exempted from that measure. Similarly, a licence was required for anyone who worked or wished to work in journalism. The same decree nationalized the four leading Egyptian Publishing Houses: Dar al-Ahram, Dar Akhbar al-Yom, Dar Rose al-Youssef, and Dar al-Hilal. All daily and weekly publications in Egypt (except those published by the State) were published by these four Houses. By virtue of this decree, the ownership of these Publishing Houses was transferred to the National Union,¹¹⁸ this latter being the representative of the people. It was only logical stated the Explanatory Note attached to Decree No. 156 of 1960, that the press belongs to the nation.¹¹⁹ As the press is

¹¹⁶Cahiers de l'Orient. . ., Vol. XXXVII, Chronique (Sep. 16, 1958), p. 188.

¹¹⁷U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 118 (May 24, 1960), p. 832. The Arab World, May 25, 1960; p. 5. Cahiers de l'Orient. . . Vol. XLIII, Chronique et documents (May 24, 1960), p. 200.

¹¹⁸U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 126, (June 2, 1960), p. 906. La R.A.U. Aujourd'hui, L'Agence d'Information du Moyen-Orient (M.E.N.) (Le Caire: Dar al-Kawmiya, 1963), p. 13.

¹¹⁹Yearbook 1961, p. 1027.

the basic means of orientation, continued the same Note, it has become part of the popular Organization and is not to differ in that respect from the National Assembly or the General Congress of the National Union (the highest authority in the United Arab Republic). So the placing of the press under the direction of the National Union was viewed by the United Arab Republic authorities as a necessary step towards the building of a state based on the people's sovereignty. This belief, however, was not shared by the Secessionist who viewed the organization of the press as a "narrow censorship" and an "outcome of the police regime."¹²⁰

With the establishment of the National Union, it was hoped by the United Arab Republic policy-makers that citizens would participate effectively in that new popular organism which was to replace the political parties, to orient the press which has become the people's property, and to build up the democratic society. But the National Union could not become that popular organism.

We will examine below what was the National Union, how it functioned, and why it failed.

¹²⁰An-Nasr, Nov. 25, 1962.

3. The National Union

a) Nature

It is easier to define what the National Union was not, and what it was not to do, than to define what it was or to enumerate its various functions. This stems from the fact that, for Nasser, the state and the political organization are one and the same thing when the political organization is the real representative of the people.¹²¹ As the National Union was established to represent the whole people, it consequently meant many things to the leaders of the United Arab Republic.

Article 72 of the Provisional Constitution stipulated that the National Union was to work for the realization of national aims and the intensification of the efforts for raising a sound national structure, from the political, social, and economic viewpoints. Nasser defined it as a "democratic structure" established by the people,¹²² and a "framework" to maintain the unity of ranks of all United Arab Republic citizens.¹²³

Since the National Union was the outcome of the failure of political parties,¹²⁴ it was to avoid the defects of such parties¹²⁵

¹²¹Nasser's speech, Nov. 4, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . . . p.318. Unity Talks. . . . 2d phase, 4th meeting (Nasser's statement), p.102.

¹²²Speech, Feb. 15, 1960, Speeches, January-March, 1960. . . . p. 25.

¹²³Nasser's speech, July 9, 1960, Speeches, July-September, 1960, p. 24. Speech, Jan. 10, 1960, Speeches, January-March, 1960. . . . p. 13. Speech, June 24, 1960, Speeches, April-June, 1960. . . . p.154.

but at the same time to fill the vacuum left by the liquidation of the parties.¹²⁶ Any political activity was to be permitted only inside the National Union.¹²⁷ Yet the National Union, as envisaged by Nasser, was not a party in which other parties will be fused, because at 'that stage of revolution," Nasser was against both the multiparty system and the one-party system.¹²⁸ The National Union was to be placed above factions and above government as well.¹²⁹ But this, Nasser reminds us, did not mean uniformity of opinion: the National Union was a "national system" where every citizen was to elect freely his representatives.¹³⁰ These included farmers, workers, estate owners, factory owners, and intellectuals all of whom were to co-operate within the National Union and try to solve their problems by peaceful means and through free expression.¹³¹ Free expression is allowed as long as it does not

¹²⁴Yearbook 1960, p. 53.

¹²⁵Nasser's speech, August 10, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 418. Speech, May 9, 1960, Speeches, 1960. . ., p. 120.

¹²⁶Nasser's interview granted to Dana Adams Shmidt and the correspondents of the New York Times, Nov. 3, 1959, Speeches 1959. . ., p. 608.

¹²⁷Speech, Dec. 23, 1954, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 512.

¹²⁸Speech, Nov. 26, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 469. Speech, Feb. 23, 1960, Speeches, 1960. . .

¹²⁹Yearbook 1959, p. 80.

¹³⁰Nasser's interview granted to Karanjia (India) April 17, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 547.

lead to an "organized opposition" the aim of which is to oppose everything.¹³²

The National Union had great responsibilities. It had to find out the problems of society, and was entitled to solve any problem it could solve.¹³³ It was to fight illiteracy, to establish co-operative committees and clubs, to build new houses in co-operation with the population, to build infirmaries, to control bilharzia, to increase the income of the village by establishing rural industries, to create social security funds in the village, and to construct roads. It had also to establish co-operative societies which would sell consumers' goods for a small commission.¹³⁴ Besides all this, the National Union was to receive the complaints of the citizens.¹³⁵ If local problems could not be solved by the National Union representatives, they were to be submitted to the government. Interaction between the members of the National Union, the people at large, and the

¹³¹Nasser's speech at the opening of the Preparatory Committee of the National Congress for the Popular Powers on Nov. 25, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 383.

¹³²Nasser's interview granted to Dr. Hans Fleig of Humburg T.V., August 13, 1961, Speeches, 1961. . ., p. 189.

¹³³Speech, July 28, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 330.
Interview to M.H. Haykal (Al-Ahram), July 2, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . .
p. 579. Speech Oct. 18, 1960, Speeches, Oct.-December, 1960. . .,
p. 87.

¹³⁴Nasser's speech, August 8, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p.405.

¹³⁵Nasser's speech, May, 9, 1960, Speeches, April-June 1960. . .,
p. 120.

government was a continuous process. The National Union was to formulate the general policy according to the needs of the people, the government was to endorse it, while the National Union local committees were to execute that policy.¹³⁶

In short, the National Union was -- according to Nasser -- a means to the building and safeguarding of the "socialist, democratic, and co-operative society."¹³⁷ It was the "method -- which seemed to the United Arab Republic Legislator -- dictated by the national and external conditions for the achievement of the Revolution," the framework within which this Revolution was to be carried on in order to preserve the nation's internal security and independence.¹³⁸

b) Structure and Function

The National Union was mentioned for the first time in the Egyptian Constitution of 1956, where it was envisaged in Article 192. Established on November 27, 1957, the National Union was the successor of the Liberation Rally, formed in Egypt on January 22, 1953 after the dissolution of the Egyptian political parties.¹³⁹

¹³⁶Yearbook 1960, p. 56.

¹³⁷Speeches, 1959. . . . Speech, July 22, 1959, p. 275; and speech, July 28, 1959, p. 332.

¹³⁸Ibid., interview granted to M.H. Haykal, July 2, 1959, p. 567.

¹³⁹For the Statute of the Liberation Rally and that of the National Union of 1957, see Khalil, The Arab States. . . . Vol. I; Constitutional. . . . pp. 688-90, and pp. 690-97 respectively.

After the fusion of Syria and Egypt, the general concept of the National Union as a mass organization was adopted with some modifications to meet the needs of the new bi-regional State. The National Union was organized on two levels: a regional one, where each Region had its own branch of the National Union for its own problems -- this level was subdivided into other levels --; and a national level, where both branches met annually in a General Congress in which the problems of the whole nation were considered.

The procedure of admission to membership in the National Union was also modified. It did not need the approval of a special committee as was the case in 1957. Every citizen of the United Arab Republic, from sixteen years of age onwards, was a member of the National Union and hence had the right, or rather the duty -- a fine of L.L. 10 was exacted from any male citizen in age of voting who, without a previous excuse, refused to vote¹⁴⁰ to elect his representatives in the National Union Committee of his village or town-section; while any citizen of good conduct was able to become an active member in the sub-committee of his

¹⁴⁰ Presidential Decree No. 935 (article 26) of May 16, 1959, U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 99 (May 16, 1959), p. 4.

village or district after approval by the executive committee of the unit concerned.¹⁴¹

Presidential Decree No. 935 of May 16, 1959, as amended by Decree No. 1050 of June 11, 1959,¹⁴² organized the structure of the National Union in the Egyptian Region. This organization was applied in the Syrian Region later.

The organization of the National Union in the Northern Region started in January 1959 when Anwar as-Sadat, the Secretary General of the National Union of the Egyptian Region, was sent to the Northern Region for consultations towards the formation of the National Union. It was not till November of the same year that 'Abdel-Hakim 'Amer, who was appointed Controller General of the National Union in the Northern Region on October 21, 1959 issued Decree No. 19 of November 14, 1959 for organizing the National Union in that Region. The Decree was taken on basis of

¹⁴¹National Union of the United Arab Republic, Structure and Function, Information Department (Cairo: S.O.P. Press, 1960), p. 8 (Hereafter referred to as National Union. . .). Yearbook 1960, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴²U.A.R., O.G., 1959, special issue (May 16, 1959), pp. 2-6. U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 135 (July 1, 1959), p. 3. Yearbook 1960, pp. 56-88. Georges Vaucher, Gamal Abdel-Nasser et Son Equipe, Vol. II; L'édification de la République Arabe Unie (Paris; René Julliard, 1960), pp. 320-68: a brief description of the National Union at action in some Egyptian villages. Vaucher reports (p. 322) that Z. Mohieddin (the then Minister of Interior) told him that the idea of a National Union was first used by Salazar of Portugal. Jean Tusan, "L'Union Nationale de la République Arabe Unie," Orient (Paris), No. 20 (4e trimestre, 1961), pp. 181-94.

Decrees Nos. 935 and 1050 of 1959.¹⁴³

The National Union looked like a pyramid: starting from the village, at the base, and rising, through the markaz (also called zone in the Syrian Region), on the muhafazat, to the General Secretariat, the highest regional unit. The National Union functioned in the Regions and throughout the Republic through congresses (also called conferences). The muhafazat's congress represented all units within the muhafazat; the Regional Congress represented all muhafazats, and finally, at the top of the national pyramid, the General Congress represented the nation and was headed by the President of the Republic.

The basic unit of the National Union was the committee, which existed at all levels of the National Union.

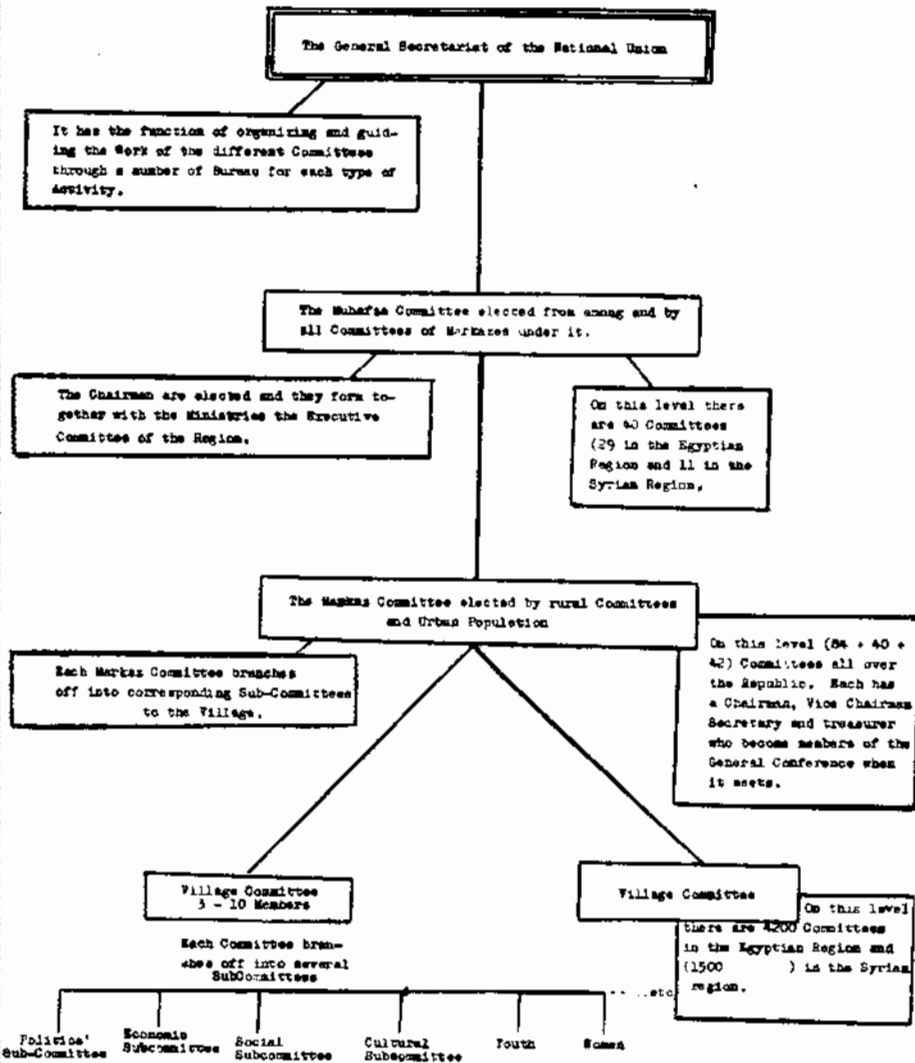
The following Charts¹⁴⁴ will show the structure of the National Union. (In the second Chart, the word conference is substituted in the text by that of congress.)

The structure of the National Union of the Northern Union consisted of three levels. The first level comprised: (1) the village and the area; (2) the markaz; (3) the muhafazat;

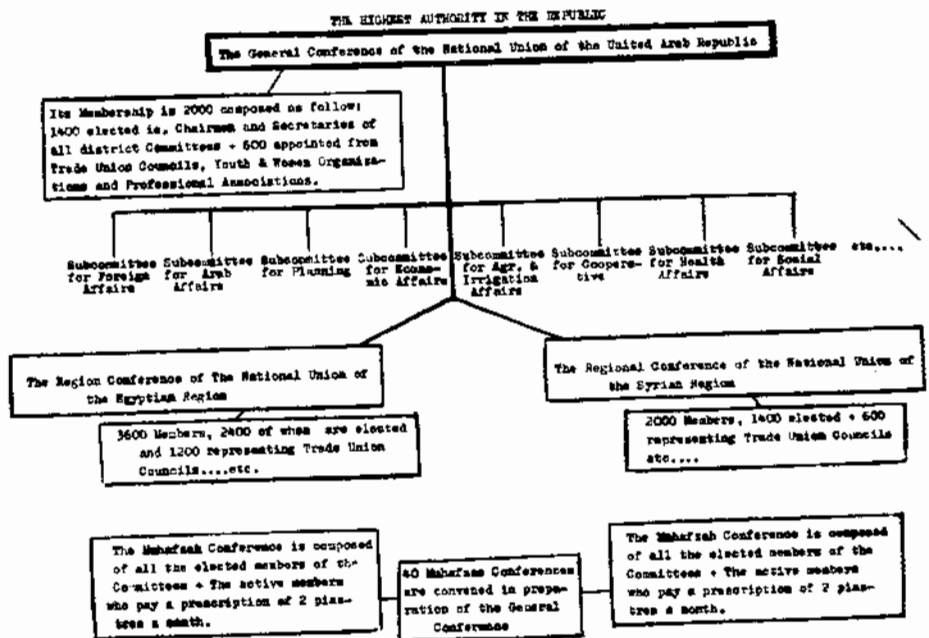
¹⁴³U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 257 (Nov. 24, 1959), p. 532. Al-Ahram, Nov. 15, 1959, pp. 1, 3. Al-Ahram, Nov. 16, 1959, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴National Union. . . , pp. 15-16 respectively.

A CHART SHOWING THE DIFFERENT FORMATIONS OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE NATIONAL UNION



**A CHART SHOWING THE DIFFERENT CONFERENCES
OF THE NATIONAL UNION**



(4) the General Secretariat. The second level comprised the whole Region. The third level, the national level, covered the whole Republic. We will examine in the sequel each level separately.

The First level:

(1) The village and the area.-- Each of these had its own executive committee, a bureau, sub-committees, and a general committee.

(a) The executive committee.-- It consisted of directly elected members, not exceeding ten in the village nor thirty in the area. These members joined together with the urban population to elect the executive committee of the markaz, thus creating close contacts between the lower units and the markaz. The executive committee represented the unit for which it stood. It expressed the opinion and interests of the citizens of that unit in local and national affairs. The problems of the unit were studied by the members of the executive committee in collaboration with the citizens of the concerned unit. The proposals of the executive committee were first to be approved by the general committee of the unit and could then be submitted either to the local authorities or to the Regional Government, namely the Executive Council. This was made possible by pre-established points of contact between the National Union and the various governmental bodies. The first important

contact was through the General Congress (which will be discussed in another place) the resolutions of which were to be passed by the National Assembly.¹⁴⁵ The second was the fact that some members of the National Union were to be appointed members of the National Assembly also.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, members of the National Union committees and bureaus were to be elected to the local councils under the new local administration, which started operating in the Southern Region during March, 1960 and in the Northern Region on September 14, 1961.¹⁴⁷ We have also to remember that the President of the National Union was the President of the Republic, and that its Supervisor was Vice-President and Minister. Thus interaction between the National Union and the government was ~~insured~~ and continuous. The committee, not only at the lower echelons but at all levels, was expected to be very active. It had to meet every fortnight -- however, members of the executive committee were not paid --. The executive committee was to execute and supervise the general policy of the National Union in its unit, to explain to the people the policy of the National Union, and to initiate them in self-government.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵The Arab World Affairs (Cairo), Vol. II, No.3, special issue (July 21, 1960), p. 4.

¹⁴⁶Nasser's speech, May 9, 1960, Speeches, April-June 1960 . . ., p. 117.

¹⁴⁷See Chap. ii, nn. 22,23. U.A.R., O.G., 1961, no. 223 (Sep. 30, 1961), p. 1436. Nasser's speech of Dec. 23, 1960, Speeches, October-December, 1960 . . ., p. 149. Al-Ahram,

(b) The bureau.-- The executive committee of the village elected from among its members a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. The bureau of the area consisted of a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer.

The bureau was responsible for the daily functions of the executive committee even when this latter was not in session.

(c) Sub-committees.-- Also called activity committees, they were formed to implement the social, cultural, and co-operative programmes of the National Union as outlined by the executive committee. The sub-committees were made up of one or two members of the executive committee and of other active members of the National Union who were chosen by the executive committee. In order to make the units of the National Union quite representative, the sub-committees included also members chosen from among trade-unions and public and private institutions.

Sub-committees varied in number and in nature according to the needs of villages and the area.

In the village there were the following subcommittees: a sub-committee for co-operation, agriculture, and industries;

Nov. 14, 1959, p. 1. Decree No. 124 of 1960 provided that the elections of the members of the local councils on their three levels -- Muhafazat, markaz, village -- were to be partly from among members of the executive committee of the National Union. 'Abdel-Qader Hatem et al., 'Ashr Sanawat Majidat (Cairo: ad-Dar al-Qawmiyat lit-Tiba'at wa-n-Nashr (1963)), pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁸Yearbook 1960, pp. 80-81.

a sub-committee for youth, culture, and education; a sub-committee for social services and rehabilitation; a sub-committee for health, public services, and utilities; a sub-committee for women's activities; and a sub-committee for local administration, complaints, and suggestions.

Areas were subdivided into sub-areas, and had, besides the above mentioned sub-committees, sub-committees for work and workers, and sub-committees for economic affairs. In addition to their specific functions, the sub-committees were to undertake national guidance in order to spread culture, and also to explain the aims of the National Union and try to consolidate the role of the United Arab Republic on the international scene as a promoter of positive neutralism and of peaceful co-existence.¹⁴⁹

(d) The general committee.-- In the village, it consisted of all members of the sub-committees together with the members of the executive committee. In areas, however, the general committee was made of the members of the executive committee plus three members of each sub-committee, chosen by the executive committee. The general committee was to coordinate the efforts of the sub-committees and to study the problems submitted to it by the executive committee and the

¹⁴⁹National Union. . ., p. 22

sub-committees for its approval before they were sent to the local authorities or to the Regional Government. The general committee could discuss any local or national question and suggest ways for reforms. It was entitled to carry out any projects within its jurisdiction as a local committee and to send its recommendations to the upper levels of the National Union.

(2) The markaz.-- It is the administrative center of a number of villages. Its capital, called bandar, has its own executive committee; bureau, sub-committees, and a general committee. As in the previous units, the markaz also possessed an executive committee, a bureau, sub-committees, and a general committee.

(a) The executive committee.--¹⁵⁰

The executive committee consisted of the secretaries of the executive committees in the villages together with delegates elected by the executive committee of the area from its members, each delegate representing five committee members. The executive committee of the markaz included also representatives from the urban population.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 9, 11, 24.

The general functions of the markaz executive committee did not differ from that of the village, but it had the additional duty of accepting or rejecting the resignation of executive committee members in villages and areas. When the electoral units of the markaz exceeded seventy-five, the markaz could have two executive committees instead of one, to be organized as already described.

(b) The bureau.-- It comprised six members, four of whom were to be chosen from among the members of the executive committee of the markaz; the other two could be either members of the said committee or any two appointed members. Ministers could not be members of the markaz bureau.

(c) The sub-committees.-- The sub-committees of the markaz did not differ from the already mentioned sub-committees. But their activities were to extend to all villages and areas of the markaz.

(d) The general committee.-- It consisted of the members of the markaz executive committee, of the secretary and of the treasurer of every executive committee in the villages of the markaz, together with a delegate representing the executive committee of the villages within the territory of the markaz and two delegates for each five members of the executive committee in the areas of the markaz. It also included members elected by the executive committee from public

officers in the villages and areas of the markaz.

(3) The Muhafazat.-- Each muhafazat covered a certain number of markazes. The muhafazats were, for administrative purposes, grouped into mintaqats -- each mintaqat including a number of muhafazats. There were eleven muhafazats in the Northern Region. Each muhafazat had an executive committee, a bureau, sub-committees, a general committee, and a general congress.

(a) The executive committee.-- It consisted of all bureaus of the executive committees in the markaz and of the bureaus of the areas which were independent of the markaz -- some areas were, for local purposes, administratively independent of the markaz. The executive committee of the muhafazat was the highest of all elected committees of the National Union. The executive committee of the muhafazat supervised all other committees and formations of the National Union in the muhafazat and participated in all their activities.

(b) The bureau.-- It was made of a chairman, a first deputy-chairman, a second deputy-chairman, a first secretary, a second secretary, and a treasurer -- all of whom were members of the executive committee of the muhafazat. The chairmen of the bureaus of all muhafazats participated in the Executive Committee of the National Union in the Syrian Region.

(c) Sub-committees.-- Similar to those of the markaz were set-up throughout the muhafazat.

(d) The general committee.-- It was composed of all members of the executive committee in the muhafazat and of the executive committees of all markazes and areas (independent of the markaz) within the territory of the muhafazat.

(e) The congress of the muhafazat.-- Each muhafazat had its own congress, which consisted of all the active members of the executive committees of the units -- villages, areas, markazes -- falling within the territory of the muhafazat. Each unit was entitled to prepare material for the congress. This congress was convened at the request of the executive committee of the muhafazat. The congress worked through several sub-committees corresponding to all aspects of national and international life. The resolutions of the congress usually covered matters relating to world peace, disarmament, peaceful co-existence, positive neutralism, as well as matters relating to the social, economic, and cultural life of the citizens. It was only after the congresses of all muhafazats had met that the Regional Congress could be held.

(4) The General Secretariat.-- Headed by Sarraj, the Secretariat was to organize and guide, through its bureaus, the work of the various committees.

The Second Level;

This level consisted of the Northern Region in its entirety. The regional level was made of : (a) the General Committee, (b) the Executive Committee, (c) the General Congress.

(a) The General Committee of the Syrian Region.---

Its 200 members consisted of the supervisor of the National Union in the Syrian Region; the Ministers of the Syrian Region and their deputies; the members of bureaus of the executive committees of the muhafazats; the chairmen of the executive committees of the markazes and the areas (independent of the markaz); and together with members -- whose number was not to exceed half the number of the above cited -- representing the syndicates, the public and private institutions, and who were appointed by 'Amer, the Supervisor of the National Union. This Committee was to meet at least once every four months at the request of 'Amer.

(b) The Executive Committee of the Syrian Region.---

This Committee was formed by 'Amer on December 30, 1959 and was composed of 'Amer, Sarraj, Ahmed al-Hajj Younes, To'mat al-'Awdatallah, and Amjad at-Tarabulsi.¹⁵¹ But a few days

¹⁵¹Decree No. 83 of Dec. 30, 1959, U.A.R., O.G., 1959....
No. 289, special issue (Dec. 31, 1959), p. 914.

before Secession -- on September 19, 1961 -- this Committee as well as its counterpart in the Egyptian Region were abolished by Nasser.¹⁵² Quoting Al-Akhbar (Egypt), the Arab World reported that this fusion was "a new step to consolidate the Union."¹⁵³ In fact the role of the Executive Committee was quite important. It had to help 'Amer in co-ordinating the work of the National Union bureaus of the Region, to present the candidacy of active members to the executive committees for approval, and to supervise the work of the bureaus and the committees.

(c) The General Congress of the Syrian Region.--

It was composed of 1,400 members. These included the Supervisor of the National Union ('Amer), the ministers and their deputies, the members of the executive committees of the muhafazats, and the chairmen of the executive committees of the villages, areas and markazes, while the appointed members represented syndicates, trade-unions, private and public institutions, and youth organizations. The number of the appointed members was not to exceed half the number of the elected members.

The Congress was to draw the general policy of the Region. It was to meet once a year, fifteen days before the

¹⁵²The Arab World, Sep. 20, 1961, p. 1,2.

¹⁵³The Arab World, Sep. 21, 1961, p. 5.

meeting of the General Congress of the United Arab Republic, but it could meet in extraordinary sessions as often as needed. The Supervisor of the Region was to convene any meeting of the General Congress of the Region. During the lifetime of the Union, the General Congress of the Syrian Region was held only once, between 20 and 23 June, 1960.¹⁵⁴

Shortly before Secession and after the dissolution of the two Executive Committees of the Regions, Nasser abolished the meetings of separate Congresses in the Regions.¹⁵⁵ Having fused the governmental apparatus in a new attempt to tighten the Union (as was discussed in a previous section), it was necessary to fuse the popular organization as well.

The Third Level:

At the National United Arab Republic level, the National Union was composed of: (a) the General Congress, (b) the Supreme Executive Committee, (c) the General Committee.

(a) The General Committee of the General Congress--

It was made of 250 members who were to prepare for sessions of the Congress.

¹⁵⁴Al-Ahram, June 1, 1961. For an account on the General Congress in the Northern Region see Barnamej al-Mu'tamar . . .

¹⁵⁵The Arab World, Sep. 22, 1961, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶The Arab World, Nov. 14, 1961, p. 10.

(b) The Supreme Executive Committee of the United Arab Republic.-- It was formed by a Presidential Decree No. 5 of June 5, 1960¹⁵⁶ and consisted of the following :

Gamal 'Abdel-Nasser	(Egyptian)
'Abdel-Hakim 'Amer	(Egyptian)
'Abdel-Latif al-Boghdadi	(Egyptian)
Anwar as-Sadat	(Egyptian)
Zakaria Mohieddin	(Egyptian)
Hussein al-Shafe'i	(Egyptian)
Kamal ed-Din Hussein	(Egyptian)
Nour ed-Din Tarraf	(Egyptian)
Ahmed Abdo Al-Sharabassi	(Egyptian)
'Abdel-Muneim Kaissouni	(Egyptian)
Kamal Ramzi Stino	(Egyptian)
'Ali Sabri	(Egyptian)
Kamal ed-Din Rif'at	(Egyptian)
Nour ed-Din Kahala	(Syrian)
'Abdel-Hamid as-Sarraaj	(Syrian)
To'mat al-'Awdatallah	(Syrian)
Amjad at-Tarabulsi	(Syrian)
Jamal as-Soufi	(Syrian)
Ahmed Huneidi	(Syrian)

This Committee was to promote the implementation of the Congress resolutions through the legislation and administrative channels.

(c) The General Congress of the United Arab Republic.-- It was the highest authority in the United Arab Republic "because -- said Nasser -- it represented the people"¹⁵⁷ The Congress was composed of 1,850 members, of whom 1,350 were members of the executive committees of all muhafazats of the

¹⁵⁶U.A.R., O.G., 1960, No. 139 (June 22, 1960), p. 1071

¹⁵⁷Nasser's speech, June 24, 1960, Speeches, April-June, 1960. . . . , p. 154.

United Arab Republic and 500 were appointed members.¹⁵⁸ The Congress was presided over by the President of the National Union, who was the President of the Republic. The Congress worked through committees, each committee dealing with a specific problem. There were committees dealing with a specific problem. There were committees for external affairs, Arab affairs, ideology, economic affairs, agriculture, irrigation, agrarian reform, the co-operative movement, cultural affairs, science and arts, communication, municipal services, education, health, security, public works, housing, supply and distribution, electricity, industry, social affairs, youth movement, women, and labour. The resolutions of the Congress were binding on the government, in as much as the former was the highest authority in the country, its decisions were to serve as the guiding policy of the Republic during the year following its session.

The Congress was to meet once a year at the summon of the President of the Republic. During the Union, the Congress met only once between 9-16 July 1960.¹⁵⁹

During the life-time of the National Union in the Northern Region, the elections of the local Committees, on July 8, 1959, were the only ones.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Ahram, May 15, 1960, pp. 1, 11.

¹⁵⁹ Yearbook 1961, resolutions of the General Congress, pp. 51-80. The Arab World, July 11, 1960.

Great hopes were attached to the elections of the local committees because of the important role which Nasser assigned to these Committees. He said that these were to represent the "will of the people"¹⁶⁰ and were to carry out three revolutions: the National, the Arab, and the Social.¹⁶¹

Elections were opened to all United Arab Republic citizens except members of the Judiciary, members of the Council of State, military officers, and the police, all of whom were to resign their posts if they wished to present their candidacy for the elections.¹⁶²

The elections assumed a particular significance in the Northern Region. By inviting the people to join one political organization, Nasser proved once more that he was determined to continue his fight against factionalism. The elections were the official and popular admission of the dissolution of the parties in the Northern Region. It is true that the parties had already dissolved themselves on February 23, 1958, but this was done according to a decree which had requested them so to do. It was quite different when ex-party members ran

¹⁶⁰Nasser's speech, Feb. 20, 1960.

¹⁶¹Nasser's address to the National Union General Congress conclusive session, July 11, 1960, Speeches, July-September 1960. . . . p. 29

¹⁶²Presidential Decree No. 935 of May 16, 1959, U.A.R., O.G., 1959, No. 99 (May 16, 1959), p. 2.

willingly for the elections of one national organization as did most of the Syrian ex-party members during the elections of the National Union. It was thus the first time in Syria since its independence, that elections were carried out in the name of the nation and neither in the name of a party nor in that of a "za'im" (who often replaced the party platform in Syria).

Thirty-nine thousand candidates competed for the 9,440 seats of the National Union local committees in the Syrian Region. The result of the elections made many malcontents. But none except the Communists openly questioned the elections. The Communists condemned the elections of the National Union for having been conducted under "pressure and forgery" -- even before the elections, the Communists have condemned the National Union which they viewed as a "national persecutor."¹⁶⁴

The Ba'th expressed their discontent indirectly by attacking the "strong reactionary front" which opposed their candidates, a fact which -- said they -- compelled them to withdraw most of their candidates from the elections.¹⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that As-Sahafat, the Ba'th Beirut daily, reported at that time that the percentage of the voters was

¹⁶³Al-Akhbar, June 14, 1959, pp. 1,8; June 28, 1959, p.1; and July 12, 1959, pp. 1,8.

¹⁶⁴Al-Akhbar, June 7, 1959, pp. 1,8.

¹⁶⁵M. Hamdoun (the then Minister of Agrarian Reform and the Ba'th candidate to the National Union), An-Nahar, July 8, 1959, pp. 1, 7.

95.50 and wrote about the victory of the revolutionary socialist forces,¹⁶⁶ though the Ba'th won only about a 100 out of 9,440 seats. This can be explained by the fact that the Ba'th were not expecting such development and hence were taken by surprise during the electoral campaign and during the elections themselves. Moreover the Ba'thist Ministers were all elected, and thus the Ba'th Party was not yet prepared to oppose the regime.

The Secessionists, subsequently, adopted an attitude similar to that of the Ba'th and the Communists. They had accused the United Arab Republic authorities of having allowed men of the Intelligence Bureau to win the majority of the seats.¹⁶⁷ But Nasser denied such allegations, saying that elections were open to all in order not to give ground for rumours about the "Ministry of Interior and the Police."¹⁶⁸

With such attitudes within its ranks, the National Union could not function as expected nor represent national unity.

The functioning of the National Union as a whole was compared to the working of a "huge parliament having its roots

¹⁶⁶ As-Sahafat, July 9, 1959; July 10, 1959; and July 11, 1959.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Jumhouriyat (Beirut), special supplement on Syria, Sp. 28, 1962, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ al-Lajnat at-Tahdiriyat. . ., p. 199. Speech, July 22, 1959, Speeches, 1959. . ., p. 287.

in the people and working for the people."¹⁶⁹ This was especially true of the two Congresses that were held during the Union, namely the Regional Congress and the General Congress.

At the Regional Congress of the Northern Region, the Executive Ministers exposed, in turn, the respective problems and achievements of their Ministries.¹⁷⁰ Then the delegates, who represented the National Union units of the whole Region, were divided up into committees and sub-committees to examine and discuss the problems of the Region on the light of the ministerial declarations and on the light of their own local problems and needs.¹⁷¹ Following this, the Congress adopted a number of resolutions which were later submitted to the Executive Council of the Northern Region,¹⁷² or -- as in the case of problems which could not be solved at the Regional level -- to the General Congress of the National Union.

Delegates of the National Union from all over the United Arab Republic participated in the General Congress of the United Arab Republic. As in the case of the Regional

¹⁶⁹National Union. . ., p. 13.

¹⁷⁰See Barnamej al-Mu'tamar. . .

¹⁷¹Some denied the fact that there existed any debate during the Congress, Al-Akhbar, July 2, 1960, pp. 1,2.

¹⁷²Al-Ayyam, Nov. 7, 1960.

Congress, delegates were organized into committees and sub-committees, each dealing with a particular problem.

The General Congress adopted 275 resolutions pertaining to domestic and foreign policies.¹⁷³ These resolutions looked like a charter of national action, and were submitted to the National Assembly at its first meeting on July 22, 1960.

The daily activities of the National Union were regularly reported by the local press. Members of the National Union used to discuss the problems of their own localities in the presence of the executive committees and sometimes in that of the executive ministers¹⁷⁴ and of members of the National Assembly.¹⁷⁵ The executive ministers often visited the muhafazats in order to meet the members of the National Union.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, local requests were forwarded by members of the executive committees and bureaus who were constantly in contact with the Secretary-General of the National Union (Sarraj) who was also, from September 20, 1960 to August 16, 1961, President of the Executive Council.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³Yearbook 1961, pp. 51-80.

¹⁷⁴Al-Ayyam, Dec. 2, 1960; March 6, 1961.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., Nov. 23, 1960.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., Oct. 24, 1960; Nov. 30, 1960.

¹⁷⁷L'Orient (Beirut), Sep. 5, 1961. Al-Ayyam, Sep. 4, 1961.

Special bureaus were established to receive the grievances of members of the National Union.¹⁷⁸ The requests of the National Union units varied with the needs of the units, and included demands for the building of schools, universities, and hospitals; the establishment of museums and banks; or the demand for any other economic and social project.¹⁷⁹ Such requests were sometimes enclosed in a petition addressed to the Executive Council.¹⁸⁰

Members of the National Union could protest against certain policies -- as they did when the Executive Committee of Damascus addressed a petition, through the Minister of Treasury, to the National Assembly requesting lower taxes.¹⁸¹ They could also interpellate any executive minister visiting their localities, for the reasons of the delay put in the execution of certain projects.¹⁸²

Besides their local activities, members of the National Union manifested their interest in Arab questions: it was

¹⁷⁸Al-Ayyam, Nov. 10, 1960; Jan. 4, 1961.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., Feb. 1, 1960; Dec. 18, 1960; Feb. 28, 1961; and March 29, 1961. Requests were expressed from various parts of the Northern Region: Tel-Kalakh, Tartous, Jeblet, Soueida, Dummar, Latakia, Der'a, Mazzeh, Rouqat etc... Al-Ayyam, Nov. 9, 1960; Nov. 18, 1960; Nov. 27, 1960; Dec. 1, 1960; Dec. 12, 1960; Dec. 16, 1960; April 6, 1961; April 30, 1961; June 4, 1961; July 9, 1961; Sep. 15, 1961, and these were but only instances of the requests that were flooding the National Union bureaus and committees.

¹⁸⁰Al-Ayyam, Jan. 8, 1961.

in the name of the National Union that the Syrians expressed their solidarity with the Algerian Revolution and sent money to the Algerian militants.¹⁸³

From this brief review of the activities of the National Union, it can fairly be said that the National Union was not "a façade unmoved by the masses' demands."¹⁸⁴ On the contrary, the National Union suffered from an excess of demands. This was true to such an extent that the National Union was unable to solve all the problems brought to its committees by the citizens. In fact, the National Union has placed the citizens face to face with problems and needs which the government was often unable to satisfy, hence disillusionment of the citizens. Members of the National Union manifested in some way or another their dissatisfaction. During a debate organized by the National Union Executive Committee of Damascus, one of the

¹⁸¹Al-Ayyam, Dec. 13, 1960; Dec. 25n 1960, March 3, 1961.

¹⁸²Ibid., Dec. 28, 1960. The Minister of Health was interpellated in Aleppo for the delay put in finishing up of the building of a hospital.

¹⁸³Al-Ayyam, Oct. 8, 1960; Oct. 11, 1960; Oct. 31, 1960; Dec. 19; 1960; Dec. 20; 1960; and Dec. 22, 1960.

¹⁸⁴D. Jamal al-'Utayfah, "Mafhoum wa Dawr ad-Dawlat Khilal Marahel al-Thawrat," At-Tali'at (Egyptian monthly), No. 7, special issue (July, 1965), p. 88.

debaters, Mrs. Suraya al-Hafez, questioned the utility of studying the problems and preparing projects, since whenever the government was requested to finance a project, it answered, invariably: "we have no money."¹⁸⁵

The National Union also suffered from the inefficacy of many of its executive committees. These failed to receive the complaints of the citizens and to solve their problems. Thus the citizens had to seek for a meeting either with the Secretary-General of the National Union or with the executive ministers, a situation which troubled all those concerned.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, when Secession occurred, the activities of the National Union executive committees had not yet extended to the whole region: many executive committees, bureaux, and sub-committees were still being organized. Similarly, the whole structure of the National Union was not completed until mid-September, 1961, when the Local Administration started operating in the Northern Region. And since, as we have stated, the committees of the National Union were to rely upon, and to co-operate with, the local councils in solving their problems, it cannot be said that the committees were given their full capacity before September 1961.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Ayyam, Dec. 13, 1960.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Ayyam, Dec. 2, 1960.

Next, certain acts of the National Union authorities exacerbated the feelings of many Syrians. One of such acts was related to the regulation of the press. This latter was initially to become the property of the people, but it soon came to depend of the good will of Sarraj. Besides the aforesaid considerations, the National Union has to be studied in the whole context of the Union. After Secession, the National Union was criticized as was the case with the economic, political, and social policies of Nasser. It was rejected by many Syrians as was rejected the whole of Nasser's regime in Syria. The Secessionists attacked it because, they said, it aimed at disrupting the political and syndical bodies,¹⁸⁷ and because freedom of expression was not allowed within the National Union.¹⁸⁸ President Quwatly declared on October 23, 1961 that the role of the National Union was the paving of roads, the laying of pipelines and the extension of electricity.¹⁸⁹ What can be said, in reply to President Quwatly, is that unfortunately for the Arab World, the needs of the majority are roads, pipelines, and electricity. But this could not satisfy the ever existing political tendencies in the Northern Region. In fact, though political parties were dissolved in that Region, yet partisanship did not dis-

¹⁸⁷ An-Nasr, Sep. 28, 1962.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Nov. 25, 1962.

¹⁸⁹ Quwatly's address to the Syrian nation, Munajjed, Suriyat wa Masr. . ., p. 235.

appear from the actions and reactions of former party members, a situation which was reflected within the National Union as well as outside it. The Communists rejected the National Union which they viewed as a "fascist system," "with vague objectives", and "a means of torture."¹⁹⁰ While the Ba'th could not forgive the National Union for what they termed as the "vacuum" and the "paralysis" which it had created in Syria.¹⁹¹

The National Union was unable to make itself acceptable to all existing political tendencies in the Northern Region; nor was it able to solve its own social contradictions which have resulted from the fact that erstwhile capitalists and feudalists were invited to participate, on equal footing, with peasants and workers in the building of the socialist society.

In sum the National Union was handicapped by structural shortcomings, financial problems, political differences, and by social contradictions. Thus the National Union failed to fulfil its initial aim, namely to serve as an organism where

¹⁹⁰ Al-Akhbar, April 19, 1959, p. 4; June 7, 1959; June 21, 1959; and Sep. 13, 1959.

¹⁹¹ Abdel-Karim Zouhour at the first meeting of the Unit Talks of 1963.

all its constituents elements would co-operate peacefully towards an overall community development.