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THE ARAB SUMMIT OF JANUARY 1964

Some Observations on Inter-Arab Relations

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The Arab kings and presidents have come and gone. The flags and the long stretches of bunting on important public buildings have been taken down. Some 200 foreign journalists have filed their stories and packed their bags. Cairo traffic, inhibited only slightly during the summit conference and redirected in tortuous ways during the ceremonial trips to and from the airport, has reverted to normal. The Egyptian press has put away its superlatives for the time being and carries non-summit news once again on its front page.

The Nile Hilton, in which all but a few of the 271 delegates were housed and fed, has been returned to Hilton management after a week of annexation and capacity payment by the Arab League. The inconveniences were slight: some employees of the hotel were asked to decamp (apparently for security reasons), and the not inconsiderable number of tourists whose reservations overlapped the period of the conference were told, and carefully helped, to find alternate lodging elsewhere in a tourist-packed city. For the government, which pre-empted the hotel, and the conferees, the Hilton worked out very well. When the Kasr El-Nil barracks, red and ugly, were finally razed in 1954, their location on the Nile was taken in part by the hotel, in part by the new Arab League building, and in part by the governorate and municipality building. Security arrangements for the conference were vastly simplified by this juxtaposition. A police perimeter, established around the three buildings, admitted only those with special passes. The heads of state and members of delegations were thus not required to leave the perimeter during the entire conference period and were able, in fact, to walk on a specially constructed covered bridge between their housing area in the Hilton and the red-carpeted atmosphere of the conference rooms in the Arab League building.

Journalists were provided with facilities inside the perimeter

on the first floor of the Cairo governorate building. According to veterans of similar conferences in the non-Western world, the facilities were outstanding. The only difficulty was, expectably, the paucity of reliable information from the conference rooms and the Hilton, both of which were out of bounds to journalists without a personal invitation from one of the delegations. The briefings after each session were given by competent professionals in touch with the UAR delegation and were remarkably good under the cryptic circumstances prevailing. The briefings gave some indication of the all-important pattern of visiting between heads of state and gave some direction to journalistic conjecture by suggesting some of the new inter-Arab understandings that were being, or that might be, reached during the conference. The only other official sources were the press releases after each full session, but except for the final release these were masterpieces of factual minimum.

As the conference moved toward its fifth and final day, the bits and pieces of information began to combine to form a picture of considerable accomplishment. By the end of the third day, in fact, Arab journalists had in various ways extracted from their national delegations the general outlines of the final communiqué, as well as some of the details of the several reconciliations. Some non-Arab correspondents had even been able to talk to lesser delegates outside the conference perimeter. The late evening briefing of the third day added the news that agreement had been reached on a unified military command.

The fourth day of the conference was the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. That morning Al Ahram carried a series of five pictures of President Nasser and King Saud in harmonious conversation, leaving little doubt about the direction of the "second-most-difficult" reconciliation effort. The "most difficult" was left in little doubt either—in the sense that Syria and the UAR remain clearly at odds. Despite the atmosphere of increasing good will and euphoria, the UAR succeeded in avoiding reconciliation with Amin el-Hafez and the Syrian Baath, and Syria's isolation increased as the conference progressed. On the evening of the fourth day, a few hours after breaking the day's fast, Syrian isolation was reportedly translated into intransigence at what it was hoped would be the final meeting of the conference; the meeting began at 9:50 p.m., continued unexpectedly until 4:15 the following morning, and resumed for a further two hours at 10:30 a.m. Thus it was not until 1:00 p.m. on the fifth day that the weary kings and presidents presented themselves publicly for photographers and for a hearing of the finally approved concluding statement.

Just as he met them on arrival at the airport, so President Nasser was on hand to say good-by to the kings and presidents as they severally departed. Upon arrival, the only ones to receive the presidential embrace were Ben Bella of Algeria, Arif of Iraq, and (surprisingly) Bourguiba of Tunisia; and it is a measure of the personal feelings generated during the conference that at departure time the only one who merely shook hands with the UAR president was Amin el-Hafez. It is difficult to assess this kind of euphoria, to determine the lasting qualities of the exhilaration that comes naturally when a head of state meets his peers. Do the good faith and the reconciliations persist? Because the conference represented a peak of good relations among most Arab states, the faith will perhaps not be as good again until the next summit is reached. The sophisticated of Cairo are now mildly mocking the exhilaration of the conference, but the new personal and political departures to which it gave impetus are there for all to observe.

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President Nasser of the UAR was the one to propose the convening of a summit conference of Arab kings and presidents. The proposal was made publicly at a Victory Day speech in Port Said on December 23, 1963, but was later conveyed in writing to the Secretary-General of the Arab League. The latter, undoubtedly pleased that the Arab League, after a long period off-stage, might once again be a focus of attention, issued invitations accordingly. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, each state of the Arab League quickly expressed its enthusiasm for a first meeting on January 13. Saudi Arabia did finally respond in the affirmative, but only after further maneuvers in the tense internal rivalry that separates the reigning King Saud from his ruling brother, Crown Prince Faisal. The Egyptians would have preferred Prince Faisal as head of the Saudi Arabian delegation but had eventually to be satisfied with the King.

At the last moment President Fuad Chehab of Lebanon begged off on account of illness. There was some speculation that the illness might be a diplomatic one, the theory being that for various reasons Chehab would hesitate to be a Christian embarrassment to his fellow Muslims, but this speculation proved to be fanciful. Nasser himself was reported to be upset at Chehab's projected absence, and the Lebanese apparently had some difficulty in persuading him that the President was in fact having a most painful time with his back. Presumably neutral sources confirmed the truth of Chehab's ailment, because —though for protocol reasons he was not met by Nasser himself at the airport—Rashid Karami, the Lebanese Prime Minister (and only inci-

dentally a Muslim), received a warm welcome. Another delegation without an accompanying head of state was that of Libya, but in this instance there was no concern about it whatsoever. The King of Libya is an old and unwell man, and his place was quite sensibly taken by his son, the Crown Prince Hassan el-Reda.

What prompted Nasser to propose a summit conference at this particular time? On the surface the proposal appeared to have been provoked by an exchange of editorial comment between the UAR and some other Arab states. In December there appeared in Rose El Youssef, a Cairo weekly of some appeal to Egyptian and other Arab intellectuals, an article stating quite clearly that the Arab world should not allow itself again to become militarily embroiled with Israel until it was ready, and that readiness could be defined only in terms of political union and a unified military command. Only by political and military union, the article said, could the UAR effectively use its military strength to guarantee other Arab borders; only by this kind of union, the article implied, could the UAR prevent irresponsible military adventurism in the face of the Israeli threat to divert the waters of the Jordan River. The article further said that anti-Egyptian regimes in Damascus, Amman, and Riyadh were eager to have the UAR embroiled in a war with Israel in the hope of finding an opportunity for a "stab in the back."

There were cries of outrage from the expected places. Jordan (in the person of its royalist Prime Minister) said angrily that it could defend its borders against Israel without Egyptian help and that a unified command was quite unnecessary in view of the fact that Jordan was apparently in a better frame of mind to carry out its responsibilities vis-à-vis Israel than was the UAR. The Syrian reaction was similar but stronger: a Baathist newspaper said in socialist and revolutionary satisfaction that "the people will punish all rulers who fail to carry out their duties against Israel." Perhaps because Syrian governments have in recent years been unstable, the Syrians more than other Arabs have tended to be verbally belligerent and physically provocative toward Israel—and it is, in fact, this Syrian belligerence (without the military hardware to back it up) that in Egypt brings on nightmares of unwanted embroilment.

It was after these and similar exchanges that Nasser issued his call to the summit, and it was a call for concerted action to deal with the Israeli plan to divert the waters of the Jordan River. Few Arab countries could refuse to show solidarity—refusal was clearly impossible for those countries whose newspapers had just been indulging in shows of paper courage—and because the affair had been put in the

framework of an extraordinary session of the Arab League, no Arab country, no matter how exasperated or threatened by propaganda and subversion from Cairo, could refuse on the grounds of pique. Once the snowball of acceptance had begun to roll, those heads of state who may still have had lingering doubts about the wisdom of attending found they could not afford to be absent.

The Israeli plan to divert the Jordan waters is nothing new. The whole problem of equitable division of the water among the riparian states (Israel and Jordan, principally, but also Syria and Lebanon) has been around for a long time. This is not the place for details of the whole tiresome affair,[1] but a very short account is necessary. Some time before 1953, the United States became aware that on either side of the armistice line various plans for use of the Jordan waters were being developed along lines that were likely to conflict at some future time. In its usual anguish about bringing "peace and stability" to the area of Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States in 1953 sent Eric Johnston to the Middle East with a plan for joint use of the waters by both sides. Two years and several trips later, this remarkable negotiator had developed a "Unified Development Plan" that was accepted at the technical level by both sides. Because agreement at the political level would have implied recognition of Israel, the Political Committee of the Arab League did not endorse the plan but returned it in 1955 to the Technical Committee for "further consideration." There the matter of joint development has rested ever since.

The Unified Plan gave the Arab states about three-fifths of the annual flow of the river system, and the scheme's premise was that water allocations were based on needs inside the Jordan basin but could be used outside it. Since 1955, there have been unilateral projects, but none has proposed to take more water than allotted under Johnston's final plan. The Jordanians have built a part of the East Ghor Canal envisaged by Johnston. In 1953 the Israelis began construction aimed at carrying water to the Negev from an offtake in one of the demilitarized zones, but this work was halted when Syria complained that the project was in violation of the armistice agreement. The present Israeli plan is almost identical with the earlier one: the chief differences are that the offtake has been shifted south to Lake Tiberias and is not in a de-

[1] Those interested should start by consulting Georgiana G. Stevens, "The Jordan River Valley," International Conciliation (No. 506, January 1956). See also G. H. Jansen, "The Problem of the Jordan Waters," The World Today (London: Chatham House, February 1964).

militarized zone, and that the water is less useful because it is more saline. The expectation is that the Israelis will have one pump in operation within a few months and two more in operation in due course. The Israelis contend that full operation of the pumps will draw less water than allotted under the Unified Plan.

Though the Unified Plan was never adopted, it continues to have a useful life. More often than not, it is the criterion by which other proposals are judged, as demonstrated by continuing direct or oblique references to the "Johnston Plan" in the Middle East press, and its reasonableness hovers over other, more aggressive suggestions for the Jordan waters. The plan's status in Middle East politics is attributable not only to its history of sweet-reasonableness, but also to the not-so-Italian hand of the United States, which on several occasions has made its position on the Jordan waters perfectly clear. Since 1955 the United States has continued to support the Unified Plan in the sense that it has supported any unilateral project that could fit into the plan's basic premise and allocations. Jordan has had American support (and financing) for its East Ghor Canal; Israel has had American approval of its diversionary works on the same grounds.

If the Israeli plan for diversion is within the framework of Johnston's Unified Development Plan (and all indications are that the Israelis will be taking less than half of the water allocated by the plan), why are the Arabs so concerned? The Johnston Plan treated the Arab states very fairly and even elicited technical agreement—so why now the intense discomfort at the thought of smaller withdrawals than the plan envisaged? It is always possible, of course, that the discomfort is not as intense as it seems, and certainly there were a number of other good reasons for the call to the summit, but there do exist some very genuine Arab fears with respect to anything that might strengthen the power position of Israel. Because the idea of new irrigation works, new land, more immigrant settlers, and greater agricultural production in the Negev falls into the Arab category of power politics, the Arabs feel impelled to counter it in some way. The Arab states say that they never agreed to Johnston's plan and that the Israeli diversionary scheme is a unilateral violation of the principle that riparian states must agree on the use of river waters; the East Ghor Canal in Jordan, they say, is entirely an Arab matter because it is from the Yarmuk tributary, an entirely Arab river. These and other Arab arguments are as refutable as their Israeli counterparts; the fact is that neither side wishes the other to have an advantage in a cold-war situation.

One Egyptian purpose in proposing the summit conference was

to organize the Arab reaction to this particular Israeli threat. The Arabs were in considerable disarray generally, and on the basis of its relations with other Arab states, the UAR was in no position to bring about an agreed response to the Jordan diversion project without the help of an extraordinary platform from which to launch some new departures. The need for an agreed response arose as much as anything else from the posture of belligerently unstable Syria, whose reaction to the first working of the first Israeli pump was likely to be rash. Only in the context of an Arab summit could Syria be bound to an agreed course of action; and in the opinion of the UAR, the wisest course of action, based on a cool military assessment, was temporarily a nonbelligerent one. But nonbelligerence toward Israel has never been publicly popular in the Arab world, and the UAR, representing both military and revolutionary power, did not wish to accept the onus of refusing to fight. By means of a summit conference, it was hoped, the responsibility for inaction in the face of the Israeli threat could be broadened to include Syria and the rest of the Arab world. One observer put it this way: "President Nasser no doubt reckons that in making all the Arab states equally and openly responsible for a final decision, he will bring the warmongers among them face to face with their moment of truth."[2]

Even so, the proposal of an Arab summit represented considerably more than an attempt to contain military braggadocio. By taking the initiative in proposing the conference, Nasser was clearly reasserting a leadership that had in some respects been allowed to lapse—and that no other Arab leader could assume. In terms of his personal prestige and that of the UAR, Nasser stood to gain an immense amount from a successful and dramatic meeting of heads of state. At a time when his rivals for leadership of the Arab revolution—the Baath Party whose greatest strength is in Syria—were implying that he was soft on Israel because he was accepting American wheat, Nasser must have seen an opportunity to demonstrate again his essential toughness. The same display of toughness could also serve to disenchant those hopeful Westerners who had been listening to Zionist whispers that an unofficial détente was in being.

Perhaps the major purpose in proposing a summit was, in retrospect, to create an occasion for new departures. Before the conference, many observers foresaw the possibility of one or two shifts from name-calling to moderate reconciliation, but looking back, one realizes that

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[2] The Economist (presumably Patrick Seale), January 4, 1964.

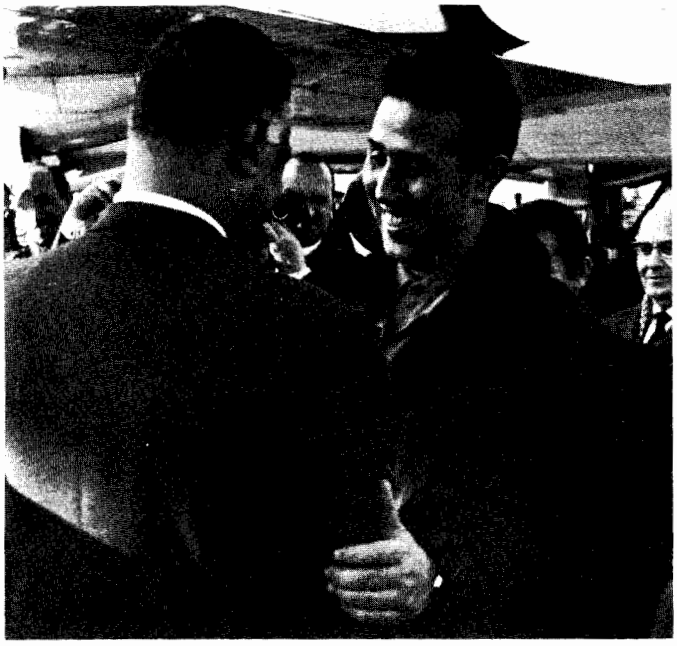
A formal session with full delegations.

Heads of state at the conference table.

A discussion between Bourguiba and Hassan II.

President Arif (second from right) with the Syrians.

Bourguiba being welcomed by Nasser.



Ben Bella arrives for the conference.

King Saud and President Nasser.

President Nasser greets Hafez at the airport.

the summit proposal may have had as primary purpose the launching of a new phase in Egyptian relations with the rest of the Arab world.

The previous phase had begun in September 1961, when Syria broke away from the United Arab Republic, and was a time of "anti-reactionary" words and activities directed principally against the Arab monarchies and culminating in Egyptian support of republican rebels in Yemen; it was a time when the forces of "antirevolutionary reaction" in Jordan and Saudi Arabia were almost continually required to react to the threat of subversion—if not directly from the UAR, then from "revolutionary" elements within.

It was also a time of struggle between the UAR and the Baath, the revolutionary rivals whose ideologies are almost identical. The struggle waxed as the Baath assumed power (for the first time anywhere) in Iraq and in Syria, and waned as Iraq returned in November 1963 to non-Baathist nationalist sympathies. The struggle was exacerbated by a short-lived possibility of tripartite union: in early 1963, after changes to Baathist power in Iraq and Syria, a heady atmosphere in favor of union between these two countries and the UAR existed everywhere, and in April there were talks in Cairo, the signing of a federal charter, and plans for a plebiscite in September. But by June of 1963 it was all over, except for various matters of form, and Levantine intellectuals ordinarily proud of their cynicism were feeling sheepish about the enthusiasm they had felt. The defeating issue, which was found in various disguises, was one of political control; as the Baath felt itself more firmly in power in Syria and Iraq, its basic distrust and resentment of Nasser became more obvious. The Baath wanted control over their own areas; Nasser wanted a monopoly. The UAR claims that the Baath never had any intention of going through with either a union or a federation, and that the idea of union was merely a Baathist device to give false hope to Nasserite elements while giving itself time to consolidate its power. During the summer and early autumn of 1963, the relations between Egypt and the Baath rose to new heights of imaginative invective, which began to subside only when Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq managed a bloodless switch and ousted Baathist power from the Iraqi cabinet.

According to some Egyptian sources, the new phase of UAR relations with its Arab brethren is based on the recognition of two realities. The first is the fact of non-union: an analysis of the failure of 1963 reveals that union is not now feasible—and perhaps not even desirable on the theory that a union now would soon come unstuck. The second is the fact that no effective substitute governments for the Arab

monarchies are now available: it would be uselessly destructive to subvert them at this stage of the Arab revolution. The new phase, according to these sources, seeks to find the common denominators of feeling and belief among Arab governments and to establish thereby a basis for common action; the Egyptian center of the Arab revolution becomes a demonstration of revolutionary advantages, a pilot project that others imitate because of its success rather than its persuasive talk. It is finally possible to introduce this new phase, the story continues, because with the discrediting of the Baath the capital of the Arab revolution has been permanently established in Cairo.

Whether or not the preceding paragraph provides a factual explanation of official thinking, it is beyond doubt that the summit conference marked a turning point in the UAR's Arab policy. A few days after Nasser's proposal in the Port Said speech, Al Ahram of December 27 gave an indication of things to come by saying that Egyptian newspapers had "decided" to call a halt to all press campaigns against other Arab states. This cessation, said Al Ahram, was to create a "suitable atmosphere" for the discussions of the summit. More important to several Arab states was a parallel decision to stop all forms of radio propaganda, including some particularly vicious personal attacks on Arab kings. Not only did these attacks come to a stop, but the Egyptian press and radio contributed positively to the atmosphere of the conference by publicizing in an almost affectionate way the biographies and personalities of the kings and presidents who would be coming. The atmosphere created in Cairo was, in fact, one of high decision, an atmosphere that Nasser himself had launched at Port Said when he said of the conference: "What we say inside we say outside. If we can fight, we come out and say so. If we cannot, we come out and say so and ask for the postponement of the battle."

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The formal meetings of the Arab heads of state took place in the Arab League building, and the informal meetings occurred for the most part in rooms of the Nile Hilton. Of the eight formal meetings, three were attended by the full delegations from each Arab state and five were restricted to kings and presidents; the eight meetings, according to an alert journalist's timepiece, lasted a total of 22 hours and 44 minutes. An Egyptian newspaper reckoned that during the conference there were 40 unofficial meetings, of which Nasser attended 21, Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq 20, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria 19, and King Hussein of Jordan 13. The full meetings took place around an almost circular table with the heads of state seated alphabetically. Each delegation had a single chair at the table's edge, except for the delega-

tion of Palestine, which had no chair at that advanced rank and seated its chief delegate (Ahmed El-Shukairy, who is now permanent Palestinian representative at the League) in the second row. The Secretary-General of the League, Abdul Khaleq Hassouna, was seated in front alongside the session's Chairman. In accordance with the rotation system of the League, the Chairman throughout the summit conference was Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq.

The unofficial and informal meetings were easily as momentous as the formal ones because informality is necessary to the process of reconciliation. By my count there were six major changes in relations between Arab states; although other changes took place, they were dependent upon, and a "logical" issue of, the key six. Significantly, the UAR was involved in four of the six—three reconciliations and one ratification of anticipated partnership—and Syria was involved in none. Three reconciliations involved Hassan II of Morocco, two with his fellow North Africans Ben Bella and Bourguiba, and one with Nasser. All six are important to an understanding of the summit.

I can say little about the political intricacies of North Africa and its reconciliations, but a few impressions are in order. Ben Bella was perhaps the busiest, though not necessarily the most successful, mediator at the conference; more than any other head of state, he was often seen in the company of Nasser and in some ways seemed to have developed an almost cousinly dependence on the Egyptian leader. Bourguiba, that remarkable man,[3] had a great personal success at the conference and at important moments managed to express well what others thought; he had prepared himself for the conference by reaching prior understandings with both Ben Bella and Nasser, and many reports credit him with the role of a major conference catalyst. Hassan II, whose diplomats before the conference were saying that he was coming to Cairo only because it happened to be the meeting place for a session of the Arab League, stayed for less than two days but apparently accomplished a great deal; his new understandings with Ben Bella (who agreed with him to give new impetus to the settlement of their border dispute) and with Nasser (for whom little was involved beyond a cessation of propaganda) provided the Moroccan king with a new position if he should choose to assume it. Perhaps the most important thing about the North Africans at the summit has to do with the very fact of their presence: simply by

[3] For chapter and verse on his abilities, see The Tunisian Way (CFG-12-'63) by Charles F. Gallagher, American Universities Field Staff, November 1963.

being there, they gave added importance to the position of the UAR, which has become the principal link, both cultural and political, between the Arab East and the Arab West. Then, too, their presence for the first time at an Arab meeting dealing specifically with Israel added a subtle respectability and freshness to what might otherwise have had a stale international impact.

There was no need at the conference to apply the reconciliation process to the relations between the UAR and Iraq. The groundwork had already been carefully laid. Prior to the events of November 1963, when an army-backed coup bloodlessly broke the power of the Baath, any understanding between the two countries would have been impossible, but when President Abdul Salam Arif, who had once risked his political neck for a pro-UAR cause, became more than a figurehead president, a rebuilding of good relations was clearly in the interests of both. The Cairo press welcomed the November 1963 coup with the greatest enthusiasm; the Baath was in retreat (having in early November reached the disturbing peak of its power by sending its international leadership from Damascus to settle an Iraqi government dispute), and Egypt no longer needed to contemplate the formation of a Syrian-Iraqi anti-UAR coalition. Perhaps because of a long history of being wary of each other, the two countries approached a possible understanding with caution; but once it was understood in Egypt that the new Iraqi government was truly anti-Baath and that it was prepared within limits to co-operate on inter-Arab affairs, the UAR government felt free to consider a summit conference without fear that a revolutionary rival might make difficulties and block Egyptian hegemony. After Nasser's proposal, and before the conference, the UAR ambassador in Iraq, Amin El-Huwaidi, was reported as having long conversations with Arif in Baghdad; at the same time the Cairo press was engaged in describing Arif as a staunch Arab patriot and a friend of Egypt. In an obvious but effective anti-Syrian way, in fact, the UAR set out to bolster the position of Arif in the Arab world; one observer put it that he hoped Arif's ego would survive the onslaught. During the conference, Arif and Nasser were unmistakably friendly, and after the conference, along with Ben Bella, Arif was several times a guest at Nasser's home.

As for relations between the UAR and Jordan, a reconciliation took place during the conference, but it was clear that this reconciliation was no surprise to either side. Within a few hours of Hussein's arrival, he and Nasser had a meeting without benefit of mediator, and within 24 hours the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries had been announced. The minor irritations were easily dealt with: the Jordanian Air Force planes that had come to Egypt with the

help of defecting pilots were to be returned and an amnesty decreed for the pilots. The major irritation of UAR propaganda, which in Jordan is a source of civil and military unrest, had already been stopped. What the UAR received from Jordan was an assurance that during the conference (and for some time after) Hussein would not engage in any anti-UAR maneuvering. This assurance was desirable not so much because of the Syrian Baath (which could only with the greatest difficulty show common cause with an Arab monarch) but principally because of Hussein's royal counterparts in Saudi Arabia. Nasser needed, and obtained, a clear field for his important negotiations with Saud and Faisal —and without the possibility of an antirevolutionary royal front.

There is a connection between the parlous state of the Egyptian economy and the importance of negotiations with Saudi Arabia. Some Egyptians go to the untenable extreme of saying that economic urgency is the only reason that the UAR is interested in changing its Arab policy from one of antireactionary subversion to one of "harmony in diversity." It is true that the economy is at a particularly low ebb at the moment and that there is little immediate relief in sight; with the economy straining in every direction in an attempt to change its own nature, the usual shortage of foreign exchange has become critical and the Egyptian pound is buying considerably less than it used to—all this at a time when the usual providers in both East and West are disenchanted or unable to help. The UAR is desperately anxious to stop spending large sums of its money on military support of the republican regime in Yemen, but it cannot find a way of withdrawing its troops that does not run the politically impossible risk of returning Yemen to the forces of the not-yet-defeated Imam or some other anti-Egyptian "reactionaries." Saudi Arabia, which has (at least until recently) been giving encouragement and material assistance to the Imam, holds the key to successful Egyptian withdrawal, because without a complete understanding between the two outside powers that seek to determine Yemen's future, there is no political alternative to continuing rivalry and expensive involvement.

Though it was billed in the Cairo press as the problem of relations between Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen, there was little doubt in anyone's mind that the real problem was to find a formula for reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and the UAR. There were minor matters that could be easily worked out (such as reimbursement for seized Saudi property in Cairo), but the major matter of Yemen constituted a formidable difficulty. The situation of Yemen is an extraordinarily complicated one, and the spirit of reconciliation that might initiate the search for a solution must ultimately be bolstered by a large

and mutual measure of good faith—which has recently been totally lacking. The atmosphere of reconciliation at the conference allowed progress in Egyptian-Saudi relations only up to a certain point. Nasser and King Saud soon established a friendly, talking relationship that indicated a political direction, but the distance traveled toward the goal of final understanding was only enough to ensure further talk with Crown Prince Faisal, the true ruler who absented himself from the euphoria in Cairo and who was in a position to disavow any of his brother's commitments.

Both sides know that there must ultimately be some kind of solution to the future of Yemen, and both sides have played their cards well. Though Faisal now seems to be in the stronger bargaining position because of the frightening costs of maintaining UAR troops, Nasser holds some strong trumps. The biggest is probably his influence over the impact of the Arab revolution on Saudi Arabia; the Saudi princes are as vulnerable to the attacks of Voice of the Arabs as any group in the Middle East. Another Nasser trump is the demonstration of his leadership at the summit conference, the ease with which he was able to isolate Syria and Saudi Arabia, and the magic by which he was able to gain acceptance almost overnight for a radical reordering of his own Arab policy. Since the conference, both Arif and Ben Bella have been personally involved in mediation efforts between Nasser and Faisal, and, filled with public enthusiasm about the sudden necessity to "clear the air" between all Arab states, they have finally (through their personal representatives) succeeded in arranging a meeting in Riyadh of two UAR vice-presidents with Crown Prince Faisal, an intelligent man who has certainly realized that Nasser's espousal of the cause of general reconciliation has become a general Arab pressure on himself. The fact that a meeting is in the offing probably means that a basis for discussion of the Yemeni problem has been already agreed upon. The bargaining will be sharp and may take many meetings, but the direction is clear.

Nobody at the conference really expected that there would be a reconciliation between Syria and the UAR, though at one point it did look as if (in one observer's words) "the unity kick" was getting out of hand. But relations between Nasser and the Syrian Baath remained cool and correct, and the isolation of Amin el-Hafez proceeded so well that it may even have been overdone. As far as can be determined, the Syrian leader had a private meeting with only one other head of state (Abdul Salam Arif), and even Salah Bitar, the deputy of the Syrian delegation and a man widely known for moderation, saw the other heads of state only briefly and abortively. According to an Egyptian report, Ha-

fez contributed to his own isolation by making belligerent recommendations and providing the conferees with details of the military force that he himself would use in carrying the recommendations out; Bourguiba then spoke with a tolerant French-type logic that made Hafez appear immature, and Nasser brought further discredit by demonstrating that Hafez' figures on Syrian military strength were considerably more glowing than those given by his own Syrian chief of staff at a League meeting held a month previously. A Syrian report, on the other hand, explains Hafez' behavior by stressing the Syrian conviction that, despite agreements, the proceedings of the conference would not finally be secret, and that, as in the case of the April 1963 unity talks, the UAR might even publish conversations verbatim—and that for his Syrian image, Hafez apparently feels his posture must be warlike. Whatever the truth of these reports, it is certain that Hafez felt himself isolated, and it is a fair guess that he resented it. He and Bitar made a last attempt to do something about this by staying on for 24 hours after the end of the conference in the hopes of seeing Nasser, but no interview was granted and Hafez had to be content with a handshake at the airport.

One Egyptian purpose in proposing a summit conference was to bind Syria to a common Arab policy that the UAR could live with and to keep Syria from rash military acts that could embroil the UAR in a war with Israel. Did the isolation of Syria contribute to the accomplishment of this purpose? The knowledge in Syria that Hafez and the Baath were humiliated at the Arab summit will probably not bring a closing of ranks and a strengthening of the Baath position; in that unstable land, the humiliation is more likely to be understood as a need for change—and that Hafez seemed to agree with this prognosis is demonstrated by his last-minute attempts to have a publicized talk with Nasser. The danger now is that Hafez, weaker internally as a result of isolation, will try to bolster his position by embarking on some kind of military adventure. Despite the agreement on a unified military command, what is there really to prevent him from engaging in some early and provocative water diversion—and all "in the spirit of the summit"—so near to Israel that it must bring a military reaction? Perhaps the Egyptian calculation is that the humiliation of Hafez will bring a change of regime before Hafez has a chance to be militarily rash. If there has been a miscalculation, it will not be the first time that Egypt has misunderstood the Syrian personality.

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The formal results of the conference are embodied in a statement dated January 17, 1964. The Council of the Kings and Heads of

State of the Arab League, it says, "has adopted the practical resolutions, both defensive and technical, essential to warding off the imminent Zionist menace." The Council also reached "unanimous agreement to settle all differences and clear the Arab atmosphere of all blemishes and to suspend all campaigns by information media; and to consolidate relations between the Arab sister states, to ensure collective co-operative reconstruction, and to ward off the aggressive expansionist designs menacing all Arabs alike." The statement goes on to say that "the convening of more of these meetings at the highest level is a matter of vital Arab interest" and that the next summit meeting will be held in Alexandria in August 1964. The statement speaks also of the Palestine "entity" and what its role must be in the liberation of the fatherland, and it has quite a few additional remarks about the international position of the Arab world.

Behind and beside this formal statement, there are results of considerable interest. The statement's reference to "defensive and technical" resolutions alludes to Arab plans to divert the Jordan waters in various ways so that the waters cannot be used by Israel and to defend those diversions with military force. As announced at a press conference given by the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Arab diversionary works will involve bringing the waters of the Hasbani and the Banyas into the Litani river system, which empties into the Mediterranean on the coast of Lebanon, or sending them by canal over to the Yarmuk system in Syria and Jordan; the works will also involve the further development of the Yarmuk irrigation system in Jordan. The diversionary plans have both positive and negative aspects: the negative aspect entails diverting the water so that it cannot be used by Israel (and this, said the Secretary-General, will take between 18 months and two years), and the positive aspect is the use of the water by the Arabs themselves (this will take longer). The negative aspect will cost a total of six and one quarter million Egyptian pounds for work that may start as early as May of this year. A unified military command (with the Egyptian Aly Aly Amer as commander in chief) will have its headquarters in the UAR and will have both soldiers and a budget at its disposal. Plans have been made for "all military eventualities."

All this has something of a fairy-tale quality, though some very sober Arabs believe it is not just talk. The diversionary works planned for the Hasbani and the Banyas will be in Lebanon, where the Lebanese will have grave doubts concerning the commission of provocative acts on their soil—and graver doubts about the presence of non-Lebanese Arab defensive forces. The feasibility studies necessary to major diversionary works take a long time, and there has been no evidence that

the engineering groundwork has been as well laid as some non-engineers are claiming. Nor is it yet clear that the Arab plans really envisage taking more water than the Johnston Plan allotted in 1955. Without this, the Israelis would have little reason to complain. As for the unified military command, it is at the moment no more than a paper arrangement; so far no troops from one Arab country have been stationed defensively on the soil of another. There are a dozen other doubts that are being expressed by the cynics—the Arab plans provide plenty of time, they say, and time changes all plans.

From the Egyptian viewpoint, it may not matter too much whether it is partly a fairy tale or not. The Egyptians are pretending that they are perfectly serious, and perhaps they are; but what is important is that the responsibility for a common Arab plan has been spread to other Arab states, including Syria. If the Arab diversionary works are subject to endless delays, it will not be the fault of the UAR, which will be giving every support. If they are in fact put into operation, and if the Israelis either by guerrilla tactics or by formal attack blow them up, Israel will be clearly the aggressor. In the meantime, under the sign of an Israeli threat, the UAR can move steadily forward with its new policy of co-operation with Arab governments, enhancing its leadership and coming to terms with Saudi Arabia—and discrediting the Syrian Baath whenever possible.

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[Photographs courtesy Al Ahram, Cairo.]