

P.D.R. Yemen

Outpost of Socialist Development in Arabia

Helen Lackner

1985

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[Title Page]

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Finally, and this is no mere traditional formula, I alone am responsible for all assertions, ideas, positions, interpretations, conclusions and errors to be found in this work. I am sure that no one shares all the positions expressed here but though I do not in any way claim to have all the answers, I have tried to ask many questions. Despite its failings, I hope that this book will help readers to greater and more sympathetic understanding of Democratic Yemen, its people and their recent history, and to better awareness of the difficulties of socialist development in a poor Third World country.

Names and transliteration

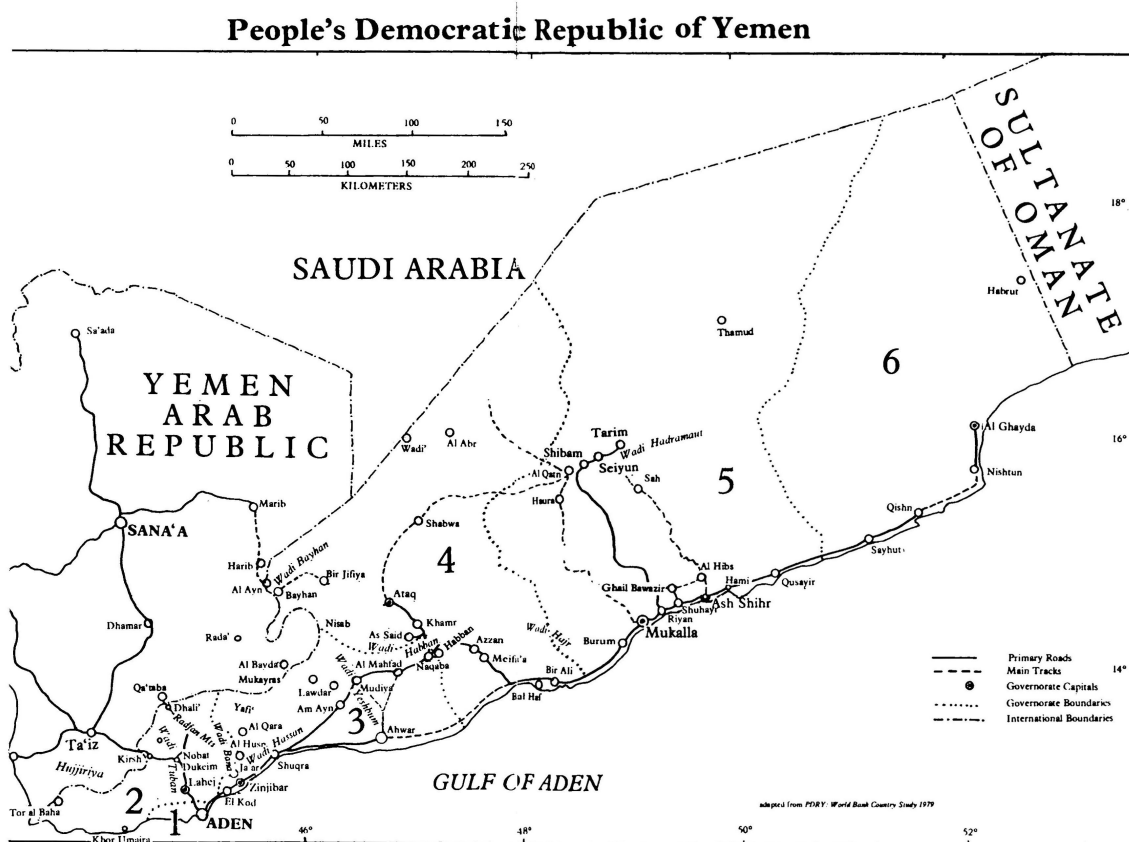
A number of points need to be made. Yemen is now a country divided into two states, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The latter, subject of this book has, to say the least, an unwieldy name; at home the official abbreviation is Democratic Yemen which I use here by preference to South Yemen more commonly used in the West. I have tried to be consistent in this and when I talk of Yemen I mean the whole country. When talking of North Yemen I mean either the Imamate for the pre-1962 period or the Yemen Arab Republic thereafter. When discussing the PDRY I use either that term or Democratic Yemen, but occasionally South Yemen, usually when referring to other writers or when it contrasts with North Yemen. Before independence the country was in the 1960s known as the Federation of South Arabia which was composed of the Colony of Aden and the Eastern and Western Aden Protectorates. In discussing these I have used the terms amirates, sultanates, shaykhdoms and statelets almost interchangeably; when discussing the countryside in contrast to Aden, I use the terms hinterland and interior. Finally when I use southern Yemen, I refer to the PDRY and the southern part of the YAR, more or less the Shafi'i part of Yemen which shared a similar culture with the PDRY's side of the border.

As all readers of books on the Arab world will know, transliteration from Arabic is a major problem. I make no claim to adopt academic convention on this. On the whole I have used the commonly accepted English terms for geographic names. Although there is, I hope, internal consistency in my transliteration, it does not include the more obscure diacritical signs. Many institutions in the PDRY have official English translations for their names which may at first appear strange to the reader. I have chosen to accept and to use these names even when they are not those I would have translated myself. Similarly in many quotations I have preferred to use the available 'official' translation, rather than provide an alternative.

Units

1000 fils	=	YD 1		
Yemeni Dinar	=	US\$ 0.345		
(YD)				
feddan	=	1 acre	=	0.405 hectare
				(ha)
ton	=	1000 Kg		
b/d	=	barrels per day		

General Map of P.D.R. Yemen



Abbreviations

ATUC:	Aden Trades Union Congress
BP:	British Petroleum
DFLP:	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (successor to PDFLP)
EEC:	European Economic Community
FLOSY:	Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen
FFYP:	First Five Year Plan
FMC:	Fish Marketing Corporation
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the U.N.
GCC:	Gulf Co-operation Council
GUYW:	General Union of Yemeni Women
GUYW:	General Union of Yemeni Workers
IDA:	International Development Association of the World Bank
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMMD:	Institute of Health Manpower Development
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
KFAED:	Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development
LPC:	Local People's Councils
MAN:	Movement of Arab Nationalists
MAAR:	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
MCH:	Mother and Child Health
MRS:	Machinery Rental Station
NDF:	National Democratic Front
NFPO:	National Front Political Organization
NLF:	National Liberation Front
OLOS:	Organization for the Liberation of the Occupied South
OPEC:	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCAS:	Public Corporation for Agricultural Services
PCMFV:	Public Corporation for the Marketing of Fruits and Vegetables
PDC:	People's Defence Committees
PDFLP:	11 Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PDU:	People's Democratic Union
PFLO:	People's Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG:	People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf

Introduction

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen is the only country in the Arab world where a socialist group fighting for the overthrow of the old order actually achieved power. When evaluating any aspect of Democratic Yemen's development since 1967 it is essential to bear in mind the internal and external circumstances which form the background to the regime's policies. First internal conditions. The movement which gained control at independence has been trying to 'build socialism' in the 1970s in a country with a population of only 2 million distributed over a large geographic area, with an average population density of less than 5.1 per square kilometre, and a rural density of 4 *per* square kilometre, making the per capita cost of all services and infrastructure particularly high.¹ The poverty of the land is absolute: there are no significant natural resources. Cultivable land represents 0.3% of the country's surface. There are no commercial quantities of minerals: the significance of the 1982 oil strike remains unclear at the time of writing, but whatever it may turn out to be, it is not relevant to the 1980s. It may turn out to make self-financed development possible and also solve the growing debt-repayment problem, but this is as yet mere speculation. The country's fishing waters were at first seen as the panacea, and as a result they were overexploited in the 1970s and in future can only reasonably be expected to improve the national diet and play a minor role in the acquisition of foreign exchange through exports. Unlike many other very poor countries, Democratic Yemen does not even have a large reserve of labour: emigration has for centuries, but particularly in recent decades, removed labour which might otherwise have been available for local development.

While in the 1950s and 1960s Aden, but not the hinterland, lived in prosperity, the total absence of resources was revealed at independence with the simultaneous collapse of the port following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the destruction of the economy of Aden dependent on the military base. The country was left with only its traditional hinterland subsistence agriculture and fisheries. The emigration of the professional and commercial middle classes with their capital aggravated the situation. Furthermore the hostility which the new state encountered almost everywhere meant that it had great difficulty in raising finance for development projects which the population expected from independence. On the contrary, the immediate effect of the departure of the British and the closure of the Suez Canal was a drop in living standards in Aden with

¹ World Bank, World Development Report 1984 p. 218

no significant improvement in the hinterland. These were the materials on which a new state and society were to be built..

The international context is relevant at the broad political level in explaining the background against which the NLF developed, while the regional context has had direct political, economic and ideological impact. There is no doubt that Democratic Yemen was born in a particularly hostile world. For the Third World the 1970s brought increased poverty and deprivation for the majority of the people; in most countries raw or semi-processed materials were exported at falling prices in real terms while those of imports rose. This situation benefited both the transnational companies of the capitalist countries and the small national bourgeoisies which rule most Third World countries. Increased exploitation of Third World resources was one way to alleviate the effects of the recession in the capitalist world which began in the early 1970s. Deteriorating terms of trade are one aspect of the impoverishment of Third World countries. Another became clear in the 1980s. While in the 1970s governments were encouraged to borrow vast amounts and interest rates relatively low, these rose to exorbitant levels by the 1980s, thus crippling the economies of many Third World countries who found themselves making net transfers to the capitalist countries in the shape of debt service payments. A third, lesser but still significant, factor is labour migration in particular that of professionals, giving another example of free aid from the Third World to the capitalist countries, as skills acquired at the expense of their home country go to the benefit of the labour importing country.

The Arabian Peninsula has been an exception to the general trend of increased poverty in the Third World in the 1970s. The oil price rises in 1973 created an unprecedented boom in the economies of the oil-producing Peninsula states who all had small and little qualified native populations. Their sudden rise to the top of the per capita income league allowed them to make ambitious development plans which necessitated the import of labour, while those who could afford it adopted the lifestyles of the international idle rich. These developments in the Peninsula took place after the 1967 defeat of the Arabs in their war against Israel, which also had a major impact on people's thinking throughout the Arab world. Blame for the defeat was placed by the left as well as by the right on the so-called socialism of Nasser, which became discredited for both sides. All these factors were crucial to the development of Democratic Yemen, making the context even more unfavourable than it would have been merely through the circumstances prevailing internally.

The boom in the Peninsula affected Democratic Yemen in a number of ways. Emigration has had a profound influence economically, culturally and even politically. By the 1970s Saudi Arabia and the Peninsula mini-states had been receiving Yemeni immigrant workers for decades: they started working in the oil industry in the 1950s and were also found in the armed forces of the then Trucial States. By the 1970s the Peninsula had become a far better option for Yemeni migrant workers than further afield where they had earlier emigrated: Indonesia and India in the 19th Century, Britain and the USA in the earlier part of the 20th. As recession hit the heavy industries where

they worked in these countries, the oil-export induced boom of the Peninsula provided alternative employment. While in the early days of oil extraction Yemenis had been working in an environment which was not substantially different from home and where the standard of living was comparable, the situation changed in the 1970s as oil prices rose and per capita income for nationals of the Peninsula states rocketed. The earnings of Yemeni migrant workers rose dramatically with a number of consequences. Positively their higher level of remittances provided the government in Aden with some of the foreign exchange desperately needed to finance development projects. Emigrants were also able to improve significantly the standard of living of their families who lived mainly in the remote rural areas and who therefore suffered less from the urban-rural gap than they would have otherwise.

Emigration also has a considerable impact as a result of the gap in income between home and abroad: the high rates of pay prevailing in the Peninsula states meant that relatives at home do not find it necessary to work at the low public sector salaries and many prefer to remain idle. It is also difficult for the public sector to retain staff and to obtain hard work from them as they find little incentive from their salaries. A secondary but related effect was some neglect of traditional agriculture and fisheries whose returns in the 1970s could not compete with those of emigration. Emigrants and their families continued to use the developing social services while their productive life was spent abroad.

The negative effects of the boom in the Gulf are very important. They are noticeable mainly indirectly in their ideological influence. Similarities of culture and language resulted in a disproportionate increase in expectations which was totally unrealistic given objective conditions in PDRY. As the standard of living of emigrant workers and their families rose, the expectations of their neighbours rose also. Being aware of what was available in the Gulf states in the 1970s, Yemenis expected independence to provide the same at home particularly as in the 1960s Aden had been the most modern city in the Peninsula, quoted as an example throughout the region. Its decline in the 1970s, taking place while ultra-modern cities were rising out of the desert at meteoric speed elsewhere, was explained in political rather than economic terms. In this respect the propaganda war waged against the régime in Aden was successful. Yemenis came to blame the poverty of their country on socialism rather than on the objective differences in financial circumstances which separated Democratic Yemen and the Gulf states. This propaganda success was made easier by two factors: the excesses of the régime in the early 1970s and the fact that many of the régime's social policies challenged traditionalist beliefs.

Those Yemenis who blamed socialism for the difficulties of Democratic Yemen in the 1970s ignored the most important difference between their country and the Gulf states they wanted to emulate: while in the latter all forms of development and unproductive expenditure could be financed from revenue derived from oil exports, in Yemen no such possibility existed. Another deceptive feature of the 1970s was the apparent boom in the Yemen Arab Republic where cash incomes were high and where foreign aid

was pouring in. Looking at these facts alone ignores that many had little access to cash and that the cost of living was incomparably higher than in Democratic Yemen, thus cancelling the advantage: while a minor government employee in Aden could live modestly and support his family on his official salary, his equivalent in Sana'a would earn ten times as much in cash but this would barely pay his rent, let alone food or other necessities. Further he had no guarantee that his salary would be paid regularly as this depended mostly on foreign subsidies which were often cancelled when the régime in Sana'a took an independent political line. Foreign aid programmes, whose long term benefit is open to question, were also clearly initiated for political reasons in Sana'a.

While comparison with the Peninsula oil-exporting states is understandable due to their proximity and because most Yemeni workers emigrate there, comparison with other Third World states with similar income is far more appropriate. There is no doubt that living conditions for ordinary people in Democratic Yemen are better than those prevailing in countries whose per capita GNP is similar, for example Sudan, Mauritania, Liberia and Senegal. In most poor Third World countries there are vast differentials in incomes between the numerically small bourgeoisie and the mass of the people at or below bare survival level. Corruption is everywhere the norm and efforts to improve poor people's standards of living are symbolic or nonexistent. Unfortunately many Yemenis ignore this and forget that in a decade which has seen a serious fall in standards of living of the poor throughout most of the Third World, in their own country social services have been created, the gap between the privileged and the masses remains negligible in comparison with elsewhere, and corruption is effectively nonexistent. In brief, while standards of living elsewhere have deteriorated, in Democratic Yemen they have improved and at the same time the bases for future development have been laid. An ordinary unprivileged person in the PDRY has a better life than would be available in other Third World countries of whatever ideology, despite the country's almost total lack of resources, largely thanks to emigrants' remittances.

In the late 1970s a public sector worker, be he in a factory in Aden, a state farm in the countryside, or a fisheries cooperative on the coast could expect a basic income of YD 50 per month, which might be supplemented by overtime of another YD 20 or more. If his wife was also working for cash, but in a less responsible position, her income might be YD 35–40. Out of this they would expect to pay YD 5 on rent, another YD 15 for electricity and water if connected to the national supply, and would need another YD 50–60 to feed a family of 5 a fully nutritious diet. This is not wealth, but it is a long way from not knowing where the next meal comes from. Food, although expensive, has been heavily subsidised by the régime since independence, as are other basic necessities, as must be obvious from these figures. Education and health services are available to these families, though for many access may be difficult due to remoteness. These achievements are not to be belittled and have taken place in a particularly unfavourable environment.

This book is an attempt to understand what led the struggle for liberation to take the shape it did, what political influences directed the NLF towards a socialist ideology and how the regime has chosen and implemented policies in the state's first 17 years, as well as the problems it has faced and those it ignores.

Some will argue that political developments in Democratic Yemen cannot be discussed in isolation from parallel developments in the Yemen Arab Republic in the past twenty years, and there is no doubt that the two parts of Yemen are intimately connected at all levels. Despite this argument I have only dealt with events and developments in the Y AR insofar as they narrowly and directly affected Democratic Yemen. A full comparative study would have demanded more research and time than I had. I also believe that the current division of the country into two states creates a reality which must be dealt with as such. While many Yemenis in the west of Democratic Yemen feel a deep and urgent attachment to a united Yemen, there are others, in Hadramaut and Mahra, for whom this is hardly a concern.

Because my primary concern is with internal developments and in particular how they affect the population I have dealt with international relations only briefly, concentrating instead on the political changes which have laid the basis for a transformation of the social structure and the creation of a new society.

Chapter One: The Colonial Period

The British occupied Aden in 1839 as a useful staging post on the route to India, a coaling station, and a supply depot where fresh food and water could be acquired for the onward journey. Its main assets were the excellent natural harbour and later on its position at a point where steamers needed a fresh load of coal. Otherwise Aden presented no intrinsic interest to the British for it had no hinterland for trade, no wealth which could be extracted either as raw materials or as manufactures, nor had it any significant agricultural potential. Even its strategic value which was later asserted by some to be so valuable was questionable.

By 1839 the town of Aden had dwindled from its best days as an international port in the 16th century to become an impoverished fishing village of about 600 inhabitants. Thanks to its major advantage as a natural harbour, Aden had played a significant role whenever there was international activity in the region. Its decline was partly due to the loss of Portuguese ascendancy when the Ottoman Turks finally gained the upper hand in southern Arabia. The latter chose Mokha as their main port, which was closer to the areas where they had greatest control and to coffee, the only export crop. Coffee was shipped north up the Red Sea, again giving Mokha the advantage, and Aden could not compete as it had to bear the costs of the longer overland routes and the greater number of tribal groups which had to be paid off on the way. Turkish control over areas very distant from the centre of power and of little strategic interest was always loose and Aden was not a priority in Ottoman strategy. Ottoman control over Yemen relaxed with the decline in the coffee trade in the early 18th Century when competition from other coffee growing areas became significant, and this led to greater autonomy for the tribes. It was as early as 1730 that Aden regained its independence under the 'Abdali sultan of Lahej supported by the tribes of Yafi'.

That Aden's new independence did not lead to a revival of the port was due to the poverty of the areas controlled by both the 'Abdali and the Yafi'i. Aden was able to export Yafi'i coffee to the east and to trade with Somalia where Berbera was a major international marketplace. International interest in the region remained low and Aden continued to decline, the city falling into ruins. Much of it was abandoned, though the 'Abdali made some efforts to revive it and even attempted to interest Britain in the port, long before the British were willing to take any stake in it.

Since the decline of the incense empires of Southern Arabia in the 5/6th Centuries AD, the hinterland had been reduced to bare subsistence. Most lived off coastal fishing and subsistence agriculture in the few areas where there was sufficient water, while the nomadic tribes survived by seasonal grazing and the imposition of heavy customs

duties on the few remaining trade caravans and other travellers, and from raiding the travel routes. The area was of no interest to outsiders who ignored disputes between local rulers over the domination of impoverished communities. All the communities in the region were already familiar with emigration which was recorded in antiquity as already being the only means of improving the standard of living of the migrants' families. The small mountain tribes on the highlands close to what later became the YAR also survived by imposing customs duties on trade, and from taxing the craftsmen and sharecropper peasants. None of these régimes was very stable: power would shift from one part of a family to another within the same tribe, from family to family, from tribe to tribe, and tribes which lost out soon found themselves becoming subject to stronger neighbours. Thus the politics of the region were in constant flux according to the vagaries of trade, raiding, or the natural disasters of drought and flood.

In the eastern part of what was to become the PDRY, there were many important nomadic tribes who also controlled trade routes and limited the authority of the sultans who were the nominal leaders of the sedentary people. Whereas in the west settled agriculture, herding and 'trading' nomadic life were closely interwoven, and nowhere was there a significantly large and exclusively sedentary culture, in the east the situation was very different. That area is a large barren plateau and desert with a few large pockets of watered lands, mainly the Wadi Hadramaut; and on the coast the regions around Ghayl Bawazir and Maifa'a, as well as a few smaller ones east of Wadi Masila in the Mahra area. This brought about a clear division between on the one hand sedentary rural and urban populations and on the other nomads who herded animals, transported goods and levied duties on travellers and goods. The settled people were mostly in Wadi Hadramaut, where in the 16th and 17th Centuries the Kathiri sultans had a fair degree of control over the Wadi and its population and resources. In addition the main ports on the coast, Shihr and Mukalla, had their own rulers who claimed to control the trade routes between the coast and the Wadi as well as, at times, the coastal towns and their neighbouring agricultural pockets. Between 1650 and 1680 the Ottoman Turks sought to control the area, but after only 30 years of occupation the Kathiri reasserted their independence, shortly before falling into decline themselves in the 1720s. They were obliged to compromise with the nomadic confederations and to share power with the major tribes, the Humum, the 'Awamir and the Ahl Tamim, while trying to retain control of the towns, though even there they had to share power with the religious notables, the *sada* (see below), and in some cases Yafi'i immigrants. The wealth of Hadramaut was sent back by emigrants and although the surplus which could be extracted from the settled peasantry there was higher than elsewhere, tribal strife made it difficult for any single authority to accumulate significant wealth. Migration was a major feature of life throughout known history in all classes of society: it was the *sada* who tended to travel east¹ to become traders and merchants in Indonesia, while peasants were more likely to emigrate to East Africa and other Arab areas. Even

¹ Hadrami society in Indonesia in the 19th Century is described in detail in L. W. C. van den Berg

nomads worked abroad in low status occupations when no other source of income was available.

By the early 19th Century two factions of the immigrant Yafi'i were in control of the Hadrami coast, in rivalry with each other: the Ahl Barayk held Shihr while the Kasadi held Mukalla. In Wadi Hadramaut power was disputed between two families whose strength originated in their role as law enforcement officers for the Nizam of Hyderabad in India. These were the Kathiri, longstanding rulers in Wadi Hadramaut, and a new family of Yafi'i immigrants, the Qu'ayti.

The Rationale of British occupation

As was often the case in like situations, there were in Britain factions supporting the occupation of Aden and others opposing it.² Aden was not in any case under direct control from London, but from India, where the central authority was in Delhi but immediate orders concerning Aden came from Bombay. Thanks to the slowness of communications in the early 19th Century (a reliable telegraph service was only introduced in the 1870s) all sorts of contradictory policies could be pursued simultaneously over long periods; action could also be taken without due authority, giving individual officials the possibility of going their own way.

In the 18th and early 19th Centuries Britain ignored the Red Sea and the northern part of the Indian Ocean as these areas did not control access to India. The French invasion of Egypt in 1798 was a shock which changed this perception and thereafter they no longer allowed local shipping or the French open access to the area. The threat to British interests presented by the French occupation of Egypt was very clear both in London and India and steps were soon taken to counter it and re-establish British dominance in the Red and Arabian Sea areas. In the late 18th Century when Mokha was more significant as a port than Aden, British ships had tried to gain access there to obtain supplies for the island of Perim which they had occupied to forestall the French. They were not welcome in Mokha and were encouraged by the invitation of the Sultan of Lahej to come to Aden, so the troops went there and remained until early 1800 before returning to India.

Local shipping organized by the sea-faring tribes of the Peninsula had developed and their trade reached further afield than ever. Their actions against European ships, described by the British as 'piracy' also affected maritime trade, and their increasing commercial influence and significance made them a threat. To reassert their dominance,

Le Hadramout et les colonies Arabes dan l'Archipel Indien, Batavia, Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1886, republished in 1969 by Gregg International, England. This book also includes general information on life and administration of Hadramaut drawn up from interviews of Hadramis in Indonesia

² See R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule 1839-1967*, C. Hurst, London, 1975, pp. 27-9. This book is a comprehensive and highly detailed analysis of every significant event and British policy; it is essential reading for the period it covers and has been of great help in writing this chapter

the British started charting the waters of the Red Sea in the early years of the 19th Century; they also again bought coffee at Mokha and encouraged merchants to use British ships in the region, relying on their presence to counteract other influences. As steamships took over, the distances that could be covered between supply stops increased, and created the need for coaling stations. In 1829 the British tried Mukalla as a coaling station, after considering Perim, Socotra and Aden.

In the 1830s Muhammad Ali, the Khedive of Egypt, invaded the Peninsula adding a new threat to the earlier expansion of Wahhabism in the region and gave the British the opportunity of stating and confirming their interest in Aden. In 1837–8 the British negotiated with Sultan Muhsin Fadi al ‘Abdali, ruler of Aden and Lahej, who thought that the British would offer a better deal than the threatened Egyptian occupation. Negotiations were conducted on the British side by Captain Stafford Bettesworth Haines whose aim was occupation. Muhsin wanted a protection treaty in exchange for giving the British authority to build a factory and a garrison, but he did not wish to give up sovereignty, directly conflicting with Haines whose ambition and life work was to bring Aden under the British flag.

While Muhsin and Haines attempted to make a deal, various justifications were developed in different sections of the British establishment. Everybody agreed on the need to secure a coal depot for the steamships, which included both mailships and military craft. However it was justifiably argued that a coaling depot could be obtained without the expense and responsibility of military occupation, by reaching agreement with the ‘Abdali Sultan of Lahej and Aden, as was desired by Sultan Muhsin. That military and coaling were separate concerns was later demonstrated by the planning of Aden’s defences which left the coal depot outside the defence perimeter. The argument between those for and against involvement continued for decades: different factions were at various times located in London, Delhi and Bombay. The interventionists were spearheaded on the ground by Haines whose early attachment to Aden began when he took part in the charting of the Red Sea. To him Aden represented a major goal and his occupation was supported by Sir Robert Grant, the Governor of Bombay. In London, the main argument for gaining sovereignty of Aden was strategic. However authorization for a military takeover was not forthcoming and Haines was instructed to negotiate even after the capture and looting of a British ship. However thanks to poor communications Haines took the initiative and landed troops, forcing the ‘Abdali Sultan to abandon Aden in January 1839. Reluctantly Haines’s superiors accepted the *fait accompli*.

After its occupation, Aden did not change dramatically. In the first years the neighbouring Sultanates of ‘Abdali and Fadli made various attempts to recapture the town, despite some form of agreement between the British and the ‘Abdali who were paid regularly for the use of the town by Britain. Haines’s ambition to restore Aden to its legendary prosperity as a major trading centre was not achieved during his tenure,

when it was little more than a military garrison.³ In the 1840s Haines tried to undermine Mokha as a trading centre by negotiating with the leaders of the Hujjiriyah and the Imam's representatives, to persuade them to transfer the coffee trade to Aden, but it came to nothing. Aden's role as a port remained limited, playing a supporting role for the Berbera trade fair which took place from October to March, but which it failed to replace.

Haines's autocracy was such that he alienated most of the British military commanders during his period as governor; in his relations with the interior he played the tribal rivalry games according to much the same rules as the Yemeni leaders. The fact that he remained governor, when normally such a post would have been given to a more senior person, indicates what little importance was attached to Aden by the authorities in India and London. Although Haines's treatment of leaders in the hinterland showed some understanding of the dynamics of intertribal relations, to the tribal leaders he, and therefore Britain which he represented, appeared to be just another participant in local power games. They failed to identify the fundamental difference between British intervention and earlier invasions, such as the Ottoman and Portuguese. This difference was one of historical period, rather than of nationality and Britain's impact was unprecedented as it represented industrial capitalism, a mode of production far more threatening to pre-capitalist formations than the mercantile capitalism of Portugal for example. Britain both challenged the traditional leaders as independent rulers and the social and economic structures which they had dominated and fought over.

In the 1840s and 1850s, having failed to repel the British by direct assault, the rulers of 'Abdali (Lahej) and Fadli (Shuqra), 'Aqrabi, Hawshabi and others combined in an attempt to cut off Aden's supplies of water, firewood and food. This failed as merchants increasingly succumbed to the temptation of selling to the British to gain commercial advantage over their competitors. Attempts by the 'Abdali to regulate and control trade with Aden by imposing fixed customs duties also failed. The ever greater solidity of the British presence in Aden seriously undermined the authority of the tribal rulers, while the British learned that they could manipulate and manoeuvre the rulers who were unable to unite to face a threat of whose real importance they had no conception. While the blockade and embargo continued there were incidents of petty harassment of the British, including the murder of some Europeans who had ventured beyond the limits of British Aden. These murders were indiscriminate and were implicitly supported by all the local rulers who repeatedly failed to catch and punish the perpetrators, claiming that they had escaped to another territory.

Neither delegating power nor informing others of his plans and activities, Haines did not lay the foundations for a competent administration. He was constantly in conflict with other British, particularly the military authorities, and his relations with the hinterland rulers were hardly better, though he approached them as equals. He

³ Detailed account of Haines's relationships with his superiors and his policies, relationships with the Yemenis, can be found in R. J. Gavin *op cit* pp. 39–61

dominated Aden until his departure in 1854, when he was recalled to Bombay on charges of malpractice relating to his inability to account for substantial expenditure. With his departure efforts were made to bring Aden's administration into line with that of other British dependencies, and the improvement of communications soon made it possible for policy to be more strictly controlled from Bombay, and eventually from London.

Southern Yemen from the 1850s to the First World War

In the second half of the Century, the strategic importance of the new shipping routes increased the military emphasis placed upon Aden by the British, reversing the policy of the early years when they would have liked to see more commerce and less garrison. An official policy of 'Fortress Aden' was developed and priority was given to Aden's defences and their strengthening against attack from both sea and land. Aden soon came to be seen as the gateway to the Suez Canal and its first line of defence against enemy attack. Once again voices were raised to suggest that Aden was of no intrinsic military value and that protection of the route to India lay elsewhere. These voices did not prevent the authorities from strengthening the town's sea defences to the west of the rock particularly in Tawahi, or Steamer Point as the British later called it. This area therefore developed rapidly, thanks to the dredging of the port and other modern facilities created around 'Back Bay' as it was at first known. Development of Back Bay took place at the expense of Front Bay, in Crater, which was soon abandoned as being too shallow, but the main commercial and productive activities remained in the old Aden town, in the crater. To turn Aden primarily into a military outpost implied increasing control and restriction of the civilian population which the army called for, without much success.

The Suez Canal opened in 1869 changing the course of Aden's history by ensuring its transformation into a merchant city, well placed at the crossing of a number of international trade routes, and it rapidly replaced Berbera as the regional international trade centre. In 1891 with the arrival of faster steamships, work began on dredging the port giving further impetus to the city's expansion which had started in the 1880s with the purchase of land north of the isthmus from the Sultan of Lahej. This land was used to build Shaykh Othman, initially meant to be a dormitory town for the commercial parts of Aden. It was too far away for this and although it developed autonomously, did not take this role till a century later. In the late 19th Century Tawahi and Crater remained the places where people lived and worked and their overcrowding increased. Merchants of different nationalities dealing in a variety of commodities settled in Aden establishing it as a major trading centre both for the region and further afield; trade was dominated by cotton goods, coal, grain, coffee and increasingly hides and skins.

The population increased by immigration from abroad, including Indians who worked in the administration and various others involved in the higher levels of trade, but mainly by the arrival of unskilled people from the interior and Somalia who came out of season to work as labourers and who returned home for harvest and planting. Labour was brought to Aden by contractors known as *muqaddam* from each emigrant area or village. They brought in men from home and then acted as brokers, mediating between the employer and the workers; supposedly responsible for the welfare of the workers they collected their wages, fed and housed them, retaining a heavy percentage on the way and ensuring rapid enrichment for themselves. This system remained in force throughout the period of British occupation. As the town developed, rudiments of social services were introduced with the opening of the first school in 1856. Teaching was in English and exclusively aimed at the higher classes of Indian and other immigrants, although by 1890 almost half the population was Yemeni and included people from the British-dominated areas as well as from regions which subsequently became part of the YAR such as the Hujjiriyah, al Baydah, Qa'taba etc.

The development of Aden did not, however, have a significant direct effect on the interior, as most trading was of import-export variety. The interior expanded its traditional role as a supplier of water and of animal fodder which, as the demand increased, was produced further into Fadli and later in Yafi' territory. The only other side-effect was that increased quantities of grain, vegetables and supplies were imported from further afield, Lahej, Abyan and Dhali'. Despite its increased exports of food to Aden, the interior suffered from very dramatic and natural disasters of drought, flooding and animal disease. In the 1860s there was famine throughout the area, and although British views of relations with the hinterland changed in the same period towards a more interventionist approach to promote economic and social 'progress', no effort was made to alleviate the immediate conditions of famine or to develop the hinterland.

Politically, by contrast, there was considerable development. This was prompted on the one hand by Turkish Ottoman advances from northern Yemen towards areas controlled by rulers who had relations with the British in Aden. Between 1870 and 1872 the Turks tried to obtain the subordination of Lahej, where they failed due to the ruler's faith in the British. With the Subayhi they succeeded as the ruler hoped to gain greater benefits. Earlier, in 1867 in the course of a struggle for power between two factions in Hadramaut, one side had appealed to the Turks who officially claimed control over the area and sent warships to Shihr and Mukalla, to the considerable irritation of the British. In those days British policy was to reach agreement with the Ottomans who were considered to be allies in other parts of the Middle East particularly against the Russians. Consequently negotiations took place in Istanbul rather than on the spot, in this case resulting in the withdrawal of the warships and the shelving of the issue. The Turks were clearly pursuing an active policy in the region and claimed sovereignty over most of the hinterland though they did not attempt to enforce it, except when local rulers willingly submitted to them.

Britain was encouraged to be more interventionist in the interior as in Europe colonialism became the dominant mode and the trend shifted away from a mercantile concern to hold ports and strategic positions, towards occupation and full control over lands and peoples. This became clear in the Berlin Congress of 1885, when Africa was ‘carved up’ between the different European colonial nations. The context of the Congress was an international race to leave no area of the world unassigned. In the face of both international competition and direct Ottoman claims over the area, Britain found it expedient to take a more active interest in the political affairs of the hinterland. The first move was in 1873 when Britain insisted that the Ottomans respect the ‘independence’ of nine tribes: the ‘Abdali, Fadli, ‘Awlaqi, Yafi’, Hawshabi, Amiri, ‘Alawi, ‘Aqrabi and Subayhi.⁴ It was also in 1873 that the first plan for the establishment of a Protectorate over the area was drawn up; it was ignored by the authorities in India and in London, and the draft was shunted around for the following 15 years from desk to desk, but the idea survived this treatment and eventually protectorate treaties were signed.⁵ In 1886 the Government of India started a protectorates scheme with the signature of the first Treaty with the sultan of Qishn and Socotra. Areas closer to Aden were left till later, largely because of fears of protests by the Turks. These proved groundless when in 1888 the Resident in Aden went on a treaty-signing tour of states along the coast and the following year this policy was applied to inland states. Further treaties were signed in 1903 and 1904, and these continued to be revised and agreed throughout the period of British occupation. Their significance was greater in the long-term than in the short, as they officially designated who could and who could not have direct relations with Britain and consequently who did and who did not have access to weapons and other gifts. We shall return to this later when discussing the dynamics of tribal-British relations.

The treaties however did not put an end to Turkish intervention, and competition with the Ottomans continued till their final defeat in the First World War. Various commissions were set up to determine the borders between British and Turkish dominated areas, and these debates culminated in the nomination of boundary commissions, and an agreement reached in 1905. During the First World War, the Ottomans advanced as far as the suburbs of Aden in 1915, and were repelled to Dar Sa’ad where they remained for the duration. When they were finally defeated and withdrew, Imam Yahia Hamid al Din of Sana’a took over and declared Yemen to be an independent state; in 1919 he also occupied much of Aden’s hinterland which had previously been under British protection and refused to withdraw. Yahia believed that he could retain control over these areas. He had not lost any of them by negotiations with Britain and after 1926 his relations with Italy gave him further confidence. But in 1934 he felt seriously threatened by King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia whose troops were advancing into Asir in the northwest of his country, and Imam Yahia found it expedient to reach agreement

⁴ *ibid* pp. 138–146

⁵ *ibid* pp. 196–8

with Britain by withdrawing over the border and a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Cooperation was signed in February 1934.⁶ This was to be the basis of all future border discussions and disagreements between Britain and North Yemen which it failed to solve definitively due to the different understanding of the word 'border' in English and Arabic, the former treating it as a line and the latter as an area. It was however agreed that temporarily all forces should withdraw to their earlier positions and Britain recovered its protectorates, which thereafter suffered no more than various incursions and threats, but were not reoccupied by the Imam's troops or administrators.

The Ottomans and the Imams had little part to play in what became the Eastern Protectorate; after the withdrawal of the Turkish ships in 1867 and despite various appeals to them by the Naqib of Mukalla and the Kathiri of Seiyun at various times, their intervention on the ground was at an end.

The transformation of the hinterland

Although the influence of the British in penetrating and transforming the dynamics of southern Yemeni society was paramount, other factors played a significant role, in particular those which were products of the growth in industry world wide which rendered obsolete many of the features of Yemeni economic and political relations. One was the introduction of accurate rifles to replace the traditional matchlock, another was the arrival of motor transport to replace the camel. Both had an influence comparable to that of British intervention, and the three factors combined fundamentally to undermine traditional tribal structures and intertribal relations.

The new types of weapons were the Le Gras, Remington and Martini-Henri rifles which made it possible to conduct blood feuds at a distance of hundreds of metres rather than face-to-face and resulted in dramatically increased bloodshed. Starting in the 1880s, these weapons rapidly replaced the older types throughout Yemen and by 1902 had reached as far as Wadi Hadramaut and soon after even Marib. They were imported illegally through all the accessible ports on the Red Sea coast and although there are no definite estimates of the total number imported in the last 20 years of the 19th Century, it is clear that most men acquired them, even members of classes which were not traditionally arms bearing. 'During the thirtyyear period from 1880 to 1910 the traditional tribesman with his dagger at his belt and a slow match for his matchlock bound round his turban was replaced by the now familiar figure of the Arab with his faithful rifle slung across his shoulder.'⁷ Groups of ordinary tribesmen were thus encouraged to challenge the rule of their traditional leaders and to use their weapons to collect tolls independently on established trade routes, giving no more than nominal allegiance to their former leaders. This contributed to a further fragmentation

⁶ For the Imam's view of relations with Britain, see M. W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen 1918-1966*, John Hopkins, 1967, pp. 158-164

⁷ R. J. Gavin, *op cit* p. 204

of society into smaller and smaller tribal segments and it was often in such a period of flux that the British would arrive to sign a protectorate treaty and reach agreement with the 'Chief of the tribe.

At the best of times tribal leadership was fluid, and could shift from one branch of a family to another according to their relative power and influence and the personal qualities of the individual contenders. Relations between tribes varied according to the balance of diverse factors: control over economic resources such as agriculture and Ashing, the strength of the group in armed men, the control of trade routes for the imposition of customs duties or the organization of caravans, the profits of cattle raiding, the level of local and international trade from which levies could be collected, harvests, droughts, floods and other 'natural' cycles. When the British arrived in search of signatories to treaties, they were looking for tribal 'leaders' and these were not always easy to find nor necessarily willing to co-operate. On the other hand the tribes saw the British as just another faction, not unlike the Ottomans, entering the complex politics of the area, and thought they could be used and manoeuvred within the traditional patterns of inter-tribal relations. By the time it became clear that they represented a greater danger to the system it was too late: the tribes were deeply enmeshed with the British authorities and no longer had the strength to ignore them.

Starting with the signing of protectorate treaties with whoever appeared to be the main leader of what appeared to be the dominant tribe in any given area, Britain unwittingly laid the basis for its own future problems and for the rapid collapse of traditional intra- and inter-tribal relations.⁸ How wrong things could go was shown by the example of the Amiri of Dhali'. Britain had problems with them from the earliest days, and added to these were the claims of the Ottomans and later the Imam to sovereignty over some or all of the so-called Amiri area ranging from the Radfan mountains to Qa'taba. This was one of the areas whose independence the Ottomans were forced to recognize in 1873. The first conflict occurred when the British recognized one chief Ali Muqbil in the course of a succession dispute; the Ottomans supported his rival and imprisoned the British nominee who soon escaped and was only reinstated three years later. In the following years the Turks manoeuvred among sub-sections of this group and the Amir of Dhali' lost much of his influence and territory to 'lesser' chiefs. In the later years of the Century, the Amir had increasing difficulties with the Qutaibi, who were supposedly his vassals but were heavily armed and considered that they had the right to levy tolls on the Dhali'-Aden road where it passed through their territory. By the mid-1930s Belhaven reported that the situation had reached a high degree of absurdity, although this was no more than an extreme example of what was going on elsewhere:

'The Qateibi tribe, through whose territory ran the road from Qataba and Dhala' to Aden, had been subjected to a prolonged operation of air block-

⁸ *ibid* p. 201-3 for a discussion of the British understanding of the concept of tribe and how British

ade. This method, much favoured at that time, entailed the subjection of a territory to desultory bombing of a harassing nature, until a fine was paid. Great satisfaction was felt when, after several weeks, the Qateibi paid the fine levied on them and agreed to give the Amir of Dhala' hostages from their leading families, as a surety of their future good behaviour. The operations formed the subject of lengthy dispatches and much self-congratulation in Aden. To no one, however, did the conclusion of these operations afford more wholehearted delight than to the Qateibi, who had paid not one penny of the fine themselves and who had forced the Amir of Dhala' to receive and to entertain up to twenty of their number as permanent unpaying guests at Dhala'.

That the Amir of Dhala' had any influence over the Qateibi tribe was a delusion of the Aden Secretariat. He had none, unless he paid handsomely for it and, since he had frequent occasions to visit Aden, and his only road lay through Qateibi country, he paid often. The Qateibi were a virile, independent tribe, having no treaty with the British and owing allegiance to none. As soon as they had received the Aden Government's ultimatum, they had passed it to the Amir, with threats. They had closed the road to him; but they allowed him to pay a visit to Lahej where, after long bargaining, he managed to borrow sufficient money from the Sultan to pay the fine levied on Qateibi and the additional fine which they had levied on him. When the government suggested that the Amir should take hostages from them, he burst into tears; but they somehow heard of the suggestion and forced on him some twenty hungry savages, who lived in his best guest-rooms and threatened him with death and dishonour whenever the catering fell below their high standard. The Qateibi hostages at Dhala' were some of the happiest men I have known. They would rock with laughter when they loosened full ammunition belts and puffed away at the Amir's hookers, after a mutton stew of shocking dimensions. At last the Amir fled to Aden refusing to return to his country until the Qateibi hostages returned to theirs which they eventually agreed to do on the payment of a lump sum.'⁹

Having chosen a certain family as the supreme leaders of an area, the British were later forced to back up their choice against others who were often more powerful locally, had equal or greater resources, and firmly rejected the supremacy of the British nominee. By insisting on making a choice, British room for manoeuvre was restricted

policy distorted the relations prevailing before their arrival

⁹ Lord Belhaven, *The Uneven Road*, John Murray, London, 1955, pp. 136–7. This is an account by a Scottish aristocrat of his life first as an officer with the Aden Protectorate Levies and later as a Political Officer in the Western Protectorate from 1931 to the outbreak of World War Two. Written with humour this book gives considerable insight into the working style of early political officers and the types of relationships they developed with the Yemeni community

to seeking a candidate whom they considered most likely to serve their interests within the 'ruling' family and they then forced their choice onto the tribal council. Since their candidate was often challenged they would often find themselves using threats and force to support him.

This clientage soon developed into a system of subsidies which was originally introduced when the Government Guest House was opened in 1870. By 1880–81 it received 1,395 guests who were entertained and given presents on departure which in the same year amounted to Rs 46000 (£2,300 or twenty times that in today's values).

'The role it played in British relations with the tribes may be gathered from the sums of money spent and the fact that a carefully graded hospitality was offered. Tribesmen were divided into three categories for the purposes of entertainment... The whole system was geared to the pattern of social relationships in the hinterland, modified by the degree of friendliness of the individuals concerned towards the British authorities. Here was a fertile field for offering slights or flattery to tribal potentates.'¹⁰

Subsidies sometimes took the form of cash, but were most often in the form of rifles and ammunition:

'The other major chiefs, and this meant, above all, the chiefs who had signed the various protectorate treaties, were also accorded special treatment by the Aden Government. Contact with tribesmen was channelled through them and, much to the disgust and anger of many tribesmen, only those who received a recommendatory letter from the appropriate chief were welcomed and entertained at the Aden Government Guest House — an institution which was now more active than ever before.

... Since the 1880s, Aden had been issuing rifles and ammunition to approved potentates in the hinterland, especially the Sultans of Lahej, and in 1897 these arms issues had been liberalised to enable British protégés to keep ahead of those with access to smuggled weapons ... Of course the method of issuing arms was modelled upon the system of paying subsidies and making presents. They went in the first instance to the chiefs, indeed many of the presents to the chiefs took the form of rifles and ammunition rather than cash.'¹¹

Policy towards the hinterland was determined in the higher spheres of the British colonial establishment, but their instrument was the Arabic Department which later became the Arabic Office. The following account written in 1931 reveals both British attitudes to the hinterland tribesmen and how decisions on what appeared to be minor points to the British could affect the situation on the ground:

¹⁰ R. J. Gavin, *op cit* p. 127

¹¹ *ibid* p. 238–9

I remember with awe when first I entered this file-strewn place. On a high chair, such as those in use in eighteenth-century accounting offices in London, before a minute, elevated desk, sat a thin, elderly Arab, the interpreter. Desk and floor were littered with rustling papers. Two windows were blocked with contorted Oriental faces and a pandemonium of threats and insults filled the air, which was thick already with the fumes of the interpreter's hubble bubble pipe, the long tube of which coiled among the discarded files. It seemed that the interpreter had refused, to recommend a grant of rifles to the bearded faces in the window, but had granted one to another lot of faces, thereby giving the latter a deadly advantage over the former in a private war; for which the interpreter was now being threatened with instant disembowelment. As I stood there, amazed, the police arrived and a messenger, in a red turban, delivered a box full of papers from Lake. The top one fell into my hands and, before I placed it on the interpreter's desk, I read it. 'After compliments', I read, 'the Arwali demand a gift of arms and gun powder. If they do not receive this they will make a pillage on the road.' Below this I read, in a neat hand, 'refused, M. C. Lake'. So far the interpreter had remained statue calm, his eyes on his desk, his pen poised, the mouthpiece of his hubble-bubble held in his left hand; just then one of the policemen, pressing forward to expel the faces from the window, stepped on the tube of the pipe and deprived the interpreter of his smoke. He exploded with a scream of rage and rose, papers cascading right and left. I backed out of the room. I asked the young clerk who was showing me round what was the meaning of the uproar we had just witnessed.

"It is the Indian System," he said.¹²

Intervention in the interior from the 1930s onwards

Under the leadership of Sir Bernard Reilly who governed Aden from 1930 to 1940 a new policy of intervention and promotion of 'progress and development' in the hinterland was developed by which protectorate treaties were replaced by advisory ones. Aden and the Protectorates up to that time were a department of the government of Bombay, with more remote control from Delhi and eventually by the India Office in London. Policy was directly oriented to support the specific interests of the British in Bombay, not even of those in India generally, for the perspective of those administrators was totally different from the expansionist and interventionist policies prevailing in the Colonial Office which controlled other parts of the British Empire. Various British officials in Aden had tried to disengage the towns and Protectorates from Bombay's grip and eventually Reilly succeeded. In 1932 Aden was removed from the authority

¹² Belhaven, *op cit* p. 56

of the Bombay Legislative Assembly and put under that of the Viceroy of India as a Chief Commissioner's Province, and in 1937 it was finally transferred to the Colonial Office and divorced from anything that happened or might happen in India.

Intervention in the Protectorates and in Aden continued till the last years of British presence in the area, except for a break during the Second World War, when Aden was restored to its primarily military role. Although expansion took place both in the town and in the Protectorates the pace was greatly accelerated particularly in Aden town which prospered and rapidly became a major international commercial centre, as well as an ever-developing naval and air force military base with the consequent services industries. The hinterland experienced little material benefits even in the more interventionist phase of the 1950s.

Despite the border settlement following the defeat of the Ottomans with the First World War trouble continued with the Imamate of Yemen, the Imam insisting on his sovereignty over the Protectorates, and this was only inconclusively solved in 1934 with the Sana'a Agreement which called for the withdrawal of the Imam's troops from the various border areas of the Protectorates which they had occupied. Thereafter the Imam and his agents promoted dissidence against the British in the various sheikhdoms by supplying arms, ammunition and other necessities to groups who wanted to fight the British presence. Continuous dissidence against the British-supported leaders in the tribal areas was attributed by many to the conspiracies of the Imam whose aim was to create a united Yemen under his authority. However, although rebel tribesmen might accept money, weapons and ammunition from the Imam and his agents, that did not mean that they supported his political aims. On the contrary, their aim was invariably independence at the tribal level as national aspirations had not reached the hinterland in the 1940s, and only gradually did so in the 1950s. By the late 1950s the aim of all dissidence was 'independence' from colonialism, even though it is likely that in many cases this was defined as nothing more than the elimination of British interference in the internal affairs of the tribe, and the removal of the leaders imposed by the British. It was, of course, convenient as well as good public relations for British spokesmen to claim that the root of the troubles was the Imam, but such statements were no more than propaganda ploys. As reliable an authority as a former High Commissioner of Aden who was in office in the 1960s admitted that the aim of the rebels was independence and not unity with the Yemen under the Imam.¹³

The fragmentation of southern Arabian society in recent centuries was manifest in the rivalries between tribes and within tribes. As we have seen this was exacerbated by the new status acquired by petty rulers as a result of their Protectorate treaties with Britain in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Life became more dangerous with the introduction of more powerful and accurate firearms but also through the undermining of the traditional economy. Trade had in the past supported nomadic tribes in different ways: the caravan leaders and camel owners transported goods,

¹³ K. Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, London, 1968, pp. 79-81

other tribes levied customs duties to allow the goods to go through their territories, and finally some raided caravans. From the 1930s onwards three major factors put an end to this system: first the British claimed to control caravan routes and demanded free passage on the roads, coming into conflict with the tribes over customs dues and over raids. Further, although the Yemenis had obtained the new firearms, the British outdid them with airpower with which they were unable to compete. The second major influence was the introduction of motorised transport of goods which destroyed the livelihood of the camel owners and caravan leaders although the British introduced some ineffective measures to protect the camel caravans.¹⁴ For example when, in 1937, the first road suitable for motor vehicles between Mukalla and Seiyun in Wadi Hadramaut was opened:

‘the fees for the use of the road were designed not only to give revenue but also, in conjunction with minimum fares, to protect the beduin camel traffic. In fact goods were not allowed to be carried by road unless they were perishable, too heavy for camels, or urgent, in all of which cases the freight charged had to be higher than that which would be charged for camel transport.’¹⁵

The third significant factor of change was the new interventionist ‘advisory’ type of treaty signed with the British; unlike the earlier ‘protection’ treaties, these stated that the local rulers would ‘take British advice on matters not related to religion.’¹⁶ The first of these was signed with the Qu’ayti sultan in 1937 and the last was signed in 1957 but a number of statelets never accepted an advisory treaty, including Upper Yafi’ and Dathina. These advisory treaties meant the end of the independence of the rulers as they had to accept advice on internal affairs and in exchange could expect some crumbs in the form of financial aid for symbolic development projects in the fields of health, education and agriculture. The paucity of development which took place up to independence can be seen in the state of the country in 1967, discussed below. With the advisory treaties often came resident British advisers and daily interference in tribal politics, sustained with financial and other inducements, so for example a leader who was reluctant to take certain advice concerning traffic along a route would find that aid to build a school or weapons for his tribesmen were not forthcoming till he changed his mind.

Development expenditure was supposed to be financed by local taxes and British involvement was either symbolic or with a clear political purpose, as for example in the opening of the School for the Sons of Chiefs. The meagre resource base of most of the statelets was such that they were unable to finance any of the projects

¹⁴ See R. J. Gavin, *op cit* pp. 279–8, 334, on the effects on the economy of the opening of motorable roads, and the strengthening of military forces set up thanks to British intervention

¹⁵ H. Ingrams, *Arabia and the Isles*, 3rd ed. J. Murray, London, 1966, p. 298

¹⁶ R. J. Gavin, *op cit* p. 303

their populations needed. What little surplus the rulers succeeded in extracting went towards tribal support, ie the supply of arms and ammunition to their tribesmen, and to maintain the standards of hospitality required by their position. Their lifestyle was hardly different from that of their tribes-people, indicating that their wealth was not substantially greater, though they usually managed to have slightly larger houses than anyone else.

Against this background of turmoil, it is not surprising to find that at no time during the period of British occupation was the entire area at peace. Somewhere there was always some kind of armed rebellion on a smaller or larger scale. The character of this struggle changed over time: appearing at first to be just another form of inter-tribal dispute typical of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, it gradually worsened thanks to the introduction of rifles, motor transport and competition for control over trade routes. These contradictions eventually developed into an organised struggle for independence under a nationalist leadership in the 1960s. It is clear, however, that Britain's main impact on the interior was the undermining of traditional structures by imposing an artificial rigidity which distorted their movement, by the support of certain leaders against others, effectively creating certain statelets at the expense of others which might have emerged had there been no treaties. More positively it was British influence which served to reduce the bloodshed caused by the new rifles in tribal feuding by forcing truces on the rival groups, whose relations had deteriorated to a state of permanent warfare and paralysis by the 1930s. How far the situation had deteriorated before the British intervened is best illustrated in the case of Wadi Hadramaut where by the 1930s families had been locked inside their houses for literally years for fear of being shot in a feud if they came out, and where for the same reasons agriculture had almost disappeared as people were unable to go and cultivate their land. In some cases they had gone so far as to dig tunnels so they could travel from house to field without being shot.¹⁷

Free access for all to the roads, and allowing motor vehicle traffic destroyed the economy of the caravan tribes and of those who controlled the trade routes without giving them any alternative economic activity, as there was no systematic expansion of agriculture and fisheries which were left to their traditional practitioners. These now had the advantage of not being shot, but the disadvantage of being taxed by rulers who had the support of the British administration. It is little wonder that the nomads who had previously controlled trade were hostile to the new régime.

While the interior stagnated and rebelled, Aden saw a phase of unparalleled expansion which was also to affect the future and the perspective that the people of the interior had of both the British and themselves. Aden was expanded as a military base when the British handed over defence of the protectorate to the Air Ministry in 1927 allowing the hinterland to be controlled more effectively with fewer men, as

¹⁷ H. Ingrams, *op cit* p. 241 and F. Stark, *The Southern Gates of Arabia*, J. Murray, London, 1936, p. 227

clearly the tribesmen could not respond in kind to airborne attack. In this way, the British needed very few men on the ground in the form of political officers who carried out negotiations with the tribesmen and called on airstrikes when military action was needed. This was yet another feature which favoured the development of Aden at the expense of the interior, as RAF personnel resided in the town where they could live in the style usual to colonial people, namely luxury beyond the wildest imagination of the average tribesperson.

Oil bunkering became a major feature of the port from the 1920s onwards, rapidly giving Aden an unbeatable advantage in the port trade over its neighbouring rivals, and after 1954 when the refinery was opened, a further increased advantage. Trade with the interior remained insignificant and the gap between the two worsened, making Aden an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty. This particularly affected the people of the interior who now saw the differences with their own eyes: tribal leaders went to Aden regularly to pay their respects to the British and collect their 'gifts' and the tribesmen migrated there in search of work and saw how the British lived, but also discovered the extent of discrimination against them. In Aden the British favoured the older generation of imported Indians and their descendants, other immigrants and the few 'Adeni' families. Protectorate unskilled worker immigrants were not treated any better than the 'Yemeni' immigrants from the Hujjiriyah and other border areas which sent their labour force to Aden. All these people were involved in creating the prosperity or its symbols, in building the refinery, whole residential areas in Khormaksar, Mansura and Little Aden, roads, apartment blocks, schools to which they did not have the right to send their children, hospitals, cinemas, water and electricity supplies etc. These visible contradictions influenced men's thinking and soon transformed the nature of relations between the British and those whom they ruled. Under the combined influence of their experience and increasing awareness of political events in the outside world, the social peace of Aden was gradually undermined, starting in the 1950s, and dissent in the Protectorates took up the new colours of nationalism. These developments will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter, but here, having dealt with British policy in the interior, I shall briefly look at British policy in Aden in the last years of the Colony.

Constitutional changes in the 1950s and the Federation of South Arabia

The early 1950s saw the rise of Arab nationalism as well as increased demands by the Imam of Yemen for sovereignty over the Aden Protectorates both of which made the British look for constitutional reform to give the interior 'statelets' more legitimacy. The move towards advisory treaties peaked in the late 1940s and early 1950s but never included all states as Upper Yafi' in particular fiercely kept its distance. Thereafter

greater cohesion was required to deal with both decolonisation worldwide and the rise of Arab nationalism. The first British-sponsored effort at federation of the various statelets foundered in 1955 due to the tribal leaders' inability to give any one of their number precedence.

The mid-fifties were indeed a time of setbacks for the British when for the first time they had to face simultaneously anti-British actions in their favourite Amirate of Lahej, sponsored by the South Arabian League (see below), mutinies and mass desertions among the underpaid Levies, leading to withdrawal from the interior except for fortified positions which could be supplied by air, and increased rebellion by tribesmen aided by the Imam, who were dealt with by the traditional method of general bombardment. Added to these disasters, the Protectorate rulers' rejection of the British-sponsored federation was the final blow. However a federation which the rulers had regarded with suspicion became fashionable when in 1958 Nasser's Egypt united with Syria and 'federated' with the Imam's Yemen to form the United Arab States. So a new federation was thought up, this time at the initiative of some of the tribal rulers. It was inaugurated in 1959, with only 6 members, excluding the previously dominant Lahej Sultanate whose pre-eminence had caused the failure of earlier efforts but whose current sultan was close to the South Arabian League, and therefore out of favour with Britain.

The six founding states (Dhali', Audhali, Upper Aulaqi Sheikhdome, Bayhan, Fadli and Lower Yafi') were those whose rulers had the closest and friendliest ties with Britain, including some whom Yemeni leaders described as 'sheikhs of the day before yesterday' appointed by the British.¹⁸ In late 1961, with the prospect of Aden being forced to join, and during a brief phase when the project looked feasible, another 9 states joined: Lahej whose Nasserite sultan had been overthrown and sent into exile by the British in 1958 and replaced with a more compliant relative, Lower Aulaqi, Dathina, Haushabi, 'Alawi, Maflahi, Shu'aib and only one of the Eastern Protectorate States, Wahidi. The other states in the Eastern Protectorate, Kathiri, Qu'ayti, Qishn and Socotra refused throughout as they hoped that oil would be discovered on their land and did not wish to have to share the bounty with any impoverished mountain statelets.

The Federation never got off the ground, partly because of its constitution which made each statelet leader a minister, and also because it had no means whereby it might impose its own authority, or sponsor social and other services. It had no budget with which to build and staff schools or hospitals, and no authority in the interior. It settled in the newly built capital of al-Ittihad (nowadays Madinat al Sha'b) off the road from Aden to Little Aden across the border line of Aden Colony, a totally artificial creation. In al-Ittihad the ministers who were also rulers of their own states quibbled over power and control of non-existent resources, but more than anything they realised that the membership of Aden was essential if the Federation was to develop

¹⁸ R. J. Gavin, *op eit* p. 341

any substance, given that Aden possessed the only prospect of economic viability which the Federation could hope for.⁽¹⁾

Aden politicians, like those of Lahej before them, would only consider joining as leaders. Such an attitude was unacceptable to the independent rulers of the interior states. The conflict between the urban-based smoothies of Aden and the tribal leaders of the interior gave the British a new role as mediators to try and forge a united state from such disparate elements. As a former High Commissioner put it: 'British colonial rule had converted Aden into an island which might have been separated by a hundred miles of ocean from the South Arabian mainland. As a consequence the old-established families had cultivated the kind of oyster-like introversion sometimes found amongst the inhabitants of small and remote islands.'¹⁹ In the 1950s they gradually came to realise that the world was changing, partly because of a hostile and political trade union movement which had developed in the city, but also as a result of the British defeat in Suez in 1956, the rise of Arab nationalism, and more locally the discussion and creation of the Federation in the Protectorates. Consequently the Adenis felt the need to call for independence, but mostly hoped that this could be achieved on the same terms as other city states like Singapore. They did not want to get involved in the interior which they considered to be populated by savages, but more importantly they did not want Aden's wealth to be used to support this interior by paying for education, health or even roads. (At the time of independence there were barely 20km of paved roads outside the colony of Aden). Increasing dissent in the town and the rise of the trade union movement, although disturbing, did not persuade them to make concessions. The first Legislative Council composed half of nominated members and half of ex-officio members opened in 1947, and in 1955 a concession was made by Britain to rising Arab nationalism by allowing four out of the 18 seats to be contested in elections. The only 'Adeni' organisation to participate in the elections was the *Aden Association*,⁽²⁾ the representative of the mercantile class. The vast majority of the population of Aden was disenfranchised: the only people who had the vote were British-protected subjects who had lived in Aden for 7 of the last 10 years. This allowed Somalis to vote but disqualified Yemenis, with the result that only 21,500 were enfranchised, out of a population of 180,000. It was announced that in 1959 the number of elected members would rise to 12 to outnumber the 5 ex-officio and 6 nominated. This election was boycotted by the nationalists.

¹⁹ K. Trcvaskis, *op eit* p. 94

⁽¹⁾ From their offices and houses they could never forget Aden as the architects of al-Ittihad had designed all office and residential buildings to look out on Aden. Main office suites and home sitting rooms and terraces opened on excellent views of Tawahi and Ma'alia below Mount Shamsan forming an aesthetic background to the ships in the port. The North exposure of the buildings showed sparsely vegetated expanses of sand and on very rare clear days, mountainous outlines on the horizon. This could not fail to remind them daily of the contrast between the wealth of Aden and the barrenness of their own lands.

⁽²⁾ The Yemeni Political Organisations which emerge in this period are discussed in the next chapter.

The Aden notables hoped throughout, despite all setbacks, that Britain would eventually give Aden independence as a merchant city statelet but in 1956 received a cold shower when the then Colonial Secretary, Lord Lloyd, during a visit to Aden, far from mentioning independence, was so retrograde as to even refuse to consider self-government. In his address to the Legislative Assembly he stated that Britain would continue to honour its obligations concerning Aden:

‘I should like you to understand that for the foreseeable future it would not be reasonable or sensible or, indeed, in the interests of the Colony’s inhabitants, for them to aspire to any aim beyond that of a considerable degree of internal self-government. Therefore whilst I have indicated the type of constitutional advance to which the people in this colony may legitimately wish to aspire, Her Majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that the importance of Aden both strategically and economically within the Commonwealth is such that they cannot foresee the possibility of any fundamental relaxation of their responsibilities for the colony. I feel that this assurance will be welcome to you and to the vast majority of the Colony.’²⁰

By the early 1960s, the prospect of Britain leaving the area was looming on the horizon and the government was vainly trying to persuade the Adeni urban trader politicians to join as no better than equals a federation of tribal backwoodsmen. The only carrot they could use was to link independence to membership of the Federation. Thus blackmailed the Aden Legislative Council was persuaded to agree a merger with the Federation, debating the issue in a week of major disturbances by the townspeople who were disenfranchised and who rioted in protest at the merger and the political system in general. The vote was taken on 26 September 1962 and narrowly passed. This was indeed the eleventh hour, as later on that very day news reached Aden of the overthrow of the Imam and the Republican revolution in Sana’a, an event which was to transform the history of Yemen.

By 1963, the British had a Federation which included Aden and, it would seem, were left with the task of setting it on the road to independence. But the future was to see more turmoil as in that year nationalist armed struggle started in the mountains of Radfan, and in Aden itself trade unionists and others became increasingly open in their opposition to Britain. At the same time, British involvement in the Colony deepened after 1960 when Aden was chosen to replace Cyprus as the Headquarters of the British Middle East Command, and a large number of troops and their families were brought in to defend what remained of the empire. While the rulers of the interior, now in the Federation, were looking forward to a future of independence under the protective military umbrella of the British base in Aden, the town was being turned into a garrison. With servicemen and their dependents arriving, thousands of Yemeni immigrants were employed to build married quarters for them including the mile-long blocks of flats in Ma’alla.

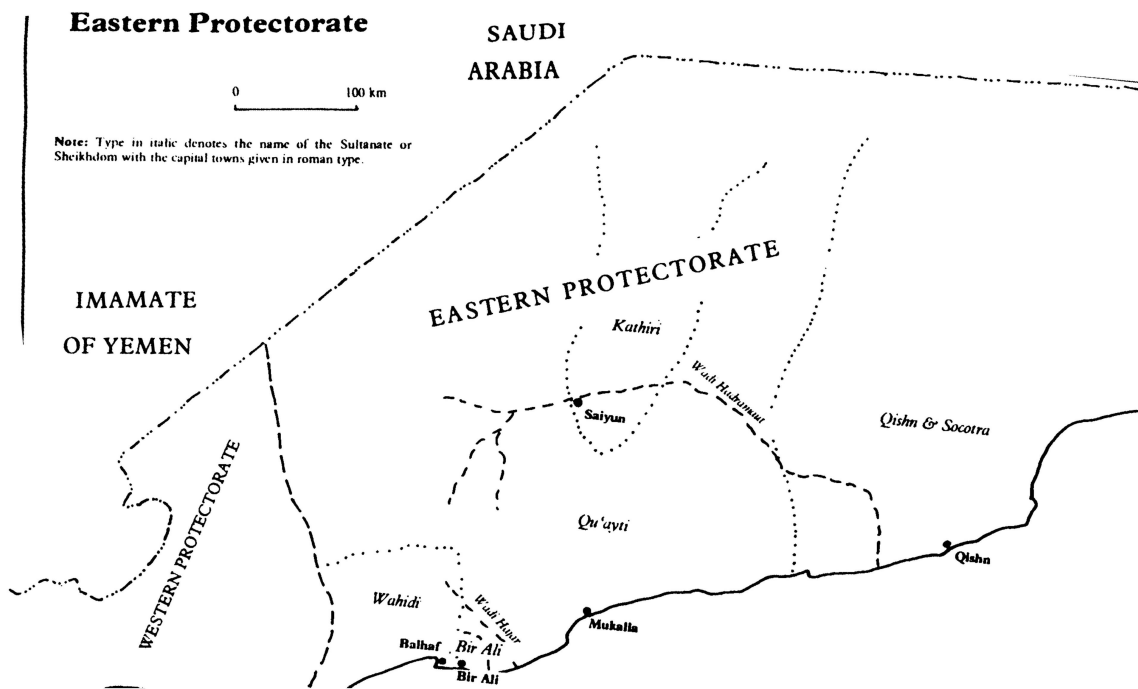
²⁰ T. Little, *South Arabia, Arena of Conflict*, London, 1968, pp. 34–5

The change of regime in Sana'a had encouraged dissidence in Aden itself and from 1963 onwards there were an increasing number of acts of hostility against the British, starting in December 1963 when the then High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, a former British Agent in the hinterland, narrowly escaped a grenade attack at the airport, while on his way to London for a constitutional conference. Thereafter the British sought to regain control over security and declared a state of emergency. With the Labour victory in England in October 1964, the future of the Colony and the Federation was once again examined as the Labour party had previously established good relations with one of the chief opponents of the traditional Adeni politicians, Abdullah al Asnaj, as a result of brotherly relations between the Aden TUC which he led and the British TUC. In efforts to bring a more popular régime to power in Aden, the Labour party tried to involve his party, The People's Socialist Party, and later appointed his nominee

Abdul Qawi Makkawi to be Chief Minister of Aden. The latter was even more opposed to the Federation than his predecessor, Baharoon, a member of the old merchant class, but was only in power from March to September 1965, during which time violence increased both in Aden and the Protectorates. As a result the new Labour Government resorted to direct rule, re-instituting Crown Colony Government in September 1965.

In February 1966, the British government delivered the death blow to Aden and the Protectorates, and specifically to their modern incarnation, the Federation of South Arabia. A Defence White Paper outlined the new British policy which, reversing all previous statements, stated that independence would be granted by 1968, that Britain would not retain the military base after independence and that all British troops would be withdrawn by December 1968. Moreover there would be no treaty of defence with the Federation. With this abrupt statement Britain abandoned its friends overnight, those who had risked nationalist hostility for favour and power under British auspices. It spelt the death of the Federation and of Aden as it then stood. Thereafter the only serious activity which could concern the British was to withdraw as quietly as possible with a minimum of bloodshed, leaving the different factions to fight each other for control of the future independent state.

Colonial maps



Adapted from *La Péninsule Arabique d'Anson d'Ani Paul Bonnemant* (1911), CNRS Paris.

Chapter Two: The development of nationalism and the struggle for independence

British intervention in Southern Arabia never went unchallenged: throughout the colonial period armed opposition movements intermittently fought the British and the rulers they had imposed, particularly in the rural areas. As we have seen¹ these movements were at first of a 'tribal' nature and started off by treating the British in the same way as the Ottomans or the Yemeni Imam as external forces which could be manipulated within the framework of the real power struggles, namely those between neighbouring rulers. Prior to the Second World War there was no nationalist movement in the country. By nationalist I mean asserting a common national identity whose expression is a claim to a single state comprising a geographic, linguistic and cultural entity; in the Arab context such a movement would also share in the wider Arab concerns of Palestine and of ending British and French influence in the area. The hinterland remained unaware of such movements till the 1950s; when they came, the new ideas were brought by radio, by migrant workers returning from Aden or further afield where they had been politicised through their work experience and exposure to the prevailing political trends, and also by students who had acquired a wider perspective on the world in the larger towns or even abroad, often in the Sudan. As ownership of radios spread to the most remote areas, Cairo Radio from the mid-1950s onwards had considerable influence on the most isolated members of society and popularised Nasser and his ideas of anti-colonialism and broad Arab nationalist aims, thus helping to form a new consciousness.

Workers and students had considerable influence in the long run: the workers were mainly of tribal and rural origin who returned and politicised the small communities who represented the higher tribal (*qabili*) social strata, and the experience they brought was of workers in a capitalist society, ie members of the lowest class in the British hierarchy. The contradiction between their high status in the Yemeni hierarchy and their low one in the colonial hierarchy had a significant impact on future development. Returning students were mainly drawn from two traditional groups: either the sons of British-sponsored rulers who went to special schools and were sometimes sent abroad, and whose education aimed to make them into the type of rulers the British

¹ See Chapter 1

wanted, namely supporters of British interests, modernisers who would not challenge the prevailing social order. The second group was more interesting politically: as the few schools built were in the towns, their students were mainly the sons of urban dwellers, people who in the traditional social hierarchy were among the lower strata, shopkeepers and artisans. In the 1960s and after independence this group formed a new class of educated cadres who could justifiably lay a claim to high status positions as a result of their training and who found themselves in a position to challenge the traditional higher strata many of whose members lacked the skills required by a modern state. These students had considerable influence in their home towns thanks to their broader experience, many went to secondary school in the Sudan; politically they challenged the traditional social structure and supported organisations whose greater egalitarianism coincided with their own interests.

Within Aden, things were different. It allowed for a greater amount of intellectual freedom than many other Arab capitals though its particular status and social composition greatly influenced the type of thinking which took place, and made it very different from Beirut or Cairo, where nationalism developed. In Aden the status of colony, the influence of the Indian population, and the close professional, mainly trading, connections between the old 'Adeni' families and the foreign trading community, Indian, Parsee and French, combined to direct the new thinking away from a Yemeni nationalism which would have meant greater links with the tribal interior regarded by the urban bourgeoisie as barbaric, savage and totally uncivilised. The Adeni bourgeoisie had much in common with other merchants, saw themselves as part of the world trading community and despised the armed, sparse, loud and poor tribesmen who lived in harsh conditions and believed in traditional tribal values and the politics of the gun. It was within this urban context that political organisations in the modern sense started to develop after the Second World War. The presence of such basic amenities as printing presses and schools in Aden meant that movements whose base was rural, had their earlier political manifestations there.

Adeni political movements

1. The early organisations

The Arab Reform Club was started in Aden as early as 1930 and by 1938 it had over 150 members. In the same period the Arab Literary Club was also formed. Both were started and run for the benefit of members of the old Adeni merchant families who included the Luqman, Jaffer, Makkawi, al Asnaj, Bayoomi and al Jifris. Members of all these families were to play important roles in the period up to independence, in positions ranging from Chief Minister within the British-sponsored Federation (Bayoomi) to leader of the Nasserite-sponsored opposition to the British (Asnaj). The same group were responsible for the first newspaper published in Aden, *Fatal al Jazira* (Luq-

man), first published in January 1940 partly to meet the British demand for a paper which would support the war effort and combat Italian and German propaganda in the region. Learning that Mohammed Ali Luqman was planning a newspaper, the British decided to sponsor and assist his paper, rather than publish their own.²

From 1944 onwards a boost was given to nationalist feeling in Aden by the arrival of the exiled Free Yemeni leaders.³ In June of that year, the earliest and main leaders of the Free Yemeni Party, Ahmed Mohammed Nu'man, Mohammed Mahmoud Zubairy, Ahmed Mohammed ash Shami, and Zeid al Mawshaki arrived in Aden, escaping the grip of the Imam in Sana'a. Because the Imam was causing trouble to the British in the Protectorates they hoped to be well received, and even to gain support from the British in Aden. Given the backwardness and isolation of the Yemeni Imamate at that time, they did not bring with them any particularly advanced nationalist thinking. On the contrary they hoped to educate themselves and broaden their horizons through contact with the educated classes of Adeni Yemenis. However, their struggle against the Imam and their need for concrete support, for money and housing provided a focus for Adeni nationalists. This brought them together with the few migrants from the Imamate who had joined the

Adeni merchant community and were enriching themselves. They were interested in changing the politics of the Imamate and were the natural base for the Free Yemeni leaders, then and later.

By the late 1940s the clubs came under criticism for being too close to the British, and as a result the same group of people founded the Aden Association in 1950 hoping to distance themselves from the British authorities. At its first meeting it drew an audience of 600 people, a very substantial number for the period. Its slogan was 'Aden for the Adenis' advocating the independence of Aden within the British Commonwealth, after a period of cooperation with Britain on constitutional reform; it participated in the first Legislative Council elections where 3 of the 4 elected members were its nominees. In 1959 when 12 candidates were elected, 11 of them were representatives of the Aden Association. All members of the Legislative Council, including some of the nominated members, were from the rich Adeni families who had been established in the Colony since the 19th Century and who had accumulated most of the prerequisites for participation in politics namely education, wealth and control of the media. In the sixties the Association split over the proposed merger of Aden with the Federation. Those who supported the Federation formed the United National Party in November 1960 under the leadership of Hassan Ali Bayoomi, while those who wanted Aden to remain on its own, following the Singapore model, formed the People's National Congress under the old Aden Association leadership of the Luqman family. Both these organisations were eventually swept away with the Federation as in the sixties real politics in

² F. Stark, *East is West*, London, 1945, p. 13

³ For more information on the Free Yemeni Movement and its influence on Adeni politics see J. L. H. Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement 1935-1962*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London 1983.

Aden were taking place neither in the Legislative Council, nor in al-Ittihad, but in the struggle between the urban-based Nasserite nationalists of the People's Socialist Party and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen on the one hand, and the rural based independent nationalists of the National Liberation Front (NLF) on the other.

2. The Aden Trade Union Congress and the People's Socialist Party

The second major trend in Aden-based politics was that which manifested itself in the Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) and later the People's Socialist Party (PSP). In contrast to the Aden Association, this grouping drew most of its support from immigrants to Aden from the Imamate and the Protectorates, workers for the most part whose politics were primarily concerned with the improvement of their very bad working conditions and with political ambitions for the whole of Yemen. Their leadership however came from the traditional Adeni families, the same grouping as that which produced the Aden Association, though in this case the lower levels of leadership were taken over by the Adeni middle professional classes who did not themselves have access to power within the framework set by the old Adeni families. Because most members of the ATUC had no vote in Aden due to the British policy of disenfranchising them, their leadership was excluded from participation in electoral politics and made demands for the reform of the franchise and an end to discrimination against Protectorate and Imamate nationals.

The ATUC emerged after a series of labour struggles with the support both of the British trade unions and the recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry into labour conditions which was formed after a series of serious strikes disrupted the Colony in early 1956. The first trade union had been legalised in 1942, but the movement only took off in the 1950s with the rapid expansion of Aden as a port and commercial centre, and the construction and later operation of the » Workers coming from the hinterland and the North were soon politic, learning about developments in the rest of the Arab world and developed a g consciousness of themselves as oppressed and colonised. In their own country were deprived of the rights such as the franchise given to subjects of the Crown like Indians and Somalis who, in the traditional Arab social hierarchy, stood far below themselves, who were proud to be tribesmen. Working conditions exacerbated these feelings, as local labour contractors abused their power and often kept substantial proportions of workers' wages for themselves charging high rates for organising abysmal housing and food and for sending remittances to the families at home. In the 1950s and particularly in early 1956 the workers revolted against this system and the strikes were well supported. The Commission of Inquiry recommended improvements in working conditions, but these were not sufficient to quell the unrest

and by the end of 1956 an estimated 28% of the workforce had been involved in losses of 210,000 working days.⁴

The ATUC was formed in March 1956 and by December, 21 unions had registered, including 16 company unions, and 3 professional bodies. Leadership was monopolised by the white collar workers of Adeni origin and excluded representatives of the mass of unskilled workers, and relations within the unions were based on traditional client-patron relationship. Improvement of working conditions and traditional trade union demands were only part of the ATUC's task. Indeed nowhere in the Arab world have trade unions adopted the purely economic demands often found in Europe: the ATUC was no exception and at least half its activities were political. For example the earlier strikes in 1956 were for the satisfaction of labour demands, but later, in 1958 action was directed against the government's immigration policy which discriminated against men from the Protectorates and the Imamate in favour of British Commonwealth citizens such as Indians and Somalis. There were also demonstrations in support of the formation of the United Arab States and Nasserite policies in general. In October 1956 a token general strike was called to oppose British and French intervention in Suez and this led to riots which the British used as an excuse to deport 240 Yemenis to the Imamate. Throughout the Fifties, under its Adeni leadership and with Abdullah al Asnaj as secretary General, the ATUC refused to participate in any way in colonial Adeni politics and it boycotted the elections both in 1955 and 1959. By 1960 the government estimated its membership to be 18,000 and it was reorganised, leaving the centre with the task of concentrating on:

‘the Congress's natural role in the national cause summed up in the Congress's pledge to march forward towards our Arab Socialist society and its unity and to free it of all means of exploitation and Colonialism’.⁵

Strikes and their suppression continued and the British issued *The Industrial Relations Ordinance* of 1960 to forbid strikes without prior mediation attempts and more generally to restrain and control the trade union movement.

With the threat of Aden being included in the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South,⁽³⁾ and the consequent split of the Aden Association, the ATUC felt the need to broaden its scope of influence which had previously been confined to Aden, partly because its leaders shared with the Adeni élite belief in the primitivism of the hinterland. The People's Socialist Party was founded in July 1962. The two organisations shared an almost identical leadership, with the president of the PSP being the ATUC's Secretary

⁴ D. C. Watt, ‘Labor relations and Trades Unions in Aden 1952–1960’, in *Middle East Journal*, autumn 1962, p. 446

⁵ D. C. Watt, *op cit* p. 449

⁽³⁾ After Aden joined it in September 1962 the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South was renamed the Federation of South Arabia

General, Abdullah al Asnaj. The PSP's platform included a call for the evacuation of the British military base, the dissolution of the Legislative Council in Aden and the Supreme Council of the Federation, and free general elections in South Yemen with universal adult franchise. The ATUC and the PSP cooperated to oppose British plans to join Aden to the Federation. In September 1962 when the vote for the merger was to take place in the Legislative Council in Aden (the Council elected on a restricted franchise excluding all North Yemenis, most Protectorate people and all women), the main leaders of ATUC and PSP were imprisoned, while major demonstrations took place in Crater. After the Revolution in Sana'a and the proclamation of the Yemen Arab Republic on 26 September demonstrations in support of the Y AR took place and calls were made for Yemeni unity. Later in October there were general strikes. All these events were sponsored and organised by the PSP-ATUC and severely repressed by the British through imprisonment and deportations.

In the following two years the PSP-ATUC came to dominate opposition to the British in Aden and to represent the nationalist movement as far as the British were concerned. The British ignored the fact that this organisation's influence was limited to Aden itself and did not extend to the Protectorates. They similarly failed to notice the birth and development of the National Liberation Front in 1963 which is discussed below. The PSP's best days came in late 1964 just after the Labour Party came to power in London. Since its foundation the ATUC had benefited from the support of the British TUC and its leader al Asnaj was seen by the Labour Party as a British-type socialist representing . progressive anticolonialism. Therefore the new Colonial Secretary hoped that a solution to Aden's problems could be found in coming to some agreement with the PSP. He dismissed the incumbent High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis and replaced him with Sir Richard Turnbull whose task was to reach some agreement for the independence of South Arabia. As the British believed that the main opposition to the Federation was the PSP, they hoped that negotiation could succeed. This would allow for the autonomy of Aden within the framework of the Federation and require only minor modifications to the political structures of the Federation and Aden.

These plans were doomed to fail. By the time the British adopted this new negotiating position, the PSP itself had lost the initiative in Aden and ceased to be the major factor in local politics. While the Federation struggled on meaninglessly in its artificial capital al-Ittihad, investing £ 14.2 million of British aid in 1964-65 on drop-in-the-ocean agriculture, fisheries, educational and health ventures, the struggle took on a new dimension with the arrival of the NLF on the scene.

3. The Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen

After the announcement made by Britain in 1966 to give South Arabia independence in 1968, and as a result of the popularity of NLF actions, the PSP realised that it would have to take up arms against the British if it were to maintain its position as a nationalist force in Aden. The popular appeal of armed struggle forced the PSP to adopt this strategy although the party was divided on the issue: the group led by Hassan Abdullah Khalifa who had been accused of attempting to assassinate the High Commissioner in December 1963 supported the armed struggle, while Abdullah al Asnaj was a great believer in the virtues of British democracy and Labour Party style socialism and opposed it. The two tendencies were reconciled after the failure of al-Asnaj's efforts to reach agreement with the new Labour Government in 1964 on the future of Aden. This led to the formation of the Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS) in February 1965: as well as the PSP this organisation included the remnants of the South Arabian League, various Adeni merchants and the then pro-Nasserite Sultans Ali Abdul Karim of Lahej who had been deposed by the British in 1958, and Ahmad ibn Abdullah of Fadli who had defected from the Federation in June 1964 during a London constitutional conference.

The creation of OLOS came too late as the PSP had by then lost much of its credibility among the working classes: many trade unionists had been attracted by the NLF's support for independence and for the republican régime in the North; workers also distrusted political manoeuvres between Adeni politicians, the Federation and the British.

The close relationship of al-Asnaj with Nasserism and their political convergence meant that it was obviously in the interest of the Egyptians to force a merger between OLOS and the NLF. OLOS was much closer to the Egyptians in ideology and organisation and it was created at a time when substantial sections of the NLF were turning against Nasserism. In order to control them and in the hope of strengthening OLOS with the fighting experience gained by the NLF in its two years of struggle, the Egyptian intelligence officers responsible for South Yemeni affairs concentrated their energies on bringing about the merger. That it would not be easy was clear as the NLF had refused to join OLOS at its formation. In January 1966 the Egyptians thought they had succeeded when the leadership of the NLF agreed to the merger and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) was founded. This did not last: it was opposed by the NLF fighters on the ground, and in November of the same year the NLF formally broke away. In the last year of struggle FLOSY was nothing more than the armed wing of the PSP, a pro-Nasserite nationalist faction including the former sultans who no longer believed in the Federation and al-Asnaj. FLOSY's main activity was to fight the rival NLF and prepare for a post-independence struggle which it hoped to win. Military struggle against the British was insignificant, but thanks to Egyptian propaganda the British were further confused and unable to

distinguish the NLF from FLOSY as Cairo Radio insisted on attributing all armed actions to FLOSY and ignoring the NLF. The British were obsessed with Nasser who was thought to be responsible for all their reverses, and ignorant of developments in South Arabia thanks to the NLF's execution of most intelligence and Special Branch officers. The British public, among others, came to believe that the main challenge was the Nasserite-supported and sponsored FLOSY.

The belief that Nasserite equals revolutionary equals Arab nationalist, meant that even after independence, the NLF was accused by some of being a British-sponsored movement whose main objective was a superficial independence which would allow colonial interest to continue, and it was distrusted by Arab 'progressives' to the extent that Syria, for example, delayed recognition of the new independent state.

FLOSY was therefore much smaller and weaker than its public image indicated, and its encounters with the NLF showed it. Despite the support of Egyptian arms and training when the final confrontation came between the two groups in Shaykh Othman in September 1967, FLOSY was quickly defeated. This was effectively the end of the PSP and FLOSY in South Yemen. Henceforth it operated as an exile movement attacking the revolutionary régime.

Movements based on Ideology

Throughout the Arab world a number of political movements emerged in the 20th Century whose inspiration came from ideological commitment and whose political programmes were in some cases based on the entire Arab area, rather than on a particular state. Two movements are of interest to us: the communists and the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. Both have since independence played an important political role and eventually, in 1975, merged with the NLF to form a new political organisation in Democratic Yemen. Here I shall discuss their role in the period leading up to independence.

1. The Ba'ath

This was a pan-Arab movement which developed in Syria in the early 1940s as a rival to the then emerging communist parties of the region. By the 1950s its ideology was characterised by the belief that only through Arab unity could the Arab nation achieve independence and that no state within the Arab nation could achieve this on its own; while being anti-communist the party claimed to be socialist. In 1956 the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party established a branch in Aden and at first its activities were closely connected to the ATUC. Its members were drawn from and participated in the working class struggles of Aden and its leadership included a-Asnaj as well as a leading Northerner, Mohsen al'Ayni who was the Ba'ath's representative for both

parts of Yemen. At the time the party had no political position on the protectorates and its interests were centred on Aden and the trade union movement.

In the 1960s after the revolution in the North, differences began to emerge within the movement as competition with the Nasserites and the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN) developed. The emergence of the NLF, the intensification of local problems and the approach of independence combined with other factors to focus the attention of the Adeni Ba'ath on regional rather than national issues⁶. (In Ba'athist parlance, national issues concern the whole Arab world, while regional ones concern those of an Arab country). These concerns brought many Ba'athists close to the positions of the MAN and the NLF and this meant internal differences within the movement, as others, such as al-Asnaj, were closely linked to the PSP. By 1964 many of the Adeni Ba'athists had rejected the positions and association of other members with the PSP although formally they remained in a single organisation and it was only after independence that the formal break took place within the Ba'ath. It is however curious that the organisation closest to Nasser, the PSP, was led by a former leader of the Ba'ath. The rise of a younger, more socialist group within the Ba'ath started in the early 1960s. Discussions were initiated both with the NLF and with the communists before independence; in 1966 for example discussions took place between the People's Democratic Union and the left Ba'athists represented by Anis Hassan Yahya.

2. The Communists

As early as the 1950s the founder of Yemeni communism, Abdullah Abdul Razzaq Badheeb was active in the country spreading socialist ideas though at that time words like Marxism were not used. An Adeni, he joined the South Arabian League and this shows the importance that he gave to the hinterland, although the policies of the SAL's leadership were by no means socialist. By 1956 his continued membership of this organisation had become untenable and with the rise of the trade union militant movement in Aden he joined the United National Front (discussed below). Most activity in the 1950s was propagandist and Badheeb wrote widely in newspapers, as well as lecturing to workers with the aim of spreading socialist ideas and discussing the problems of the country. In 1954 he was accused in court of provoking hatred between people after publishing an article challenging the role of Christianity. Although the authorities sentenced him to exile in Shihr in Hadramaut, this sentence remained unenforced after a group of Hadrami merchants opposed the decision, indicating the widespread belief in free speech, although many who supported Badheeb did not agree with his views. He was however prevented from publishing for two years and during this time went to Ta'iz where he published seven issues of a weekly, *Tali'a*, after which the Imam banned the publication despite the fact that it had concentrated on foreign rather than on local issues to avoid censorship.

⁶ See Chapter 1

In the late 1950s the group which had formed around Badheeb gradually got closer to a formal organisation and on 21 October 1961 they formed the People's Democratic Union (PDU), a party which called for a United Democratic Yemen and emphasised the importance of struggle against colonialism in the South and the Imam in the North. The members of the Union were very active in most political and trade union organisations, but the organisation had little public presence as such. Discussions and support for the NLF and armed struggle started with the birth of the NLF. The two organisations remained separate because the right wing in the NLF would not allow a communist organisation to join, but throughout the period of armed struggle the PDU through its press and its participation in trade union activities supported the actions of the NLF. It can also be credited with some political influence among the rising progressive secondary leadership of the NLF, ie those people who came to power after 22 June 1969. The NLF would allow PDU members to join only as individuals and this was considered unacceptable by the organisation's leadership. There were few ideological differences between the NLF's left and the PDU, and cooperation between them was most visible in the trade union movement, when there was a struggle between the trade unions which supported the NLF and those which supported FLOSY. The 'six unions' which sided with the NLF and swung the balance towards it were the Petroleum Workers Union, the Bank Workers Union, the Teachers Union, the Health Workers Union, the Services and Technical Workers Union and the Port Workers Union. All these unions were close to the PDU.

In 1966 and 1967, when the internal conflict within the NLF was very active, the communist press acted as mouthpiece for the left of the NLF, particularly in its weekly, *al-Amal* where Ahmad Said Bakhubaira publicised the positions of the left. In January 1967 FLOSY blew up the premises of the printing press and in the ensuing struggle between NLF and FLOSY a number of communists were killed including Abdullah Salafi, after whom the organisation was named after independence, and the leader of the Youth Union, Naguib Abdullah Said.

So although neither the Ba'athists nor the communists formally joined the NLF, both organisations worked closely with it in the period leading up to independence, laying the basis for an alliance which was to deepen in the 1970s.

Anti-British movements in the hinterland

They were also based mostly in Aden for the purposes of publications and usually because of their leaders resided there. These were important movements which differ from those mentioned earlier because their support came, on the whole, not from residents of Aden, but from the groups of the interior, organised mainly on a tribal basis.

1. The South Arabian League

The earliest of these was the South Arabian League (SAL), which mainly drew its supporters from Lahej. Throughout the colonial period, Lahej was seen by the British as the leader of the interior sheikhs and sultans. Indeed the Sultanate of Lahej was more powerful than any of the others in the Western Protectorate, and its sultans therefore expected to be treated as the overall leaders of the hinterland and not just as equals among the other leaders, which was a source of problems. When the first proposals for a federation were made in 1954, the rulers of Lahej opposed it as it did not give them the primacy over other sheikhdoms which they desired, and they therefore encouraged the development of the SAL which was only two years old at the time. They also adopted a pro-Nasserite line, following the popular Arab idea that Nasser equalled anti-colonialism equalled anti-British. This belief spread after the 1956 Suez Crisis, when Nasser was seen as a successful fighter against colonialism and as the one who had defeated the Great Powers.

The SAL was founded in 1952 but had previously existed since 1950 as the Union of the Sons of the South. Its founders were all from the Protectorate, the al-Jifri brothers from Lahej, and Sheikhan al Habshi from Hadramaut, who had recently returned from studies abroad. Their aim was the independence of a united South including both Aden and the Protectorate, and an end to the British presence. Although on the political scene for about 10 years the SAL did not enjoy the success of other organisations and it is interesting to examine the reasons for this. It was a Protectorate organisation but based in Aden, therefore it meant to attract support of those of Protectorate origin living in Aden and of the people in the Protectorate itself. As it was founded by senior Laheji notables it was fatally associated with that Sultanate, which claimed the position of *primus inter pares* among Protectorate rulers. This meant that, although one of its three main leaders was a Hadrami, support for the SAL was identified in the popular mind with support for the 'Abdali of Lahej, and it was therefore a rarity for citizens of other Protectorate states to join as this implied recognition of 'Abdali leadership. This problem prevented the development of the League on a broader scale. In Aden itself, the SAL could have been expected to attract the support of the workers from the Protectorate who by 1955 numbered 19,000 and represented nearly 14% of the population.

Workers however found that the trade unions were more likely to represent their interests both economically and politically. For them the SAL could only play politics but not even Aden politics; moreover its leadership was among the traditional élites of the sultanates with whom the workers had less in common than with the progressive élite of the ATUC.

After 1958, the SAL rapidly lost its grip on south Arabian politics as the rising trade unions dominated Adeni politics while the creation of the Federation partly as an anti-Lahej move marginalised it. In 1958 the Sultan of Lahej was exiled after promoting some nationalist moves in Lahej, including the hiring of Egyptian teachers and the

promotion of Nasserite ideas, and it was in Cairo that he and the other SAL Lahej leaders, the al-Jifri brothers established their base. In 1964 they were joined by Ahmed Abdullah, the deposed Fadli sultan, and they then joined the PSP to form OLOS, but their political significance, insofar as they ever had any, was lost.

2. The United National Front

The United National Front was another short-lived organisation of the 1950s. Formed initially in March 1955 it was partly a split from the SAL when the latter decided to participate in the Legislative Council Elections of that month, and included two ex-SAL leaders. As its name indicates it was a Front which others joined, including Abdullah Badheeb, the first Yemeni communist, and Abdullah al Asnaj, leader of the trade union movement. Its Secretary General was Mohammed Abdu Nu'man, a Free Yemeni from the Imamate, who was deported by the British in April 1956 shortly before the UNF dissolved into the ATUC and its previous component parts. The Front called for universal suffrage, unity in the south between Aden and the Protectorate, British withdrawal and eventually unity between the north and the south, and even with the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. Its aims were summarised by the then Governor of Aden as follows:

‘The National United Front whose stated policy is union with the Protectorate, the Yemen and the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman and the setting up of a South Arabian Independent state. This party is an amalgamation of the Nationalists who insist on independence and will be content with nothing less, the left wing of the South Arabian League and a few Free Yemenis who work for a more liberal form of government in their own country the Yemen’⁷

When the ATUC was formed and the UNF’s Secretary General deported, it ceased to function as a separate unit, but it had brought together different factions who continued to pursue the same aims, including union leaders and ordinary members as well as educated political personalities.

The NLF

1. The Origins of the National Liberation Front

The development of political movements in Aden took place mainly in the 1950s.⁸ Most of these were urban-based both in terms of their membership and their political

⁷ T. Hickinbotham, *Aden*, London, 1958, pp. 196–7

⁸ An earlier version of this section was presented to the Symposium on Contemporary Yemen, held

orientation, paying scant regard to the interior Protectorate which the élite regarded as primitive by comparison with the urban sophistication which it claimed for itself. Only two of these movements drew their support from the hinterland: they were the South Arabian League and the National Liberation Front. The National Liberation Front within four years developed into a force which overwhelmed the entire country, defeated its rival, FLOSY, destroyed the Federation of South Arabia and all its component statelets, and finally took over from Britain at independence. It achieved all this without any substantial support from abroad, having lost the support of Egypt in early 1966 after the failure of the merger with FLOSY.

In its own view of the history of South Arabia, the NLF considers the conflict between the Irshadi and the 'Alawi as the first manifestation of a 'class' based conflict in the region, and therefore identifies the Irshadi as its spiritual ancestors. This conflict took place in Indonesia in the first 20 years of this Century within the Hadrami community which split between the 'aristocratic' superior 'caste' of the *sada* and the commoners who organised themselves into the *Jam 'iyyat al-Irshad* (the Guidance Association) and became known as the Irshadi.⁹ The Irshadi challenged the 'Alawi (or *Sada*) in their claim to transfer to Indonesia the rights and authority associated with their hereditary status in Hadramaut as in Indonesia the two groups were not economically differentiated. The bitterness of the conflict is indicated by the fact that it degenerated to occasional street fighting and killings. Although it took place in Indonesia and was formally over by 1920, the conflict's influence on life in Hadramaut went on throughout the 1930s and was witnessed by travellers.¹⁰ In the 1930s and during World War Two, it found expression when the large bin-'Abdat family of al-Ghurfa announced their allegiance to the Irshadi as a reason for their armed struggle against both the Sultans of Hadramaut.

In the post-war period the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN) had a far more direct and substantial influence on the development of the NLF. Formed in Beirut in the aftermath of the 1948 defeat in Palestine by a group of Palestinian nationalist intellectuals, the MAN¹¹ developed in the following decade to include many non-communist nationalists. Its first cells were in the Fertile Crescent, but gradually they extended to the periphery of the region with branches in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Aden. Expansion usually took place through students from these regions joining the movement while studying in Beirut or Cairo and then forming branches when they returned back home. Although initially anticommunist, the MAN developed into the most radical organisation in the Arab world and was mother to all the left-wing movements ranging

at Exeter University in July 1983, and is published in B. R. Pridham ed, *Contemporary Yemen: vol 1 Politics and Historical Background*, London, 1984, pp. 46–62

⁹ See above p. 19

¹⁰ F. Stark, *The Southern Gates of Arabia*, London, 1936, p. 217 .

¹¹ Here I am presenting nothing more than a crude summary of the MAN concentrating on the features most relevant to the NLF. The most reliable source on the MAN in English is W. Kazziha *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, London, 1975

from the mild opposition in Kuwait to the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf, the National Democratic Front in the Yemen Arab Republic and, most significantly in the Palestinian arena, the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Of all the various movements the MAN engendered the only one to have achieved power is the NLF in Democratic Yemen.

In the 1950s, the MAN'S main objectives were to regain Palestine, to unify the Arab world in a single state, and to effect an Arab liberation which implied the elimination of Western influence, direct and indirect, on all Arab states. It separated the struggle into stages, the first of which was political, to be followed by a social and economic stage after the success of the first. It was gradually won over to Nasserite socialism in the mid-1950s as a result of Nasser's ability to force the British out of the Suez Canal area, and particularly after the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Syria in 1958. The UAR period was the most 'Nasserite' in the history of the MAN. The first signs of a new ideology became apparent in 1960 when the Movement's organ *al-Hurriyah* published an article rejecting the theory of stages and associating political with social and economic struggle. It stated:

'There is no longer a political national question standing separately and posing against a specific social question called 'the workers question' or 'the question of social progress'. The Arab question has come to mean an overall revolutionary concept which is the melting-pot of the national, political, economic and social ambitions of the progressive Arab masses.'¹²

By 1961 the left analysed the failure of the UAR as an expression of class relations, and differences developed between the left led by the *al-Hurriyah* group and the right, culminating at a conference held in May 1964 where they were openly discussed but remained unresolved. Thereafter the movement was effectively split between the two groups.

The formation of the MAN branch in Aden in 1959 took place only a few months before the first public emergence of the MAN left in the publication of the 1960 article. It was composed of students and former students, mostly from the interior, who took MAN ideology back into the hinterland to form the first elements for a progressive nationalist movement among the tribesmen of South Arabia. The founders of the MAN Aden branch were to play prominent roles in the 1960s in the struggle against the British and in the first years of independence. They included Ahmad as-Salami, Taha Muqbil, Sayf ad-Dali' and Faysal Abdul-Latif who were soon joined by Qahtan ash Sha'bi, Salim Ruba'i 'Ali and Abdul Fattah 'Ismael.¹³

¹² *al-Hurriyah* 2.5.1960, quoted in Kazziha, *op cit* p. 65

¹³ Fathi Abdul Fattah, *Tajribat al-thawra fi al-Yaman al-Dimuqratiya* Beirut, 1974, p. 43; Ahmad Ati al-Masry, *Tajribat al-Yaman al-Dimuqratiya* Cairo 1974, p. 188; J. P. Viennot, 'L'expérience révolutionnaire du Sud-Yemen', *Maghreb* Octobre 1973, p. 74

The 26 September Revolution and the creation of the Yemen Arab Republic in 1962 had an immediate and substantial impact on political life in Aden and the Protectorate. Thousands of men rushed to the North to support the revolution in the earliest days, well before it was known in Aden that the Egyptian régime was shoring up the new republic in Sana'a. Those who rushed north went to join the National Guard (*al haras al toarani*) to defend the republic against its enemies and later remained to fight the Saudi-backed Imam's counter-offensive. The republicans included tribesmen from the hinterland, northerners who had migrated to Aden as workers, students from Aden and others originating from the interior, as well as tribal leaders from border regions who supported the republic and Yemeni emigrants to the Gulf working there as soldiers or as civilians.

2. The birth of the NLF

While in the YAR, the southern Yemenis soon met to discuss the situation at home and what they could do about it. A first conference was convened by the Aden MAN branch and held in Sana'a in February 1963. It was attended by over 1,000 representatives of revolutionary organisations in the South, all of which were to join the NLF. This conference formed a Preparatory Committee and in June 1963 a further conference was held in Sana'a where the National Liberation Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (*al-Jabha al-qawmiyya li-tahrir al-Junub al-Yamani al-Muhta!*) was officially founded, and later announced on Sana'a radio. The South Arabian MAN was its nucleus and thus the NLF-inherited the ideological divisions and debates of the Movement. By the end of 1963 it included nine other organisations, some of which represented tribal groups, like the Formation of the Tribes, the Mahra Youth Organisation and the Yafi'i Reform Front, while the rest represented Arab political tendencies which were significant at the time: the Nasserite Front, the Secret Organisation of Free Officers and Soldiers, the Revolutionary Organisation of Free Men of Occupied South Yemen, the Patriotic Front, the Aden Revolutionary Vanguard and the Revolutionary Organisation of Youth in Occupied South Yemen.

At that early stage in its development, the NLF as a whole had no coherent ideology and it accepted anyone committed to armed struggle to gain full independence from Britain. The creation of the NLF marked the beginning of a serious decline in support for the politically-oriented Adeni-based organisations like the ATUC and its political adjunct, the recently formed People's Socialist Party who as already discussed opposed armed struggle and called for political means to achieve their ends. The mass of workers in Aden turned to the NLF, drawn by the straightforward appeal of armed struggle, perhaps through clearly reasoned political argument but also as a modernised form of traditional tribal armed conflict. The NLF was significantly different from existing political organisations in the social composition of its groups and of its leadership which included social strata not previously included in any political activity. It included tribesmen who had emigrated to Aden and further afield in search of work and had

developed a social and political consciousness while in the Gulf or Saudi Arabia; they were employed in construction or the armed forces; it also included many who had stayed at home or returned there. The NLF also attracted the support of educated youth again mainly from the towns, and from traditionally lower social classes who had studied in Aden but, unlike the Adenis, had retained roots in their home areas and were able to use these contacts to further the aims of the NLF. The tribesmen did not come from the top strata of society, but rather from the social group which included the majority of the population and whose economic circumstances varied from poverty to comparative comfort. These were groups which had not previously been mobilised and might support socialist policies, rather than people who had a vested interest in the traditional social structure.

In its early days, the NLF also received support from the Egyptian political and military authorities in the YAR. This was not only a consequence of Nasserite Egypt's hostility to British colonialism, but a calculated decision which took some time to develop. The fact that the Imam was alive and rallying tribal support against the republicans had a considerable effect on the nature of the republican régime in the YAR, then and later. He rapidly obtained the support of Saudi Arabia while the régime in Sana'a equally rapidly got Egyptian assistance, an assistance that was soon to become stifling but was essential to the republic's survival. In 1963 the NLF was promised much help from the Egyptians and the Sana'ani authorities. However, until February 1963 when Britain finally sided with the Imam against the republic both the Sana'ani authorities and their Egyptian sponsors were reluctant to give the NLF too much open support.

The NLF's existence was officially announced on 28 July 1963 on Radio Sana'a in a statement which emphasised the Front's concentration on coordinating urban and rural struggle:

‘Our aspiration in the Occupied Yemeni south has now entered a phase which demands a fundamental change in the methods of the struggle to win complete independence and to overcome imperialism. The weakest point is the lack of coordination in the struggle in the Yemeni south as a whole. The major reason for that is the lack of a common command for national action in Aden and the Amirates. Another reason lies in the circumstance that the majority of the political organisations limit their activity to Aden .. ,’¹⁴

The coming years were to show that the NLF meant what it said. In the summer of 1963 Front members concentrated their energies on training and equipping, while some fighting took place in Hawshabi and Yafi' under tribal leadership. The NLF officially launched its military campaign on 14 October in Radfan. This area was defined by the

¹⁴ Quoted in F. Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans*, London, 1974, p. 192

British as part of the Dhali' Amirate and had always been a centre of resistance.¹⁵ The British once again treated the problem at first as merely tribal. They were unaware of the fact that this was a new type of organisation whose appeal and support would stretch throughout the Protectorate and in less than four years would gain control of the entire country. The Radfan campaign need not be described in detail. All we need to notice is that the British expected to defeat the uprising in a matter of days but in fact it took them over six months, and required the deployment of SAS-élite troops and other reinforcements, to achieve no more than a mere foothold in the Radfan area, at the cost of significant defeats and casualties. Although it was technically a military victory for the British, it was a political defeat, as in 1964 and 1965 the NLF extended its operations to other parts of Dhali', Dathina and Awdhali, as well as beginning in Aden itself in August 1964. What distinguished these clashes from the earlier tribal revolts and attacks on the British in Aden was the organisation behind them. For the first time a single organisation was involved simultaneously in Aden and the interior, hitting the British and the Amirates in a two-pronged attack: operations in the hinterland had a mainly political impact and went alongside political infiltration and education; the objective was to undermine these puppet authorities and this was so successful that in 1967 they all fell without substantial resistance. In Aden attacks were concentrated on targets carefully chosen for their collaboration with the British.

The creation of OLOS, by the PSP/ATUC group led by al-Asnaj, and more importantly the emerging differences within the MAN at the Arab level, formed the background of the NLF's First Congress held in June 1965 in Ta'iz, almost two years after its foundation. The previous year, in May 1964, a NLF delegation led by Qahtan ash-Sha'bi had participated in a National Conference of the MAN in Beirut which had debated the issues which separated the rising left Marxist-oriented part of the movement to the old nationalist one. As no agreement was reached the Movement was thereafter divided in fact, if not formally. The Conference's discussions were confused by the left distancing itself from Nasser but still requiring his financial support. The right opposed this but in the end pragmatism won the day and the Conference opted for financial support. Although the NLF delegation played no active part in the ideological debate, it sided with the right and was later challenged for this by other members who had received reports of the debate and found themselves in closer agreement with the leftist YAR branch of the MAN.

3. The National Charter

The NLF held its first Congress between 22 and 25 June 1965 in Ta'iz. By the time it opened, the NLF had expelled some tribal leaders and the Congress was devoted to the discussion of a long-term programme which was published as the National Charter. It also published resolutions which recognised the problem presented by OLOS:

¹⁵ See Chapter 1

‘The Conference affirms that the NLFOS is the sole representative of our people in the South, so it declares ... the continuation of its armed struggle until the aspirations of the people are fulfilled in full..’,¹⁶

Other resolutions indicated the NLF’s concern about wider world issues, denouncing imperialist aggression in North and South Vietnam, intervention in the Dominican Republic and oppression in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, the Congo, Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa.⁽⁴⁾

The National Charter (*al-mithaq al-watam*) is the only document of political analysis produced by the Front before independence as the next two congresses, in 1966, were essentially devoted to the problem of FLOSY. It is a long analysis of colonialist rule and a programme for NLF government. Its objectives are worth noting given the developments within the NLF since then. Its introduction sets the tone for the document: referring to armed struggle which had been launched in the South, it stated that:

‘This revolutionary movement is the expression of a global conception of life which aims basically at the radical transformation of the social reality created by colonialism through all its concepts, values and social relations, which are founded on exploitation and tyranny, and to determine the type of life to which our people aspire and the type of relations which it wants to see installed on the local, regional, national and international levels.’¹⁷

The Charter emphasises the need to get rid, not only of British occupation and British military bases, but also of the rule of the ‘agent reactionary sultans’. Unsurprisingly, given that the document was published after the revolution in the North and that Yemeni nationalists have called for unity since the 1950s, the Charter states:

‘The Arab people in the Yemeni area, north and south, are part of the Arab nation. The Yemeni area is an integral part of the Arab homeland, and it is a single unit historically through shared struggle and fate. The restoration of unity of our Arab people in the Yemeni area, north and south, on the road towards free Arab unity, is a popular demand and a necessity imposed by the revolution.’¹⁸

¹⁶ BBC SWB ME 1902 6 July 1965

¹⁷ ‘Adel Rida, *Thawra al-Junub*, Cairo 1969, pp. 85–6. This translation from F. Halliday, *op cit* p. 194

¹⁸ ‘Adel Rida, *op cit* p. 87

⁽⁴⁾ The Congress also elected an executive committee of eight members who included Qahtan ash-Sha’bi, Faysal Abdul-Latif ash-Sha’bi, Taha Muqbil, Salim Zain, Ali Salami, and Sayf ad-Dali’.

In analysing the economic situation, the Charter concentrates on the great gap which exists between Aden and the underdeveloped rural areas. It blames the poverty of the interior on 'feudal landowners, primarily sultans and amirs who exploit the people and plunder their land and wealth.'¹⁹ It points out that small peasants are exploited by the large landowners who are the only ones to extract a profit from the land. The importance it gives to the rural areas is reasserted in the resolutions which were broadcast:

In view of the fact that the tribal sector constitutes a large proportion of our people, and as a result of the imperialist policy which has kept them in a state of ignorance and backwardness, the Conference recognised the need to concentrate on enlightening, taking care of and raising the level of this sector so that it might catch up with the revolution and play its historical part in it.'²⁰

The NLF's general economic programme is based on the following principles:

'a) Complete economic liberation from foreign exploiting capitalism and colonialist companies; b) the building of a national economy on a new and healthy basis compatible with the principles of social justice, and achieved through popular control over primary products and the means of production; c) thorough planning and guidance of material, human and scientific means to achieve this aim, according to a general plan for economic and social development; d) the private sector can play an important role in the country's development provided it avoids exploitation and monopoly and limits itself to the areas allocated to it by the law; it can operate alone, in association, or in coordination with the public sector, according to the development plan and general economic organisation'²¹

It is worth noting that while not binding itself to Marxist socialism, the Charter does challenge programmes linked with capitalism: it does not insist on nationalisation but restricts the role of the private sector to the limits defined by an overall development plan, and it also calls for social equity and popular control over the economy.

In its sectoral analysis the Charter gives considerable attention to agriculture and here again, while not proposing the nationalisation of land, the programme implies a new social order in the rural areas. After pointing out that the sultans seized the people's land and water by force or by obliging them to sell at ridiculous prices, it calls for the return of land to the small peasants. Tribally-owned lands are to be reclaimed, surveyed and redistributed to small peasants. The problem of water is identified as

¹⁹ *ibid* p. 89

²⁰ BBC SWB ME 1902, 6 July 1965

²¹ 'Adel Rida, *op cit* p. 90

mainly reliance on flood waters which produced cycles of drought and flood. The solution proposed is the introduction of modern technology, the drilling of boreholes, building dams and better water distribution. Mechanisation is to provide the solution to the problem of productivity. It proposes legislation to improve the conditions of agricultural workers and tenant farmers, as well as to control agricultural production.

The Charter's social programme concentrates on the problem of the rural-urban gap and proposes to close it by bringing electricity to the rural areas, developing modern agricultural machinery, processing agricultural products, planning villages, building houses, schools and health units, and providing clean water supplies. The Charter proposes to make education freely available to all, as well as health facilities, doctors and medicines.

The Charter's proposals on the position of women are radical for a society where the issue had hardly been raised. It blames colonialism for the backwardness in which women have been kept, and for misrepresenting Islam as justifying their subjugation, ignorance and enslavement. It proposes:

‘to restore their natural rights to women, and their equality with men in bearing their social responsibility thus providing the basis for human justice and giving women the position in life to which they are entitled as full participants, developing their highest social and productive abilities.’²²

The only clear call for socialism is found in the discussion of internal affairs when the Charter says that:

‘Social development and progressive transformation from the present backward stage to the stage of socialist construction requires that all the working popular forces carry their responsibilities in construction.’²³

The sections of society which are expected to support its aims and fight for them are ‘the popular forces of workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals and students’ and in particular the workers and peasants who are to form an alliance which is the guarantor of social progress.

The Charter's ambiguities reflect the debate within the NLF between left and right, and are clearly seen in its use of socialist language calling, for example, for the alliance between workers and peasants and the construction of socialism, but failing to suggest nationalisation. However, despite this, the Charter places the NLF in the vanguard of left-wing movements in the Arab world, and this is important as even in 1965 its likelihood of coming to power was higher than that of other left-wing groups in the region, given the strength of its position and the British commitment to leave South Arabia. The Charter's discussion of foreign affairs was less of a challenge to the current

²² *ibid* p. 91

²³ *ibid* p. 97

progressive Arab opinion as it did not directly confront Nasserism, despite the fact that by then differences were emerging openly between the MAN left and Nasserite Egypt and, more specifically, the NLF and their comrades from the YAR had already begun to notice that Egyptian policy was motivated as much by Egypt's national interests as by solidarity. The left of the NLF was already far to the left of Nasserism. A further example of Egyptian *real politik* took place in the summer of 1965 when Nasser and King Faysal of Saudi Arabia reached an agreement for both to withdraw from the YAR, an agreement which, had it been implemented, would have caused serious difficulties for the NLF. However the Charter itself praised Nasser and his historic role in the Arab world:

‘The Arab revolution of 23 July 1952 in Egypt was the tangible incarnation of the beginning of the process of renaissance of the Arab liberation movement... Through its revolutionary capacity, its selflessness and its understanding it succeeded in defeating all the colonialist pacts ... Thus the UAR continues to provide the fundamental support for the Arab revolutionary movement, for unity and progress. The part of the UAR in the support, from the beginning, of our people's struggle, by all necessary means, is a great historic role which deserves to be respected.’²⁴

4. The Conflict with FLOSY and victory

The differences between the right and left in the NLF reflected those in the MAN for the left were turning towards Marxist socialism under the influence of Fanon and Guevara among others; they admired Cuba, China and the struggle of the Vietnamese. By contrast the right favoured continued close relations with Nasser and wanted more authoritarian internal structures in the NLF, which would leave the leadership unchallenged and prevent the rank and file from gaining power. The strength of the left and the extent of its support at the grass-roots level were to become manifest in the coming months. Many groups in the South found the Charter too right wing and challenged it in the summer of 1965. Members from Adeni schools sent questions to the leadership, challenging its Nasserite ideology. This led to a number of small meetings which might have led to a split had more urgent problems not arisen in the form of the Egyptians' efforts to force a merger between the NLF and OLOS. This pressure was not totally unwelcome to the right wing NLF leadership who saw it as a way out of the ideological debate. As a result debate on the Charter and post-independence policies had to be postponed and, as it turned out, was not to take place till after the NLF achieved power at independence. From late 1965 and through 1966 the NLF's problems focused on FLOSY.

The difficulties which the right leadership was encountering within the NLF may have made it more receptive to Egyptian pressure. On 13 January 1966 three NLF

²⁴ *ibidp.* 100–101

leaders announced in Cairo the formation of the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) which was supposed to represent the merger between OLOS and the NLF (with the exclusion of the SAL elements within OLOS). The NLF members and cadres on the ground violently opposed this and rejected the merger, so three MAN leaders, George Habbash, Hani al-Hindi and Mohsen Ibrahim were sent to Ta'iz to try and mediate between the two groups of the NLF, those supporting and those opposing the merger; the first two represented the right of the MAN while the third represented the left. Two months of intensive discussions failed to solve the problem and in March the Egyptians invited the NLF leaders to Cairo, supposedly for discussion. On arrival they were detained and thus missed the NLF's Second Congress held in June 1966 in Jibla. This meeting rejected the NLF-OLOS merger, expelled the three leaders who had signed the January agreement (Salim Zain, Taha Muqbil and 'Ali Salami) and elected a new Executive Committee of 11 members which included Abdul Fattah 'Ismail, Muhammad 'Ali Haitham, Salim Ruba'i 'Ali, 'Ali Antar and 'Ali Salim al Beedh.

Despite this clear rejection of the merger, the Egyptians did not give up and continued putting pressure on the NLF, leading to a new agreement in August in Alexandria, which was signed by Qahtan ash-Sha'bi, Faysal Abdul-Latif and Abdul Fattah Ismail. The reaction of the NLF on the ground was, once again, one of clear rejection of any form of merger with the OLOS and they also increasingly rejected Nasserite policies. The NLF membership were losing patience with the continued attempts to force the merger and Egypt's many tactics to weaken the Front, giving credit for all military action to FLOSY and withholding funds from the NLF. They ceased to relate to their central office and started coordinating their activities amongst themselves, and also began to look for other sources of finance and supplies. With the approach of the third official anniversary of the launching of armed struggle in October 1966, all the NLF's units in Aden combined to threaten to split the organisation unless the merger with OLOS was formally abandoned.

They won and the NLF held a Third Congress in November 1966 in Khamr in the Y AR where it totally repudiated FLOSY which thereafter became little more than the armed branch of the PSP. This affront to Nasser meant that the NLF in future would have to rely on its own resources and this meant that finances had to be raised by bank robberies, expropriation of money from the capitalist companies, as well as increased contributions from political supporters. The Congress also added another 10 members to the previously elected Executive Committee, most of whom were leaders from the interior who were involved in military operations. Thereafter the relationship between the NLF and FLOSY was to be one of open hostility and conflict for another year, until independence and the final victory of the NLF.

The conflict with FLOSY did not prevent the NLF from continuing the struggle in the hinterland in 1966 and 1967 where its activities centred on the politicisation of the people. In the summer of 1967 the NLF's most important activities were, however, the gradual takeover of each sultanate as the Federation collapsed, the British withdrew

their forces and the former sultans escaped abroad. The first amirate to fall was Dhali' in June, after which they went in rapid succession with the fall of the Kathiri and Qu'ayti Sultanates of Hadramaut in September. The Front occupied Socotra on 29 November, hours before independence and this was the last outpost to come under its control. The occupation of sultanates by the Front while the British were still formally in control led to farcical and absurd situations such as the one in Bayhan described by the High Commissioner:

'We had come to threaten the use of British aircraft against an attempt by a man who was still nominally under British protection, to recover his state by attacking from across the frontier the rebels who had usurped his power with the aid of a battalion which we were helping to pay and arm and which was still nominally under British command.'²⁵

Translation: Britain threatened the use of British aircraft against an attempt by the Sharif of Bayhan who was still nominally under British protection, to recover Bayhan, his state, by attacking from across the YAR frontier the NLF rebels who had usurped his power with the aid of the British-paid and British-armed battalion of the South Arabian Army, a force still nominally under British command. This was in September, two months before the final withdrawal.

The NLF's most spectacular action took place in June-July 1967 with the occupation of Crater in Aden. This was the first Arab victory after the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 which had caused universal dismay in the Arab world. The NLF's ability to gain control of the city of Aden for two weeks, closing it to all outsiders, represented an important symbolic victory over imperialism, and locally showed its power to the British who had not expected such strength.

There was little armed conflict between the NLF and FLOSY in the interior for the simple reason that the NLF was unchallenged except in Wahidi and Awlaqi where FLOSY gained temporary control by allying with the sultans, but elsewhere FLOSY suffered from its urban-orientation and lack of rural support. In Aden where FLOSY had money and arms thanks to continued Egyptian support, the conflict was violent and included many incidents of members of one organisation murdering members of the other. Serious fighting took place between the two organisations in January when the NLF called a general strike opposed by FLOSY who retaliated by blowing up the communist press. Later, in September when the NLF appeared to be the dominant force, FLOSY tried to reverse the balance by organising an invasion from Ta'iz. This was stopped by the NLF in Dar Sa'ad and Shaykh Othman and finally in early November the two organisations met in fullscale battle at Shaykh Othman.

After its FLOSY-supporting officers had left the force and returned to their home states the remaining South Arabian Army declared its support for the NLF, making it the only candidate for power after independence by its decisive victory over FLOSY.

²⁵ H. Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution*, London, 1970, p. 253

The Hadramaut

There are a number of reasons for discussing the Hadramaut separately and most importantly because many different movements and organisations grew there despite the region's traditional conservatism. It is where the earliest (Irshadi) and later the most egalitarian movements took place, which are discussed below. The fact that the Eastern Protectorate, including Hadramaut, never joined the Federation is certainly relevant to these developments.

As we have seen the NLF looked to the Irshadi movement in Wadi Hadramaut as an ancestor progressive movement in the region. Later Hadramis participated in the various parties and organisations which emerged in Aden, as well as forming comparable organisations in Hadramaut itself. The region is notable among other things for the fact that interest in education is considerable and that it has long had a higher proportion of schools than the rest of the Protectorate.

In the 1960s as the date for Aden's independence approached the problems of the Eastern Protectorate became more prominent: as it had not joined the Federation many nationalists feared that it would secede and possibly be swallowed up by Saudi Arabia which was known to want a port on the Indian Ocean. The widespread belief that oil had been discovered in Thamud also encouraged the idea of secession, as the rulers of all three states, but mainly of Qu'ayti and Kathiri were looking forward to spending the oil revenue unaided. There was no clear or open discussion about the future of the area, and some evidence of the sultans' intentions to affiliate to Saudi Arabia emerged at the London Conference in 1964, highlighting the threats to the integrity of the country.²⁶

In this situation of uncertainty, militants from the NLF, FLOSY and even the SAL were very active politically to ensure that the region was not separated from the rest of the country after independence. Not only did they most probably share the belief that oil had been found, but the Hadramaut also possessed other assets which they did not want the new country to lose. Wadi Hadramaut and the coastal region have much of the country's agricultural land, the coastal waters are rich in fish and the region's population included a higher percentage of well-educated people than elsewhere, thanks to the religious traditions of the region with a number of important centres of learning and the influence of modernist movements and emigration. The population of the Hadramaut had always been militant when it felt its interests threatened, and as recently as August 1964 there had been riots in Mukalla and Seiyun when the British authorities refused to issue entry visas to Egyptian teachers who had been engaged to work in Hadrami schools.²⁷

The nationalist organisations developed their activities and here as elsewhere there was conflict between the supporters of the MAN-NLF, and the Ba'athists who were a

²⁶ In 1965, *Tali'a* of Kuwait published documents to that effect signed by Ahmad al Attas and Mohammed bin Laden

²⁷ *Aden Chronicle*, 27.8.1964

small but influential group: many of the Hadrami Ba'athists cooperated with FLOSY which was weak but gained popular support thanks to its association with Nasser. A plethora of different organisations emerged, both in the coastal region centred on Mukalla and in the Wadi Hadramaut. In 1966 for example the Hadramaut Arab Socialist Party emerged, which opposed externally created divisions, asserted that the YAR had no designs on the South, called for Arab unity but more specifically for 'the unity of the national movement throughout the whole South' and appealed to the armed tribesmen 'to rise above narrow barriers and to work for peaceful coexistence among the sons of one homeland'. The party also appealed for national capital to play its full role in support of the national cause.²⁸

In 1967 the Arab Socialist Party in Qu'ayti also emerged, opposing the sham Federation, calling for a united Yemen and complete independence as well as the expulsion of imperialism from the homeland. A number of other organisations also appeared including the People's Democratic Front led by Ali Salem al Beedh which attempted to bring together the progressive forces, and included six trade unions (port workers, building workers, petroleum distribution workers, teachers, writers, and drivers) the students' unions and the Socialist Party. In the Wadi there were other organisations and there the NLF had its own branches, which were called the Representatives of People's Organisations (*mumathily al hayat al sha'biya*). These representatives travelled throughout Hadramaut and spoke to people about the future of the region and the country and mustered support for the NLF.

In mid-1967 the NLF and the organisations which were associated with it took control of the Hadramaut region. In June the NLF took some radical political and economic decisions, such as the supervision and control of prices and other economic activities. The NLF then attacked some of the British-supported institutions, the airport, the court, the Residency and killed some British agents in Mukalla. They also took over the police headquarters in Hajar and Haura, and held demonstrations, political meetings and rallies throughout the region. It was then easy for them to take over the military forces of Qu'ayti state and the bedu force; this was achieved bloodlessly by negotiations with the forces' command.

After their takeover the NLF purged the army and security forces by dismissing its opponents. They formed a People's Militia to strengthen the security of the new institutions which they started to create, such as the People's Committees who were supposed to provide a local political leadership, and the Supreme People's Council which was composed of NLF members and militant workers. Economically they tried to lay the foundations for new forms by nationalising the few existing economic institutions: the petrol distribution network and the cinemas and the trade houses. More significantly they formed a committee to prepare for land reform after having confiscated the movable and immovable property of the former sultans and their ministers. The latter had turned up on 17 September by ship in Mukalla on their way back from

²⁸ BBC SWB ME 2223 17 July 1966

visiting a UN mission in Geneva. Representatives of the NLF boarded the ship and turned them back, pointing out that they now controlled the region.

In this way the most radical social, political and economic measures began in Hadramaut even before formal independence, due both to NLF cadres from within the region (such as Faysal al Attas, and Abdullah Saleh al Bar) and from elsewhere such as Abdullah al Ashtal. This was partly because this is the region where traditional caste-like social differentiation was strongest and the young progressives were all the more opposed to it; also many members of the lower classes had reached high levels of education and were that much more likely to challenge traditional social order. (It is worth noting that the first two rectors of Aden University originally came from low status groups of Hadrami society, who gained education because schools were in the towns and then obtained scholarships for further education in the Sudan and elsewhere to university standard.) Those who took over in Hadramaut in 1967 were not usually members of the old élite unless they had had the sense to take up left wing political positions.

Conclusion: The NLF takes power

How did the NLF, a small movement internally divided between its right and left come to power in November 1967 when there were so many other candidates? These included the Federation of South Arabia which Britain had sponsored and developed for precisely that purpose and FLO SY, an organisation close to Nasser but also influenced by the British Labour Party and, with hindsight, one far less opposed to British interests than the NLF left which eventually gained power. It is also surprising to see that while in 1956 Lord Lloyd, the British Colonial Secretary offered 'a considerable degree of internal self-government' as the highest legitimate ambition for Aden, it was only ten years later in February 1966 that a Labour Government announced in its Defence White Paper that not only would independence be granted by the end of 1968, but moreover the new state would not even get a defence treaty; and further that the British base, which in 1960 had become the East of Suez headquarters, was to be abandoned and all troops withdrawn. This meant in effect that all the basic structures on which the Federation had expected to rely for its survival were removed at a stroke thus encouraging the anti-British movements, both the FLOSY and the NLF.

The Federation was immensely weakened and almost lost meaning as soon as the British announced that they were withdrawing entirely: this meant it would lose British support against its enemies, and also the £11 million a year revenue from the base which, after Aden's merger with the Federation, was to be one of the main sources of income for the foreseeable future. Abandoned by the British at a time when nationalism was the dominant mode throughout the Arab world, it made no sense for anyone in the Federation to continue cooperating with British-sponsored initiatives and while some Federal leaders continued to try and retain British involvement at least for military

protection against 'Egyptian Aggression and Russian Penetration',²⁹ all other forces promptly tried to find alternative alliances and competed in denouncing Britain. The fundamental weaknesses of the Federation were revealed: it had no leader, excluded almost half the country, the Eastern Protectorate which it had failed to bring in and its ministers did not form a cohesive body. The overall uncertainty and instability of South Arabia in 1966–7 cannot be overemphasised, even the forthcoming state's territorial integrity was not assured.

By September 1967 the Federation had completely disintegrated and the new High Commissioner, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, who had been appointed to pull out as smoothly as possible in the circumstances, recognised this publicly on 5

September when he offered to enter into negotiations with the nationalist movement. As far as the British were concerned at this point there were still three possible contenders for power: the NLF, FLOSY and the South Arabian Army. In September and October FLOSY was defeated militarily by the NLF in and around Aden, at a time when the NLF had already taken over most of the hinterland. It was then that FLOSY's fundamental weakness was publicly revealed: as an urban based movement whose popular base had been in the trade union movement, it was fundamentally unable to compete as it had both neglected the rural areas and seen its popular support melt away to the NLF when its militants saw the FLOSY leaders wavering and negotiating with anyone who would talk to them. FLOSY leaders were, with and without coordination, negotiating with the Federation rulers, the UN, the British, the Egyptians and even the NLF. Their ignorance of the rural areas was boundless. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis recalls:

'when one asked, as I once did, to name which clans followed [Asnag] there was not one clan whose name he knew, let alone one whose support he could claim.'³⁰

The South Arabian Army does not appear to have been a serious candidate for power: its leadership did not include any nationally-known political figures and as it had been recently formed was close to the British thanks to its history and training, and was tribally structured. After the NLF had defeated FLOSY in Shaykh Othman, the main FLOSY-supporting officers in the army left to return to their tribes and the considerable infiltration which the NLF had practised in the army bore fruit, as many enlisted men and junior officers supported the NLF. When it was clear that the balance swung towards the NLF, the army declared its allegiance, solving the problem for the British:

²⁹ *The Sunday Times*, 12.3.1967

³⁰ K. Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, London, 1968, p. 172

... 'We only had the choice to hand over to the NLF or to nobody. We were lucky in at last finding someone to whom we might be able to hand over in peace.'³¹

How little serious attention the British had previously given to the NLF and its ignorance of developments in the previous two years⁽⁵⁾ is indicated by Trevelyan's statement that up to November 1967

'We had no direct contact with the NLF leaders, but by this time we were negotiating through senior Arab officers who were in close touch with them.'³²

Negotiations only started in Geneva on 21 November 1967 and ended on the 29th with an agreement that independence would be on the 30th. There was so little time that the NLF leaders who signed the agreement arrived home after independence. The British completed a hasty and most unceremonious retreat, leaving an unenviable situation to the NLF: a state which became a single entity only on the very night of independence, despite efforts at secession. In all respects the NLF was faced with an extraordinary situation with internal dissension within the NLF itself, attacks by FLOSY, the SAL and Saudi Arabia from across the border, and a catastrophic economic situation.

³¹ K. Trevelyan *op cit* p. 258

³² *ibid* p. 259

⁽⁵⁾ British ignorance of events can only partly be attributed to their lack of interest. The NLF took much of the credit for eliminating in 1965 the bulk of Britain's intelligence network in Aden, both among the police Special Branch and among other spies.

Chapter Three: The first 10 Years of Independence

The Situation at Independence

The situation of the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY) at independence can be summarised as follows: the state was bankrupt and had no visible means of support, having lost its three sources of income: the port and its international trade as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war leading to the closure of the Suez Canal, the British base and its direct and indirect employment, and direct British grant-aid. The rout of the traditional leaders in the hinterland was a positive feature but new political structures had not yet been established, as the NLF had only taken control of the former sultanates a few months before independence at most and had had therefore no opportunity to develop alternative governing structures or to train its members in administration rather than struggle. The lack of finance either from taxation or aid meant immediate economic decline, and hardship both in the hinterland and in Aden. The first few years of independence were by far the most precarious. Not only was the NLF internally divided but during the first months of independence in the South, the republican régime in the North was seriously threatened. Further within a few months FLOSY and the SAL had regrouped and with the assistance of Saudi Arabia, started attacking across the borders supporters of the Imam in North Yemen and others. The first post-independence attacks took place as early as February 1968 in a remote area near Bayhan, seriously threatening the new régime in Aden whose relationship with its army was not one of full mutual confidence; indeed the belated support of the army for the NLF in the autumn of 1967 was due not to political alignment but rather to expediency, and the NLF did not consider its army one hundred per cent reliable in its struggle against former rivals. The army at that time was still tribally organised; it had been formed by the British and retained its British officers up to the end of February 1968; its loyalty to the new régime was untested; further it was widely suspected by the left of supporting the right wing within the NLF.

Within the Yemeni context the new republic was born at a difficult time. As I have mentioned independence came as the republican régime in the North was going through one of the most acute and important crises in its civil war: the Egyptians had withdrawn in October 1967 as a result of the August 1967 Khartoum agreement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The royalists therefore attempted a last ditch effort

to defeat the republicans who were now weakened by the departure of the Egyptians and a shortage of supplies. The attack almost succeeded insofar as the siege of the capital Sana'a lasted till February 1968 and its relief needed the total mobilisation of republican supporters from North and South. These events were of immediate significance for the new PRSY as up to 600 militants from the NLF participated in the defence of Sana'a. Later in 1968 after the siege was lifted a struggle developed between the left and the right-wing republicans in the North, which was parallel to the split within the NLF, with the crucial difference that the left eventually won in the NLF while the right did in the Yemen Arab Republic. In this confused situation the close connection existing between northern and southern political movements was a further complicating factor.

The Arab world met the NLF's seizure of power with suspicion. The 'progressive' Arab states such as Algeria, Syria and Iraq had little knowledge of the NLF and had consistently regarded FLOSY as the representative of progress in South Arabia. Although these régimes had considerable differences with Nasser and competed with him in trying to lead the Arab world, they followed him in their assessment of other forces in the Arab world. They all deplored the defeat of FLOSY, and being ignorant of the composition of the NLF no Arab state greeted its victory with enthusiasm. FLOSY had spread the slander that the NLF was a puppet of Britain, created by the British to avoid handing over power to FLOSY which claimed to be the true representative of the progressive South Arabian people. This had stuck¹ and Arab régimes were in no hurry to recognise the PRSY or to assist its régime. The early association of FLOSY with the Ba'ath party and Nasserism made it an easily identifiable left-wing organisation and this also probably influenced the negative reception the NLF received. Despite this the PRSY was eventually given diplomatic recognition by most states and was admitted to the Arab League and the United Nations in December 1967.

The suspicion the PRSY met among the 'progressive' Arab states was as nothing compared to the hostility it encountered elsewhere. Saudi Arabia lost no time in encouraging and arming the PRSY's enemies. Saudi Arabia supported ex-sultans and the South Arabian League in their efforts to overthrow the NLF. It provided both with arms, bases near the border, communications equipment as well as money and all other necessities. Since early 1967 there had been a strong suspicion within the NLF that Britain was conspiring with Saudi Arabia to partition the country and amputate Hadramaut and Mahra either to give them a phoney independence or to hand them over outright to Saudi Arabia. Although there is as yet no firm evidence to support this, it was a widespread fear in the region itself and lay behind many of the NLF's moves in Hadramaut prior to independence. Many Yemenis believe that in his meeting with the British Prime Minister in the spring of 1967 King Faysal of Saudi Arabia wanted such a deal as some compensation for the instability brought about by Britain's

¹ This slander was given almost official status in a communiqué of Algérie Presse Service in November 1967, see *Orient* 1969, footnote 21 p. 23.

abandonment of the sultans, the Aden base and the Federation. To Faysal the nationalist forces were no more than atheist communists, be they FLOSY or NLF. Following independence many of the moves sponsored by Saudi Arabia against the new republic could be interpreted as having this aim, as they were made in those desert areas which separate the Hadramaut in the east from the rest of the country.

In the east, Oman was the most hostile neighbour and remained so the longest. The NLF actively supported the guerrilla campaign carried out by the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf against the régime of the retrograde sultan. This support continued beyond the guerrillas' military defeat in 1976. A major focus of conflict between Oman and the PDRY was the Kuria Muria Islands, which had been administered with Aden and the Protectorates but lay off the Omani coast. In 1967 Britain handed them over to Oman and they were the only part of Democratic Yemen over which the new régime did not obtain sovereignty. Recovering them would have been very hazardous given their geographic position and would have entailed open conflict with the Sultanate of Oman and its British-led armed forces, but the claim to them remains.

The rest of the world was no friendlier. Britain left the new régime a few poisoned gifts. Rapidly reneging on its aid commitments, it provided little of the £60mn it had offered before independence and of the £12mn which had been agreed at the Geneva independence negotiations. The total evacuation of British forces from Aden left the town with over 20,000 unemployed. Foreign trade had been destroyed and to this must be added the overall legacy of colonialism which included a country divided along tribal lines, without any unifying roads or services and a stultified rural economy.

The socialist states showed hardly greater enthusiasm. Here again the NLF suffered from the ignorance of the outside world and its own uncertainties, as well as the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict, then at its height. The socialist countries rapidly recognised the PR SY, but did not give their unreserved support. Before independence, the NLF had made contacts both with the Soviet and with the Chinese Communist Parties and there were some who favoured the development strategy of one or the other, but no firm allegiance had been offered to either side. The Soviets, possibly due to their support for Nasser, encouraged the NLF to cooperate with FLO SY after independence and were fairly slow to provide aid, thus initially creating suspicion amongst the left of the NLF, where self-reliance and the Chinese Cultural Revolution were popular models.

The First 18 Months

Qahtan ash-Sha'bi, the first leader of the NLF, who was associated with the right wing of the movement became the President of the PRSY at independence, a position he achieved partly due to his age,² but also because the balance of forces within the

² He was the only leader of the NLF older than 40 and claimed that the country would not be

NLF still favoured the right which had, formally at least, halted the rise of the left by postponing the NLF congress.

The membership of Qahtan's first government was an expression of the struggle within: he kept for himself the positions of President, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and gave the crucial Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade to his fifth cousin and political ally Faysal Abdul Latif ash-Sha'bi. Some ministries however went to leaders of the left: Defence to Ali Salem al Beedh, Finance to Mahmoud Abdullah Ushaysh, Culture Guidance and Youth to Abdul Fattah Ismail. Some of the other appointees were not firmly associated with either faction and even today some retain public positions.³

The policies announced at independence⁴ included the design and implementation of an agrarian reform law, the creation of agro-industries, the opening of a textile factory and the development of the public sector in the economy. In the absence of a legitimate legislative authority and given the impossibility of holding elections immediately due to the lack of registers, it was decided the NLF's General Command would temporarily assume legislative powers until the new constitution was ready. It was also decided that the NLF was to be the only authorised political organisation. In foreign policy the new government proposed to follow a policy of positive neutralism which meant that it wanted to give active support to liberation movements in the Arab world and elsewhere in the Third World.

The struggle between the left and right within the NLF immediately emerged as the dominant problem of the new republic, and early policy decisions reflected one or the other faction. The differences between the two groups in the NLF were fundamental ones of policy and not merely personality conflicts. The left's solutions to the country's political and economic problems were far more radical than those of the right and included the creation of an entirely new administrative structure. While the right advocated adaptation of the colonial administration in Aden and use of the existing arrangements in the rural areas (insofar as they existed), the left proposed a total transformation of administrative structures in Aden and in the governorates.

Except in Qu'ayti and Lahej, the NLF had an almost clean slate to work on. Their complete lack of trained people was a great problem but there were hardly any personnel corrupted by British training who had to be dismissed. The situation in Aden was different: although many leading administrators had left along with the British as they were members either of the leading bourgeois families or of FLOSY, there were substantial numbers of them left, mainly in the lower levels of the administration.⁵

respected abroad unless it had a President who was older. See F. Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* 1974 p. 259.

³ For example the Minister of Works and Communications, Faysal bin Shamlan, who in the 1980s is Director of the Aden Refinery Company, Muhammad Abdul Qadir Bafaqih, Minister of Education who in the 1980s was the PDRY's representative to UNESCO.

⁴ See BBC SWB ME 2636 2 December 1967.

⁵ The continuing leftward shift of the régime and its hostility to administrators of the Colonial

While the left was opposed to using the pre-existing administrative structure, Qahtan and his allies were in favour of building on the remains rather than starting afresh. The reduction of the civil service by 50% was a victory for the left, but was also necessitated by the lack of funds to pay salaries.

Another early and important government decision was the division of the country into six governorates whose borders were based on the NLF's military regions during the war of independence and which were numbered rather than named. This numbering helped to emphasise the non-tribal nature of the divisions, raising the crucial question of tribalism, which was dealt with in the Tribal Reconciliation Decree which is discussed below.

The policies advocated by the left were an extension at the national level of those they had been trying to implement in Mukalla where they had gained control in the summer of 1967. This included the nationalisation of the whole economy, the creation of popular councils of peasants and fishermen's cooperatives and committees to expropriate landowners.

1. The Fourth Congress of the NLF

The Fourth Congress of the NLF was held in Zinjibar from 2 to 8 March 1968 and was the first public display of the struggle then raging within the organisation. The left had wanted the Congress held before independence to define the policies of the new state while the right had successfully managed to postpone it. When it was convened, the right used its ascendancy to include delegates who would not have qualified earlier and who supported its positions, mainly members of the army. Aware of the strength of the challenge which awaited him, Qahtan had taken measures which he hoped would swing the Congress his way, the most prominent of these was the issuing of the Agrarian Reform Law,⁶ on 5 March 1968.

In spite of all this, the Congress was a landslide victory for the left and the programme and resolutions adopted were the most militant ever to come from the NLF. The Congress confirmed that until elections could be held, the NLF General Command, its highest body, would remain the supreme legislative authority. The Congress also took a number of decisions concerning government political structures which emphasised the left's faith in popular organisations and its distrust of the existing institutions: it first called for the 'rapid establishment of popular councils in all regions of the republic, whose constitution will be determined by the Front ... The highest of these councils will be the Supreme People's Council'⁷. By contrast 'The Congress decides to cleanse the state's administrative and military institutions as fast as possible of all doubtful hireling counter revolutionary elements and of anyone incapable of ensuring

period meant that many who stayed at independence emigrated in the next few years, particularly after 22 June 1969.

⁶ This is discussed in Chapter 8.

⁷ *Orient* 1969 p. 32.

the forward march of the revolution.’⁸ This last point was largely implemented by default, though the shortage of militant cadres did mean that some lower level colonial administrators remained.

The military concerns of the time were reflected in the Congress’s resolutions. Distrust of the British-created national army continued on the left, and the defence of the revolution against its internal and external enemies was to be ensured by ‘the strengthening of the Popular Guard ... [and] the creation of a popular militia composed of trade unionists, peasant unions, student unions, and the generalisation organs in Yemen through dialogue with the revolutionary forces in North Yemen.’⁹ security problems which came mainly through the North, and also to indicate the unity felt within the Yemeni left in both republics, the Congress ‘instructs the General Command to find the adequate practical way to unify the revolutionary organs in Yemen from dialogue with the revolutionary forces in North Yemen.’¹⁰

The political positions taken by the Congress reflected a marked change from those of the earlier period and showed how the NLF was rapidly becoming a socialist organisation rather than just a liberation movement. According to the Congress ‘the NLF is a revolutionary organisation which represents the interests of workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals and chooses scientific socialism as a method of analysis and praxis.’¹¹ Its militants are no longer just seen as guerrilla fighters: ‘Congress considers that the building of a vanguard revolutionary organisation requires the education of its members in scientific socialism in order to improve their intellectual level, to ensure cohesion within the organisation and to prepare its transformation into a vanguard socialist party.’¹²

Congress’s approach to organisation, and its ideological positions on internal and foreign affairs and the role of the petty bourgeoisie place it firmly in the mainstream of revolutionary socialist thinking throughout the world and, obviously, to the left of all the Arab states. This is best seen in the scathing attack on the petty bourgeoisie and its role in the revolution:

‘The petty bourgeoisie and its self-styled “socialist parties” (ASU in the UAR, Ba’ath party, Algerian FLN) with their ideological ideas and their class positions have in reality nothing to do with socialism, with a radical class politics favourable to workers, soldiers and poor peasants. At a time of imperialist hegemony in the world, in the final analysis, the conciliating politics of the petty bourgeoisie eventually come under the control of the counter revolution at home and neo-colonialism internationally. The conciliatory attitude of the petty bourgeoisie is even more dangerous to the

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *op cit* pp. 31–2.

¹¹ *op cit* p. 26.

¹² *op cit* p. 31.

national democratic popular revolution than the openly hostile policy of a feudal-bourgeois alliance. In matters of class, the worst thing is a centralist policy.’¹³

This statement did nothing to encourage local capitalists to invest in the domestic economy, and indeed, this is the only Congress at which no appeal was made to attract national capital. Economic policy was seen in a completely different light from that prevailing in the British period: ‘Congress considers necessary the choice of an economic policy based on the liberation of our country from foreign capitalism and exploitation, with the aim of transforming the services economy into a productive industrial economy including the development of a public sector able to lead and direct economic life.’¹⁴

The Congress’s social policies put an early emphasis on a problem which remained of concern into the 1980s, and focused on the need to ‘fight against illiteracy in the countryside and in town by mobilising all energies in the service of this cause and by creating many centres for the eradication of illiteracy. All NLF local organisations must work on this problem by enrolling revolutionary intellectuals, as well as school and other students.’¹⁵

The NLF’s positions on Arab and international matters clearly show its alignment with the socialist world, as its analysis of the world situation saw it as a struggle between capitalism and socialism; it expressed satisfaction with the socialist world’s solidarity with Third World liberation movements and its assistance to newly liberated countries. Although now in power, the NLF had little ability to influence international events, being itself under siege, but it viewed the June 1967 defeat as having happened because ‘the liberation movement was deprived of a vanguard revolutionary organisation and a clear progressive social content, and the popular masses were unable to assume their responsibilities to ensure such a transformation.’¹⁶ As a result of this analysis Congress resolved to ‘support popular armed resistance in Palestine morally and financially.’¹⁷

Closer to home it asserted unquestioned support for the revolutionary movements in the Arabian Gulf, and further afield for national liberation in the Third World and all struggles against colonialism and imperialism. Alluding to the Sino-Soviet dispute it declared its openness to ‘all the socialist experiences in the world’.¹⁸

It is significant that at its first post-independence Congress the NLF defined the revolutionary classes to include workers, poor peasants, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals. It believed the country was entering the phase of national democratic

¹³ Programme of Popular National Democratic Revolution presented by Abdul Fattah Ismail, to the Fourth Congress of NLF in *Orient, op cit* p. 40–41.

¹⁴ Public Resolutions of the 4th Congress in *Orient, op cit* p. 32.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ 4th Congress Political Communiqué in *Orient, op cit* p. 37.

¹⁷ Resolutions of 4th Congress in *Orient, op cit* p. 33.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

revolution which consists of real national independence, a truly national and liberated economy independent from the capitalist world market, as a step on the road to building socialism. It believed in 'scientific socialism', in the domination of the state by the party, the leading role of the public sector in the economy, and the building of a centrally planned economy. Internationally it saw its alliance with Third World liberation movements, Third World non-aligned and socialist states, and other socialist countries against colonialism and imperialism.

The success of the left at the Congress resulted in an open split with the right as Qahtan refused to implement Congress resolutions. In particular he failed to appoint Abdul Fattah Ismail to be Prime Minister, a decision Congress had taken to ensure action on its socialist programme. The Congress ended with the split between right and left apparent to all.

2. The 20 March events

The situation came to a head within a few days. On 19 March army and security forces broke up a meeting in Aden of supporters of the Congress decisions. The next day they arrested eight NLF leaders including Abdul Fattah Ismail and Ali Salem al Beedh and 160 militants and took over the radio station. This action led to widespread protests in Ja'ar, Yafi', and Hadramaut where militants demanded the release of those imprisoned. There was also protest in some sections of the armed forces. The army hierarchy's hostility to the left was due to a clear conflict of interests: it had been upset by the sudden dismissal of its British training officers in late February and it resented the recently-decided cuts in salaries. More fundamentally as a professional body it was opposed to the left's intention of arming the militia and thus downgrading the army and finally, being tribally based, it saw the left's determination to de-tribalise institutions as a direct threat to its composition.

Opposition was such that by 25 March Qahtan had to back down. He made a speech denying that there had been or would be any arrests in the NLF, stated that the army and administration would be purged and that no factions would be tolerated within the NLF. He also promised that the Agrarian Reform Law would be implemented as well as the resolutions of the Congress and that everything would be done for the benefit of the oppressed masses.¹⁹ The statement came at the conclusion of a meeting of the NLF's General Command and represented a compromise as Qahtan had to withdraw his support from the rebels in the army and accept Congress resolutions, but he was still able to insist on his moderate Agrarian Reform Law. The imprisoned NLF members were released and the conflict continued.

In mid-April both Abdul Fattah Ismail and Ali Salem al Beedh were forced to resign their ministerial positions. However the army and police had to dismiss their more right-wing members and a more radical agrarian reform law was promised. These

¹⁹ BBC SWB ME 2733 29 March 68.

events took place in the month when the left-wing Supreme State Security Court, presided by Abdullah al Khamri, sentenced 6 former sultans and ministers to death, 5 others to 15 years imprisonment and another 5 to ten years, most of them *in absentia* needless to say.²⁰ The Minister of Defence also expelled the US military attaché²¹ who had been seen on 19 March at the headquarters of one of the army brigades involved in making arrests.

The 20 March incident was clearly a failed attempt by the right, probably with Qahtan's approval, to take over the government of the country and to overthrow the left whose strength had been shown by its success at the Congress. The failure of the right was balanced by its subsequent ability to expel leading left-wingers from the government and this gives an indication of how evenly balanced the forces were. The conflict can be seen as one between those supporting the supremacy of the party over the state, represented by Abdul Fattah and the left, and on the other hand supporters of the supremacy of the state over the party represented by Qahtan and the right.

This failure led the left to believe in May 1968 that the time had come to take power. By then the country's situation was disastrous: negotiations with Britain about aid had finally failed when the British offered £1,250,000 over 10 months instead of the 12 million promised earlier,²² there were 35,000 jobless in Aden, salaries had been cut and prices had risen, and the Treasury was said to be able to meet only one month's salaries. The only working economic asset was the refinery. The army was said to use 55% of the budget. In a move of desperation the Minister of Finance was sent on a trip to Cairo and Kuwait in the hope of obtaining aid.

3. The 14 May Movement

On 3 May fighting broke out in Madinat al Sha'b (the former al-Ittihad of the Federation) near Aden between groups supporting the two factions in the NLF. A secondary school whose intake was reserved for students of the hinterland had been built there, when students from the school distributing socialist leaflets were attacked by soldiers from the nearby barracks. In the ensuing *fracas* four NLF militants were killed and this strengthened feeling among the left that the time had come to take action.

A full-scale insurrection was launched on 14 May by the left in Ja'ar, a town in the Abyan region about 80 km north east of Aden. The left had the support of other socialists in Hadramaut, though poor communications made their intervention impossible. At that time travel by land from Mukalla to Ja'ar took 3 to 4 days with no asphalted road, while it only took half a day to reach Ja'ar from Aden, giving Qahtan and his army the advantage. The insurrection was led by many who were to gain further promi-

²⁰ BBC SWB ME 2726 21 March 68.

²¹ One Dale S. Perry.

²² BBC SWB ME 2768 13.5.68.

nence after the left took over.²³ This time Qahtan retaliated in force. Having described the rebels as:

‘a few individuals in the National Front who disagree with the National Front’s line and its national constitution. They follow a leftist and opportunist line agreeing completely with the anti-revolutionary movement and the extreme right, aimed at pushing the country into a tribal war, economic decline and crushing the National Front organisation. They claim to be with the workers, peasants, and soldiers while in fact they suppress the peasants, workers and soldiers and all sections of the people with the main aim of gaining personal privileges for themselves.’²⁴

The NLF General Command which then included many pro-Qahtan members issued a long communique on 14 May which made serious and in part justified criticisms of the left-wing insurrection accusing it of:

‘ignoring objective reality and circumstances, due to their own personal interpretation of the NLF, which means by-passing all the stages of objective scientific development and turning the NLF into the party of a single class while the National Charter specifies that it is a popular grouping of all working forces. They consider our society to be comparable to 19th Century European societies in its social structure, thus pretending to be unaware of the fundamental differences from the points of view of religion, history, customs, habits and the economy’²⁵

Other accusations were less justified as the 14 May statement strongly defended the 1965 National Charter while also claiming to defend the 4th Congress decisions, which can be seen as contradictory. It accused the rebels of condemning Arab socialist experiences such as those of Egypt and Algeria, and even world socialist experiences. The 14 May Movement was also blamed for the events of 19 March and 3 May and almost held responsible for the failure of negotiations on aid with Britain. This was not just a battle of words, and the army stayed firmly on the side of Qahtan. By early June the Movement was defeated, losing a number of leaders on the battlefield while other escaped to the North to join the remaining left-wing forces there in the continuing civil war. The ruling group was thereafter apparently unchallenged from within till its downfall a year later in June 1969. This did not however mean that everything was quiet and peaceful or that the régime could concentrate its attentions on the disastrous

²³ Including Ali Saleh Obayd ‘Muqbil’. Salem Ruba’i Ali, Ali Salem al Beedh, Salih Baqis, Ali Antar, Abdullah al Ashtal, Awadh al Hamid, Muhammed Salih Yafi’ (Muti), Abdul Aziz Abdul Wali. See PDRY — Ministry of Information, *The 14 May Movement, introduction and results*, 1973, in Arabic.

²⁴ BBC SWB ME 2779 18 May 1968.

²⁵ PRSY Ministry of Culture & National Guidance, Communiqué of the General Command of the

economic situation, a stronger challenge came from outside. The first border clashes had taken place in February 1968, when the ex-Sharif of Bayhan tried to regain his former territory with Saudi help, and in the same month Yemeni royalists had attacked across the border and were fought back by joint NLF-YAR forces in a combined military alliance. Equipment and documents were captured and the counter-revolutionaries fled to al-Bayda. This must have helped the NLF to shelve its internal struggles to face the common enemies which threatened the young republic's very existence. Border attacks became increasingly frequent and significant from the summer of 1968 onwards, when they took place at most of the possible crossing points, in the Second, Third and Fourth Governorates with the fighting concentrated in the Dhali', Mukayras, Bayhan and Sa'id regions. As we have seen the counter-revolutionaries were not short of support.

4. Disagreements with the YAR

In early 1969 when the conflict on the borders seemed to be under control, a new problem was added. This took the form of a propaganda war with the Yemen Arab Republic which at that time was reaching the end of its civil war. After the siege of Sana'a which the republicans withstood, the struggle in 1968 had been between the right and the left of the republican movement. This had culminated in the Hodeida incident in March 1968 when a Soviet ship was expected to unload arms including tanks in Hodeida port.²⁶ The right won control of these weapons and thereafter no compromise was possible between right and left republicans in the North. The left-wing leader Abdul Raqib Wahhab left for Aden but returned to the YAR in late 1968 to resume the struggle against the right who at that time were in the process of negotiating a settlement with the royalists. In early 1969 the right republicans in the YAR launched strong verbal attacks on the régime in the PRSY, showing that although in both republics rightist republicans were then in control, the right of the NLF was still far to the left of the right republicans in the North. The foreign Minister of the YAR, Yahia Jughman²⁷ launched the attack with the following statement:

'The government of the YAR accepted the declaration of independence [in the south] instead of the declaration of evacuation and unity. It accepted the establishment of a new Yemeni government in Aden. It also agreed to the establishment of liaison offices and unity offices believing that these institutions would serve as positive and effective means for removing any obstacles to unity ...

Today we are further from unity than we were a year ago. The National Front Government has succeeded in achieving in one year what colonialism failed to achieve in 130. Imperialism tried to set a boundary between

NLF, in *Orient* 1969 p. 45.

²⁶ This incident is discussed in greater detail by F. Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans*.

²⁷ London 1974 p. 122-3. '

southern and northern Yemen, establish a bogus government in Aden and create a new people with a new identity in southern Yemen. Imperialism failed in all these things, but the secessionist National Front government has succeeded.’²⁸

The southern government retaliated by asking why the YAR was giving protection to ex-sultans from the south and encouragement to FLOSY to pursue its fight across the border. The political differences between Sana’a and Aden at that time can be seen in the statement on Sana’a radio asserting that ‘the régime in the North looks upon the Liberation Front [FLOSY] as the vanguard which has borne the brunt of the fight against colonialism, sultans and agents, and therefore deserved a share in government’, going on to reject the NLF Charter and asserting that FLOSY started the struggle and gave more than the NLF.²⁹ Although no solution was found to the differences between the two parts of the homeland at that time, issues of immediate concern gradually took over and the two regimes developed on their increasingly divergent paths in the following years, culminating in the first war between them in 1972.

The Corrective Move and the Fifth Congress

1. The 22 June Corrective Move

After a number of Cabinet changes in early 1969 which indicated the increased weakness of Qahtan’s internal position, the crisis reached breaking point. On 18 June he sacked the Minister of the Interior, Mohammad Ali Haitham who had been responsible for liaison with the army. This led to a final confrontation with the left and on 22 June his resignation as well as that of Faysal ash-Sha’bi, then Prime Minister, were announced. In what became known as the Glorious 22 June Corrective Move, power was taken over by a 5-man Presidential Council composed of Salem Ruba’i Ali (known as Salmine) President, Abdul Fattah Ismail, Secretary General of the NLF, Mohammed Ali Haitham the new Prime Minister, Ali Ahmed Nasser Antar, soon to be named Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Mohammed Saleh Aulaqi, the new Minister of Defence.

The statement issued by the General Command on the morning of 22 June announcing the resignations of the two Ash Sha’bi accused them of:

‘individualist actions which caused the revolution to deviate from its proper course to a different course ... Thus the action by the General Command in carrying out a natural corrective operation within its ranks was in response to an urgent necessity felt by every citizen and especially by all the members

²⁸ He was in the late 1970s and early 1980s to become a main go-between in the Yemeni unity negotiations between Sana’a and Aden.

²⁹ BBC SWB ME 2891 4 February 1969.

of the organisation ... The General Command emphasises the following points:

The revolution can only avoid dangers and faults if it makes use of the popular political authority found in the National Front.

It is only popular democratic authority which is going to save the country and people from the dangers of individualist inclination.

The National Charter of the National Front is the guide for the revolution.

To safeguard the 26 September and 14 October revolutions from the conspiracies of the imperialists and reactionaries is the immediate task of the revolution in the South and the National Guards in the North.

It is necessary to strengthen the relations with fraternal Arab countries especially the UAR ... and to support the popular Palestine armed resistance ... and the popular Arab armed revolution in the Gulf.

... It is necessary to strengthen relations with the socialist bloc especially the Soviet Union.

Long live the revolution of 14 October under the leadership of the National Front.

Let individualist inclination end for good

Long live the collective will

Long live our struggling people.³⁰

Although the overthrow of Qahtan was achieved with the help of some who were not on the left of the NLF, the 22 June Corrective Move did mark the ascendancy of the revolutionary socialists. Thereafter debate within the NLF took place within the rhetoric of Marxist socialism, other positions being excluded from acceptable political discourse.

As the NLF was the only authorised political organisation, the communists and Ba'athists could not function under their old names and the communists (PDU) became the Salafi Youth Organisation, a name taken from the martyr killed by FLOSY, the Ba'athists became the Popular Vanguard (*at Tali'a*). Both organisations continued their negotiations with the NLF and in December 1969 their respective leaders joined the government for the first time, thus putting a seal on the alliance.

After 22 June, the right of the NLF was purged. In January 1970 twenty leading members were expelled³¹, some of them were imprisoned while others crossed the borders to join the counter-revolutionary forces. Neither the NLF right nor the remnants of FLOSY played any further domestic political role.

³⁰ BBC SWB ME 3002 17 February 1969.

³¹ B BC S WB ME 3108 25 June 1969.

Although some people who were not associated with the NLF left remained in power for a few more months, and Mohammed Ali Haitham in particular remained as Prime Minister till he was ousted in August 1971, it is clear from the changes in policies that June 1969 marks the coming to power of the NLF left.

The 22 June statement is interesting insofar as it is less militant than some of the Congress statements as it claims allegiance to the National Charter of 1965, and calls for the strengthening of relations with Nasser's UAR, a régime which had been soundly condemned at the 4th Congress. On the other hand it shows its left-wing position in asserting solidarity with the National Guards in the YAR, a group on the left of the YAR political spectrum and at the time of this statement very much on the defensive. The document further confirms its support for revolution in the Gulf and calls for strengthened relations with the socialist countries. Specific reference to the Soviet Union in this context is significant as it shows that the frequent accusation of Maoism and opposition to traditional East European socialism was incorrect.

2. The first years of Revolutionary Government

The left's enthusiasm for revolutionary measures was soon to be revealed and the next few years saw the most radical reforms and legislation that started a fundamental transformation of all social, political and economic life in the country. With the continuing deterioration of the economy drastic measures were taken. As we have seen salaries had already been severely reduced. In November 1969 the government nationalised all foreign economic institutions except the British Petroleum refinery and the bunkering companies. The 36 companies involved were to be compensated over twenty years with 2% bonds. Although in line with the NLF's socialist ideology, the nationalisation was criticised not only by the right, but also by the local communists and other left-wingers. In later years, the NLF itself was to recognise that the moment had been badly chosen as in anticipation the main financial institutions, namely banks and insurance companies, had been depleting their Aden branches of assets and the government found that the main thing it had acquired was a number of large overdrafts. This did nothing to revive the economy.

Other major revolutionary measures affected the interior: the decrees banning tribalism and the promulgation of the new Agrarian Reform Law of 1970. Finally in 1974 the new Family Law was issued which gave women equality in marriage and divorce and in responsibility for the household.

The new Agrarian Reform Law controlled the amount of land which families were allowed to own and discussed in detail later. What is relevant at this point is that this law was not only meant to benefit the poorer sections of the peasantry and to encourage them to farm collectively, but it was implemented in a particularly unorthodox way. Even before its promulgation, the first *intifadah* (literally uprising) took place in al-Husn in the Third Governorate, the region from which Salmine originated. This was a movement of peasants sponsored by party cadres in which the peasants expropriated

the landlords and redistributed the land amongst themselves under the protection of the NLF. The NLF also encouraged the peasants to form co-operatives after seizing the land. This movement gradually extended to poor fishermen and to all the governorates. While the movement was largely politically motivated, the absence of competent cadres to enforce the law also contributed to this form of implementation.

A NLF militant in Bayhan described the procedure to French observers as follows:

‘From July to September we prepared the ground, going from village to village encouraging the peasants to speak up against the feudalists, the new landowners and all the tricks they used to get around the law. The peasants admitted that they often received only 10% of the crop. The tribal leaders had right of life and death over their men and were only punished if they killed a peasant from another tribe than theirs. We persuaded the peasants that their exploiters would never change and that they had to take action: they took their axes and their sickles and suddenly arrested all their shaykhs, sayyeds and other feudalists: 82 in all...

The population was amazed: they thought that these people were untouchable and that whoever touched them would die on the spot. Seeing that the lords stayed in prison and no catastrophe struck the town, everybody started talking and all the other peasants joined those who had revolted, in the peasant leagues. There are now five leagues for “the defence of peasants” in the province. It is important that the peasants themselves put the people in prison. Some of them were armed but we did not distribute arms, fearing a massacre.’³²

Today the cooperatives and state farms of Bayhan bear witness to these events, as they are named after the day in each particular case on which the uprising took place.

As well as these revolutionary measures the new régime also took some more conventional ones aimed at reviving the economy. In 1969 a new Investment Law was promulgated to encourage local capital to participate in the development of the country. The law failed as the atmosphere was clearly against the private economy and capitalists tended to support the groups which were either out of power, or were engaged in active insurrection. Besides, despite their statements to the contrary the NLF left had no great love for capitalists, local or otherwise, and their encouragement of investment was seen as a half-hearted attempt to do something about the increasingly difficult economic situation. Nationalisation of foreign assets and later of housing did nothing to encourage private investment.

³² Qahtan was put in prison, and in the late 1970s transferred to house arrest, and finally released. He died as a result of illness in July 1981 and was given a publicised official funeral, attended by a number of senior government officials. Faysal Abdul Latif was arrested on 31 March 1970 and shot ‘while trying to escape’ a few days later.

Another positive attempt at improving the economy came in September 1969 when the country joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, though neither move had any immediate impact. The leaders also went on various fundraising trips (including the visit to China by Salmine in 1970 after China made its first loan of \$4mn), hoping to get development aid and slowly winning small commitments from the socialist countries, obtaining \$2.8mn by 1971 and \$50mn by 1973.³³ To assist development, the Supreme Hanning Council was created in November 1971 and the first Development Plan to cover 3 years ran from 1971/2 to 1973/4.

These major economic decisions took place alongside political ones. New institutions began to emerge as the regime established itself. In December 1969 the Presidential Council was reduced from five members to three, to consist of the President, the Secretary General of the NLF and the Prime Minister.³⁴ As we have seen the NLF purged its General Command of the right-wing. On the third anniversary of independence on 30 November 1970 the new constitution was promulgated after drafts had been circulated and discussed in previous months. The republic was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a move which brought a hostile response from the YAR where it was seen as an assertion of the NLF's legitimacy over the entire Yemen as the word South had been dropped from the name. Neither the inclusion of 'democratic' nor the accompanying text persuaded the rulers of the YAR that the NLF was shifting towards political positions more to their taste. After stating 'belief in the unity of the Yemen and the unity of the destiny of the Yemeni people in the territory' the new constitution went on:

'Today despite the division, the dialectic cohesion of the struggle of the Yemeni people in both parts is continuing and the unity of its struggle not only against the reactionary and imperialist plots in the territory but also in order to get rid finally of the places of division and to restore natural conditions for the unity of the territory.'³⁵

Other articles express the positions of the NLF as they were in the early 1970s, far to the left of the political spectrum:

'All political power in the PDRY is vested in the working people. The firm alliance between the working-class, the peasants, intelligentsia, the petty bourgeoisie is the invincible political basis of the national democratic revolution in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

The historical role of the working class moves upwards and they become ultimately the leading class in society.

³³ G. Troeller and C. Deffarge *Le Monde Diplomatique* April 1972 p. 6. World Bank, *World Debt tables*. Dec 1981 p. 202.

³⁴ At that time Salmine, Abdul Fattah Ismail and Mohammed Ali Haitham.

³⁵ *Constitution of the PDRY*, 1970 Preamble p. 3.

Soldiers, women and students are regarded as part of this alliance by virtue of their membership of the productive forces of the people.

This alliance between the people's democratic forces finds organised expression for itself in the National Front Organisation.

The National Front Organisation leads, on the basis of scientific socialism the political activity amongst the masses and within mass organisations to develop society in such a way that national democratic revolution, which is non-capitalist in approach, is achieved.'³⁶

In other clauses the constitution confirms the state's commitment to promoting the public sector, giving the vote to all citizens above 18 including women, and vesting political authority in local and national elected People's Councils. It confirms adherence to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, although it also supports 'national liberation movements against colonialism and imperialism'.³⁷

In May 1971 the First Supreme People's Council (SPC) met. As no elections had been held its 101 members were chosen by the NFPO internally, from the Ba'athists and communists, and also from independents, to represent different sectors of society (youth, peasants, security and armed forces, women, the professions, and the trades unions). Since its formation, the SPC has assumed supreme constitutional and legislative powers.

In August 1971 a 'ministerial reshuffle' marked the end of Haitham's political career when he was ousted and replaced by Ali Nasser Mohammed who added this post to his position as Minister of Defence, which he had held since January 1970. No other major internal political events took place until the NLF Fifth Congress of March 1972.

3. The Fifth Congress

Exactly four years after the previous one, the Fifth Congress was held in Madinat al Sha'b in March 1972. Political militancy was at a high level:

'Aden had been filled for days with demonstrating workers and peasants: crowds of militants shouting "long live Marxism-Leninism" greeted the delegates. The average age of the delegates was between twenty and thirty — most of them from poor backgrounds — and many were hardly able to read or write; but despite the difficulties involved the sessions were long, serious and highly politicised.'³⁸

As the right had been expelled, discussion by the 170 delegates took place in a comradely atmosphere within the parameters of socialist debate. The turbulent period

³⁶ *op cit* pp. 7–8.

³⁷ *op cit* p. 9.

³⁸ E. Rouleau, *le Monde* 27 May 1972.

through which the country had lived since independence and since the Fourth Congress left its mark on the Fifth. Still resolutely far to the left and claiming allegiance to scientific socialism, the organisation had learnt a lot and had begun half-heartedly to look for friends among some whom it had previously branded as enemies. The tone of the Congress was more sedate, as can be seen from the Secretary General's opening speech which referred to some of the difficulties the movement had encountered in the preceding years. Marked by greater realism than his fiery speech at the Fourth Congress, it indicated the direction which the organisation was taking towards greater stability and institutionalisation. It also showed how the experience of government had brought home the difficulties of implementing an idealistic programme and how some of the more purist positions had to be dropped to retain support and implement policies:

'No one can belittle our brief and modest experience gained in the struggle for power against the feudalist and colonialist rule and since we have shouldered the tasks and responsibilities of progressive authority. It is true that for a while we dreamt of building a new society and we thought everything was clear and simple. But as usual, reality turned out to be more complex and richer in meaning than we had imagined. We had to fight the great historic problems and daily tasks both during the national liberation stage of struggle and after we took power...

We consider our simple and modest experience to be useful to others in a number of fields ... The National Front Political Organisation is being transformed from a mass organisation aimed at the total destruction of everything set up by feudalist and colonialist rule, and leading the broad masses during the national liberation stage, into a leading force in society directly responsible for authority, struggling to build the new authority and to reconstruct society with the collaboration of the broadest masses ...'³⁹

In spite of this change in tone, the actual policies agreed by the two congresses are much the same except that attacks on the petty bourgeoisie ceased with the Fifth Congress.

Among the Congress decisions, those relating to the NLF served to mark a further step of the organisation's development towards the formal structures of a Marxist party. The Front was renamed the National Front Political Organisation (NFPO) and its General Command was replaced by an elected Central Committee of 31 members and 14 candidate members which in turn elected a Political Bureau. Congress empowered this Central Committee to work for the realisation of unity with the other political organisations towards the establishment of the Yemeni vanguard party. This

³⁹ Fifth General Congress of the National Front Political Organisation of the PDRY -*mimeographed documents* pp. 2-3 an alternative translation of this passage is to be found in F. Halliday *op cit* pp. 243-4.

was endorsement for the Organisation to continue its negotiations with the Salafi Youth Organisation, and Tali'a. Legislative power having been handed over to the Supreme People's Council in 1971, Congress asserted the NFPO's ultimate political authority in the country as its internal statutes state that 'the Central Committee of the National Front Political Organisation is the leading political organ of the country'⁴⁰

Congress resolutions called for the development of state institutions, and by its emphasis on security measures reflected the difficult situation resulting from constant assaults on the country's borders. Three resolutions encouraged the development of the army and police to 'complete their transformation into political and class organisations fully aware of their responsibilities so that they can play their responsible role in defending the revolution and taking part in the operation of construction and development.'⁴¹

It also called for the reorganisation of the popular forces and 'approves the necessity of expanding the workers, peasants, students and women's popular militia and to generalise training camps for all members of the organisation and all state farms and peasant co-operative farms.'⁴²

Despite the urgent military situation, Congress also endorsed a number of resolutions aimed at developing the economic and social life of the country and the overall feeling which emerges from this Congress is one of collective effort to build a new society. Development of public sector control of the economy, and a number of specific resolutions concerning the different sectors, particularly agriculture, were passed. Socially concern for education and the eradication of illiteracy featured alongside other resolutions on the development of mass organisations. For the first time the position of women was dealt with in a clear resolution which can only be regarded as revolutionary in the context of the Arabian Peninsula:

'The Congress endorses the struggle of the Yemeni woman for equality in rights with man ... It also asks the Yemeni woman for more struggle to overcome all residues of backwardness left behind by the colonialist and semifeudalist régime in our country.'⁴³

The centrality of the theme of Yemeni unity featured in a Congress resolution which:

'stresses that completion of our national liberation is linked with the victory of the revolutions of 26 September and 14 October over all their enemies including the forces of imperialism and reaction as this is vital for our

⁴⁰ Article 13 of the NFPO's internal rules.

⁴¹ *Resolutions adopted by the 5th General Congress of the Political Organisation — National Front* — Aden n.d. p. 2.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *op cit* p. 3.

Yemeni people in order to reach their great objective for realising a united democratic Yemen.’⁴⁴

Congress decisions on foreign relations were a further affirmation of the country’s principled revolutionary positions which it sustained despite the fact that it most probably contributed to its international isolation, particularly within the Arab world. Notably attacks on the petty bourgeois states had been dropped and replaced by

‘support for the progressive Arab countries in their struggle against Zionism and American imperialism for the sake of liberating the occupied Arab territories.’⁴⁵ These countries’ internal policies were indirectly criticised: ‘The Congress supports the Arab working class in its struggles to occupy leading positions in the Arab revolutionary movement... The Congress approves the establishment of a progressive Arab Front for the Arab liberation movement and its revolutionary groups in the just struggle against imperialism, Arab reactionary régimes and neocolonialism in the Arab homeland.’⁴⁶

It is not surprising that the régime remained unrecognised by a number of Arab states in the Peninsula, particularly as it supported the revolutionary movements in that region not only verbally, but also materially within its very limited means. In 1972 the People’s Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf was an important force which was seen by many as a threat not only to the Sultanate but also to the newly independent Amirates of the Gulf and this Congress

‘endorses the full and complete backing and support of the revolution ... and affirms increasing support for this revolution until victory is achieved over the forces of colonialism and reaction and complete national independence is realised.’⁴⁷

In international questions the Organisation supported liberation movements throughout the world against colonialism and racism, and for socialism. On this point the Congress, ‘stresses the necessity of the unity of the socialist camp and their cohesion against the forces of world imperialism’⁴⁸, a clear reference to the Sino-Soviet dispute and an appeal to both sides to put their common interests first. The Yemeni position on this question was neatly summarised by Abdul Fattah Ismail in an interview:

⁴⁴ *op cit* p. 4.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

‘From the beginning we explained to our Soviet and Chinese friends, who at first distrusted us, that we were determined to be strictly neutral in a conflict which is, in our opinion, unnatural and highly prejudicial to the worldwide movement for national liberation, to the international working class and to the socialist camp itself, whose division only serves the interests of imperialism.’⁴⁹

While maintaining a principled position on this conflict, Yemeni socialists were also influenced to some extent by the rival models of socialism which the two states presented. Although political debate centred on local issues and how to deal with them, in 1970 it had seemed that the Chinese model based on poor peasant society and on the cultural revolution attracted support. By 1972, and the Fifth Congress, the situation had changed, mainly as a result of changes in Chinese foreign policy. China had just established diplomatic relations with Haile Selassie’s Ethiopia and withdrawn its support for the Eritreans in their war of independence and was reducing its aid to the PFLOAG in Oman. Similarly China supported the right-wing régimes in Sudan and Pakistan and was involved in a rapprochement with the USA. At a time when Democratic Yemen was trying to maintain equally good relations with the USSR and China, China was withdrawing its support from revolutionary movements and significantly failed to send a message of greetings to the Congress. Such moves were a severe blow to those Yemenis who had looked to China and its cultural revolution as alternative models to stultified Soviet socialism.

The Fifth Congress is today remembered as a welcome interlude of optimism and fervour at a time when the régime was facing severe difficulties on all fronts.

4. The Seven Days

While, as we will see, the counter-revolutionaries were attacking at the borders, internal revolutionary change continued apace. The peasant and fishermen *intifadhat* had been taking place since late 1970 in some regions but in Aden itself there had been little revolutionary fervour. Most observers at that time contrasted the enthusiasm for revolution in the rural areas to the morose and cynical attitude of the Adenis; indeed the policies which had been adopted favoured the countryside while few of those taken to improve economic life in Aden had succeeded. Some of the remaining Adenis still remembered with nostalgia the days of the British as a period of prosperity and comfort. The popular demonstrations around the Fifth Congress had brought in many people from the countryside to express their loyalty to the régime and this gave impetus for greater militancy within Aden itself. The drastic measures cutting public sector salaries and the size of the civil service in 1968 had helped to reduce the budget deficit, but by 1972 it was clear that further belt-tightening was called for, and in the aftermath

⁴⁹ *Ie Monde* 31 May 72.

of the Congress mass demonstrations were organised in Aden by the NFPO in August 1972. These had two main objectives: a further cut in public sector salaries and the demand for the nationalisation of housing. As these demands had been sponsored by the leadership they were welcomed and implemented. Salaries which had been cut by between 5 and 60% in 1968 were further reduced by one third at a flat rate. All houses which were not occupied by their owners were nationalised. The demonstrations of that time came to be known as the Seven Days, and later were looked upon with some scepticism, to say the least.

5. Counter Revolution

There was no shortage of enemies attacking the borders: they included the former sultans and amirs and other rulers dispossessed by the collapse of the Federation, the former Adeni bourgeoisie whose members joined either FLOSY or the remnants of the SAL, the Saudi Arabian regime and the Yemeni Imam and his supporters. Added to these were the right-wing republicans who had achieved power in the Y AR in alliance with supporters of the Imam in 1970.

As early as February 1968 the first attacks were launched across the border in Bayhan led by the former Sharif who was one of the most active opponents of the new régime. He had strong backing from Saudi Arabia and from the royalists in the Y AR whom he had helped by facilitating supplies in the earlier years of the civil war when he was still in power. In June and July of the same year other attacks in the Second governorate near Dhali' failed but in the Fourth governorate they were more successful when the counter-revolutionaries actually succeeded in occupying Sa'id, a significant town in former Aulaqi territory, some distance from the border but a position easy to hold. Fighting was fierce and continuous and in early August 1968 the commander of the PRSY's security forces defected to the YAR with his men and weapons inflicting a heavy blow against the régime. The NLF responded to these attacks with a mass mobilisation of its forces and by arming its citizens; the army and NLF militants succeeded in repelling the attack, recapturing Sa'id on 10 August and driving the rebels back across the border.

Fighting resumed in Bayhan in October and in the next few years was almost continuous. From early 1969 the régime in the YAR gave generous support in arms, training and accommodation to the remnants of FLOSY in their struggle against the NLF. In November 1969 just after foreign assets were nationalised in the PRSY, the Saudis launched a major attack on Wadi' a desert outpost of the PRSY, which the Saudi forces occupied and have since refused to relinquish; claims and counter-claims to Wadi' continue. In March 1970 in a further attempt to overthrow the régime, a disaffected right-winger of the NLF who had been expelled in June 1969, Salim al Kindi led an armed revolt in the Second, Third and Fourth Governorates. He was arrested with documents indicating his connections with Saudi Arabia. In October of

that year he was executed along with 6 of his comrades after having been tried for sabotage.⁵⁰

Armed border clashes continued till early 1973 at various points between the YAR and the PDRY and also in the more accessible parts of the PDRY-Saudi border. The eastern border with Oman was also a constant threat as it was used by the PFLOAG who brought their supplies and carried out their international communications through the PDRY. There were constant difficulties which culminated in May 1972 when British-flown aircraft supporting the Sultanate of Oman bombed a border village, causing considerable damage. This was meant as a warning to the PDRY as well as a deterrent to the PFLOAG. The remote border was a further source of problems which the régime could well have done without.

The difficulties encountered by the régime were such that in early 1971 the Minister of Defence, Ali Nasser Mohammed, attempted to negotiate with A.Q.Makkawi of FLOSY with the aim of persuading FLOSY at least to end hostilities against the new régime. These negotiations failed. As well as armed clashes on the borders and sponsored revolts in some parts of the country, the régime also had to contend with threats to the lives of its leaders as for example in 1972 when there was an assassination attempt against Ali Nasser, by then Prime Minister.

In December 1970 a propaganda war had started with the launching of the 'Voice of the Free South' radio, speaking for the Army of National Deliverance. It was broadcasting from an old station lent by North Yemeni royalists. It specialised in military communiques claiming amazing and usually fabricated victories over the NLF, and in slanders of the régime which it accused of atheism and other anti-Muslim behaviour. In some cases these broadcasts successfully exploited the fears which many felt for their traditions and customs, by celebrating traditional prejudices and falsifying the NLF policies in a skilful way. This can be seen in the following example of a broadcast on the NLF's policy on women. They distorted the policy to make it look most offensive to traditionalist believers, and they appealed to concepts of honour, shame and loyalty, to discredit the government's policy:

'What do they mean by giving women equal rights? Islam defined women's relationship with men ... But now Marxism has destroyed this basis. It has rendered women's equality with men a basis for sin and whoredom. Marriage and protecting one's chastity is, in the Marxist view, a contradiction of the principle of progress and a sign of a backward and reactionary society. The equality the hireling government in Aden means is that women should mix with men and live together ... They want women to appear partly naked in the streets, cinemas, clubs and places of debauchery in the name of emancipation, freedom and progress.

⁵⁰ BBC SWB ME 3508 15 October 1970 and 3516 24 October 1970.

My Muslim brother in the south, would you allow your wife, daughter or sister to mix with men in public places, while partly naked? Are you going to let your honour be violated? ...'⁵¹

6. Relations with the Northern Part of the Homeland

As we have seen relations between the PDRY and the Y AR steadily deteriorated in the first few years of the former's independence. The Y AR, after the withdrawal of Egyptian troops and assistance in late 1967, withstood the siege of Sana'a which was laid by royalists, but in 1968 the right wing of the republican movement came to defeat its left, and by 1969 was reaching agreement with remnants of the royalist forces. The effect of this was to preserve the republic and prevent the return of the Imam, but also to lay the foundations for a right-wing régime closely allied to Saudi Arabia which was then virulently opposed to the régime in the PDRY. Both Sana'a and Riyadh supported factions opposed to the revolutionary régime, Riyadh aligning with the former rulers and the South Arabian League, while Sana'a supported FLOSY and provided a home for many members of the former Adeni trading bourgeoisie. In reaction to this, the PDRY supported the left of the republican movement which soon entered into open armed conflict with the régime in Sana'a. Relations between Sana'a and Aden remained bad despite attempts to improve them, the most notable being in November 1970 when the Prime Minister, then Mohammed Ali Haitham met Northern leaders in Ta'iz. As a result of the meeting a joint communiqué was issued in Sana'a and Aden announcing the two governments' decision to take preliminary measures towards the creation of a federation of the two states, as well as the formation of joint committees, notably for the management of the economy. Nothing came of this, though in 1971 most border incursions were from Saudi Arabia, and dialogue between the two parts of Yemen continued.

In early 1972 relations between the two parts of the homeland took a distinct turn for the worse when in February, the Khawlani shaykh Naji al Ghadir, supreme shaykh of the Bakil federation was killed by PDRY forces near Bayhan with a number of his followers. Although he was not greatly loved by the Sana'ani authorities, the YAR claimed that al Ghadir had crossed at the invitation of the South for discussions, while the Democratic Yemeni authorities stated that it had been an armed incursion to which their forces responded in kind. Attempts at negotiations between the two sides failed and verbal attacks escalated into an intense propaganda war. They were accompanied by the massing of troops along the border and eventually, in September open war broke out and lasted two weeks before efforts at mediation by a number of Arab states succeeded in arranging a cease-fire. The only territory which changed hands lastingly were the Kamaran Island which Sana'a has held ever since. While fighting continued, meetings took place in Cairo between representatives of the two sides and resulted

⁵¹ BBC SWB ME 3641 23 March 1971.

in agreement on the ending of hostilities, withdrawal of forces etc. To many people's surprise, the two Prime Ministers, Muhsin al 'Ayni and Ali Nasser Mohammed met in Cairo and signed an agreement on 28 October 1972 'to set up a unified state, joining the parts of Yemen, North and South'⁵²

This meeting was followed a month later by a summit meeting in Tripoli when the two Presidents, Abdul Rahman al Iryani and Salem Ruba'i Ali met and agreed on unity within a year, the formation of unity committees and a number of basic principles which were to rule the new Yemeni republic. In the following months the committees met frequently but gradually their meetings became sporadic as no agreement was reached and the situation in the YAR remained politically unstable. In June 1974 the army took over and a new President, Ibrahim al Hamdi took over.

UPONF and the Power Struggle 1975–78

By the mid-1970s revolutionary enthusiasm had cooled, even in the countryside; the major structural changes in land tenure and relations of production had not brought about instant wealth as many had expected and economic progress was not immediately apparent. Despite salary cuts and heavy food subsidies, the cost of living was rising and, more importantly, the supply situation was deteriorating. Peasants were becoming apathetic because of low returns on production aggravated by the inefficient working of the new agricultural institutions particularly those responsible for distribution. Import restrictions particularly affected the urban areas. Disenchantment with the régime developed and within the NFPO the earlier populist policies came to be associated with Salmine, while a more orthodox line was emerging under the leadership of the ideologue Abdul Fattah Ismail with the support of cadres trained in Eastern Europe who wanted more formal institutions, and less reliance on spontaneity. These factors embittered the rivalry between the two leaders, which was already visible in the rival structures each established: Abdul Fattah through the NFPO and Salmine through his Presidency-controlled financing institutions.

However the mid-1970s brought fewer upheavals than the earlier period; most radical legislation had been completed with the Family Law of January 1974, and the next important piece of social legislation took place in January 1977 with the law restricting the consumption of qat' to weekends and holidays. It was also in May 1977 that the refinery was handed over by BP to the government by agreement.

Security improved in this period as the exiles were able to mount only infrequent minor border operations while official relations between the PDRY and the YAR were maintained at a reasonable level. Negotiations started with Saudi Arabia and culminated in mutual diplomatic recognition in March 1976. In 1975 a major trial of spies and infiltrators took place in which the accused were given heavy prison sentences.⁵³

⁵² BBC SWB ME 4133 1 November 1972.

⁵³ BBC SWB ME 4971 2 September 1975.

Although the discovery of this group showed that the régime was still threatened, it was an indication of its greater stability that its enemies no longer expected to bring about its downfall by direct military attack.

The régime was gradually able to establish national administrative institutions despite the difficulties imposed by tradition and economic and financial inadequacies. The first Three Year Development Plan achieved only 77% of the intended expenditure due to the shortage of investment capital: the need for foreign aid and where it should come from were questions perpetually under debate. As so often happens internal divisions began to appear when the threat from across the borders diminished and the country's international position was gradually improving.

1. The Unification Congress

A number of political congresses were held in 1975. In March the Sixth Congress of the NFPO endorsed the decision to unite with the Ba'athists and communists; it also increased the size of the Central Committee to 41 and that of the Political Bureau to 9 members. As we have seen relations between the NFPO, Tali'a (Ba'athists) and the Salafi Youth Organisation (communists) had been close since the Corrective Move and negotiations for unity had been developing gradually. The Unification Congress was the occasion of the formal merging of the three organisations, after each had held its own congress.

The Sixth Congress of the NFPO and the Unification Congress which followed were both held in far cooler atmospheres than the earlier meetings. The reforms introduced by the régime had not resulted in immediate noticeable improvements in the standard of living and popular enthusiasm for the régime had declined. The formalisation of political life with the training of cadres in the Higher School for Scientific Socialism founded in 1972 and its branches, as well as in socialist countries, gradually estranged the cadres from ordinary citizens whose politicisation took place mainly through the migrant worker's experiences of development in surrounding countries of the Peninsula where the oil boom was beginning, and not through analysis of the conditions specific to Democratic Yemen.

For a more detailed discussion of qat, see Chapter 5.

The Unification Congress was held in October 1975 and named the new organisation the Unified Political Organisation, the National Front (UPONF). It defined its role as follows:

'The Unified Political Organisation, the National Front, in our country, marks a transitional stage towards the establishment of a vanguard party in Democratic Yemen; it is a tool of the national democratic revolution within the general framework of a broad class alliance between all social democratic forces who have a real interest in the national democratic revolution, i.e. the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals and

petty bourgeois ... The revolution in our country believes more strongly than ever that the vanguard party is the sole guarantee that the revolution will be led towards the achievement of its long term and immediate objectives. Thus working towards the creation of the vanguard party in the PDRY is a fundamental task. It will be a leadership armed with scientific socialist ideology.⁵⁴

This statement clearly shows that political leaders saw the political organisation in the mid-1970s as a step towards a socialist party; it also shows their ongoing commitment to scientific socialism, a commitment which had been seen in their earlier statements. In the Arab world this emphasis on the directing role of a party is unique.

Congress reasserted the policies of earlier congresses politically, economically and socially, as well as in foreign affairs and few changes in line were noticeable; one change in foreign affairs pointed to the regime's efforts to improve its relations with its neighbours, and particularly reflected what were at that time secret negotiations with Saudi Arabia. There was no direct attack on the reactionary Arab states, as had been launched on previous occasions. This was however a very minor compromise as support continued for the armed struggle by the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman (which in 1974 had succeeded the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf) although it was suffering very severe military reverses at the time of the Congress. Congress also reasserted its call for the creation of a 'progressive Arab domestic front which will unify the common struggle against imperialism, Arab reaction and Zionism'⁵⁵ and its support for 'the national democratic groups in their struggle against reactionary forces, for the establishment of nationalist democratic régimes ... and ... the struggle of progressive forces and the Arab workers movements,'⁵⁶ counterbalanced the absence of direct onslaught against reaction.

The major ideological change revealed at the Unification Congress was a change in the attitude to the petty bourgeoisie. While violently attacked in 1968, it had been ignored in 1972. By 1975 the UPONF's economic philosophy 'is based not on private but on public ownership represented by the public sector managed by our national democratic régime. But public ownership, via the public sector, does not prevent any other forms of ownership.'⁵⁷ This statement implicitly recognises the role of the private sector in building the country, and is reinforced in the Programme which states that 'the opportunity must be given to national capitalists to participate actively in building up our country and to participate in creating a productive agricultural and industrial national economy under the leadership of the public sector. The revolution

⁵⁴ *Programme of the Unified Political Organisation, the National Front for the National Democratic phase of the revolution*, PDRY Embassy in London 1977, pp. 14–15.

⁵⁵ *Programme op cit* p. 35.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *The Political Report presented to the Unification Congress*, PDRY Embassy London 1977 p. 36.

will encourage and defend all industrial projects set up in the private sector and the mixed sector within the development plan.⁵⁸

This change did indicate the extent to which lack of capital had held up the implementation of the First Development Plan, as well as the regime's wish to mobilise the support of the population on a wider basis.

The question of the urban-rural gap was raised once again: 'The priority at the social level is to change rapidly the face of social life in the countryside by providing for our Yemeni countryside the basic necessities of modern life; this means expanding the network of roads and modern communications, providing medical facilities, electricity for the remote villages, democratising education, building primary and preparatory schools and providing more local teacher-cadres.'⁵⁹ Despite reassertion of these objectives, few improvements were yet visible in the rural areas and more rural men than ever were emigrating to the oil-rich states of the Peninsula regardless of the ban on emigration imposed in 1974. Nor did concern for the rural situation halt the urbanisation of the politicians.

2. Decline and fall of Salmine: the 26 June events

UPONF was a very different organisation from the NLF left which had taken power in June 1969 or that which dominated the Fourth Congress in 1968. Through the many struggles it had survived in seven years, its cadres had become a ruling group concerned as much with retaining power as with maintaining militancy. They had got used to living in Aden and to the comforts of office life, reversing in practice though not in theory the early stance of the organisation to favour the rural areas. Although Aden was at first uncomfortable as a conquered city, the UPONF cadres soon got used to it and became increasingly sensitive to the demands of the urban population. The leaders' visits to the deprived rural areas became both rarer and shorter, except for Salmine whose commitment to the rural population remained a priority.

Between 1975 and 1978 the power struggle between the two clearly identifiable factions deepened: that led by Salmine will here be described as 'populist' while the other, led by Abdul Fattah Ismail will be called 'formalist'. Neither label is satisfactory, and I hope that the description of their different styles of politics will be more helpful to the reader, but such labels will avoid the use of the terms 'Maoist' and 'pro-Soviet' which are in my view both incorrect and misleading, as well as being ideologically loaded. No two visions of socialism are alike and certainly the ideals of the Yemeni revolutionaries should not be labelled facily.

Any reduction of Yemeni social structure to a description of classes in the European sense can only be mistaken. The different strata of the Yemeni social structure are still basically pre-capitalist as relations of production are those of an underdeveloped

⁵⁸ Programme *op cit* p. 27.

⁵⁹ Programme *op cit* p. 30.

economic structure, which is related to the pressures of the world economy through trading relations and labour migration. Classes in the capitalist sense do not exist as fully developed social formations and the terminology appropriate for industrial societies can only be inadequate, while that for precapitalist formations is still very tentative.

The differences which grew up between the two factions mainly concerned internal policies both economic and political. On the one hand the populist tendency under Salmine was based on a philosophy well summarised in a 1968 editorial of *al Sharara* the Mukalla NLF organ:

‘... cries of indignation will arise from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, afraid and hesitant: but where are the competent cadres? By “competent cadres” they mean owners of university diplomas. There we will answer frankly: we do not need bourgeois competence but rather devoted workers. Because the great historic experience of the workers’ councils is here to prove that the working masses can govern themselves without difficulties, without bureaucracy and without bourgeois “competence”.’⁶⁰

Salmine relied on devoted militants whose competence was not always proved and his suspicion of bureaucracy often led him to try to by-pass those institutions which the formalists were trying to set up to consolidate the centralised state, such as ministries and their regional offices, as well as some of the political organisation’s local branches. Similarly, as we have seen, Salmine supported the countryside against the town: he had little political faith in the Adenis, and distrusted the effect that urban comfort had on militants, turning them into bureaucrats. He preferred enthusiasts whose ideas and plans he often authorised and funded directly without any detailed analysis or reference to the relevant ministry.

After his downfall he was described by a foreign observer as follows:

‘Salem Robea Ali believed in an ethical approach to political and administrative work: he thought that the city, with its amenities and air conditioners, had corrupted officials. By contrast, he had faith in the revolutionary spirit of the masses which could be used to counter the new privileged élite and to provide inspiration for development programs. The mass demonstrations of 1972 were precisely designed to use the peasant masses against an urban élite, and in administrative matters he believed less in formal decision-making structures and expertise than in appointing people of peasant or worker origin and political dedication to responsible positions. He opposed the growth of formally structured organisations in party or state and countered it by promoting favoured individuals whom he personally trusted.

⁶⁰ Editorial of *Al Sharara (The Spark)*, organ of the NLF in the 5th Governorate, March 1968. This is reproduced in full in J. P. Viennot ‘Aden de la lutte pour la liberation à l’indépendance’ *Orient* 1969 p. 41–2.

His strength lay in his popularity in the country and his revolutionary vision; no one has ever suspected him personally of corruption or of leading an easy life. He travelled the country indefatigably and tried to keep himself informed of all aspects of public life.’⁶¹

As the UPONF became more institutionalised and complacent, the elements and tendencies encouraged by Salmine were viewed with increasing hostility by the rising full-time cadres. At the same time economic difficulties damaged Salmine’s personal popularity. Intensification of the power struggle was accompanied by a number of measures to control the population which was increasingly being left out of political debate. In foreign circles the most notorious of these was the 1975 ‘anti-fraternization’ law which limited contact between Yemenis and foreigners and was aimed at preventing people from being recruited as spies. The security forces also closely watched the population, mainly in the urban areas, thus showing the lack of trust which had developed between the leadership and the masses. However the régime was not particularly repressive, belying the propaganda which was, and still is, widely believed abroad.⁶² There were never thousands of people in detention in concentration camps as some in the west liked to pretend, nor was torture widespread. Most of the régime’s enemies were abroad and those who were in prison, aside from a few minor leaders of the former Federation who were released when they had served their sentences, were dissident members of the NLF itself. While detention conditions in PDRY are doubtless uncomfortable, they are no worse than living conditions in the more remote rural areas. There are a number of reasons why mass repression or state violence did not, and does not, feature as a prominent feature of life. Despite the official ban on emigration, any able-bodied man who sets his mind to it can migrate be it for political or economic reasons. It is also relevant to note that a country with such a small population and a shortage of labour, is unlikely to waste potentially productive workers by wastefully locking them up *en masse* as some black propaganda has stated. This is not to argue that the PDRY has a whiter than white human rights record. There is no doubt that in the early 1970s, many abuses took place, including the ‘disappearance’ of a number of political dissidents and the imprisonment without trial of others. As the regime matured such cases became less frequent and in the 1980s are a rarity. Most of the political prisoners were released in the early 1980s.

Throughout the 1970s different influences have affected political development. In their search for a socialist path to development the leadership has also sought to train

⁶¹ F. Halliday ‘Yemen’s unfinished Revolution: Socialism in the South,’ in *MERIP Reports* vol. 9 number 8. October 1979, p. 18.

⁶² Particularly crude examples of black propaganda can be found in *the Daily Telegraph*. G. Brook-Shepherd on 5.2.78. ‘Not even the East European States at the height of Stalin’s tyranny suffered the triple stranglehold of foreign Communist domination now being felt in South Yemen ...’ He alleges, needless to say without the slightest substantiation, that Russians, Cubans and East Germans have right of life and death over ordinary Yemenis.

cadres and this has been done with the assistance of different socialist countries. The leadership's careful steering in the Sino-Soviet storm allowed the country to benefit from aid from both sides, despite the shift to the right in Chinese foreign policy which took place in the early 1970s. East European experts and technicians arrived to assist the government in planning and in various economic projects, while the Chinese built the main cross-country road which linked the Hadramaut to Aden and assisted in health and industrial projects. Among the population the modest and friendly Chinese remain far more popular than the East Europeans. Some Yemenis went to China for short- and long-term training, but more went to Eastern European countries and this had an influence which started to be felt from the mid-1970s onwards as the students returned in significant numbers. Having been abroad at least 5 years, the conditions under which they had lived and studied influenced their ideas about development and how best to solve the country's problems.

With the decrease in military threats on the borders the régime could devote its energies to the economy. Although at that time the rate of growth was high and the First Five Year Plan made remarkable achievements, problems persisted. The difficulties in agriculture and fisheries were not yet statistically noticeable, but cooperative members in both these sectors were seriously suffering from neglect and found that their labour was being exploited to the benefit of urban dwellers and the state sector, thus leading to their disenchantment with the reforms they had first supported. The régime's concern was with production and the consolidation of institutions and this means ignoring the small producers and encouraging large scale production which at that time promised statistical success. Peasants and fishermen in the villages were thus caught up in the power struggle while their real conditions deteriorated.

Economic expansion and large projects were initiated thanks to increasing foreign funding. The mid-1970s were a time when foreign aid increased to a reasonable level with assistance from the United Nations, and the World Bank's International Development Association which had loaned over \$30 million by 1975. While the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development had been assisting the PDRY since 1971, the Arab Fund's first loan was in 1974, the Abu Dhabi Fund first made a loan in 1976 and the Saudi Fund in 1977. This last loan reflected improved relations between the PDRY and Saudi Arabia at that time.

It has been suggested that this indicated a shift to the right by the PDRY, but this was no more than wishful thinking. The only question on which there was any 'evidence' for these accusations was the Omani Revolution. But in reality Democratic Yemen made no substantial concessions on this point as, in spite of considerable material and moral support from PDRY, the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman was effectively defeated on the battlefield by the end of 1975, well before PDRY recognised Saudi Arabia. The PDRY continued to give PFLO material and diplomatic support to the end and beyond.

Internal politics were dominated by the struggle between the two factions and the ascendancy of the formalists gradually became clear. While the new state structures were

consolidating and the quality of their administration was slowly improving throughout the country, the more spontaneist parallel institutions such as the agricultural committees which Salmine had created under his direct control to counter rising bureaucracy were losing power. In late 1977 and early 1978 meetings of the Central Committee of UPONF emphasised the need for action to be taken through existing institutions and ministries, and reduced Salmine's powers. In March 1978, Salmine tried to strengthen his position in the army but this move was countered when Abdul Fattah Ismail appointed Husayn Qumatah, the commander of the Militia and a firm supporter of his, to the special committee for the reorganisation of the armed forces.

These successes of formalist politics took place alongside apparent democratisation as the first elections since independence were held. As I have already remarked the first Supreme People's Council was nominated in 1971, and the other elected popular councils promised in the early 1970s had not materialised. However with greater stability the régime felt able to hold elections for Local People's Councils. The first were held on an experimental basis in the fifth Governorate in October 1976; as this was successful the rest of the country elected its Local People's Councils in November 1977 in an atmosphere of genuine festivity. Popular participation was very high and for most men and all women these were the first elections they had ever participated in and hopes were high that the new councils would be active in dealing with local problems.

The creation of UPONF had already been a blow to the populists as it included the communists and Ba'athists whose organisational structures were centralist. They allied with the formalists in the NFPO and therefore in the UPONF this tendency was more heavily represented than the more spontaneist populist. The UPONF Congress had decided that a *Vanguard Party of a New Type* was to be created in 1978; it was expected to strengthen further centralisation of all aspects of collective life. Salmine opposed this development as it would undermine his position and effectively destroy his parallel structures of militants.

On 11 October 1977 Salmine's position was further weakened by the anniversary of the revolution. It was widely rumoured that, at the time of his assassination, he and Salmine were about to sign a unity agreement which would anniversary of the revolution. It was widely rumoured that at the time of his assassination he and Salmine were about to sign a unity agreement which would have helped both of them to consolidate their own power base at the expense of their internal rivals. It has been claimed that the treaty would have been at the expense of those working for a formalist party in Democratic Yemen and would have moved policy away from the traditional type of socialism envisaged by his rivals and towards concessions and cooperation with the politically reactionary states; the truth of these accusations is hard to evaluate.

The explosion took place on 26 June 1978. On the 24th Hamdi's successor in Sana'a, al Ghashmi⁽⁶⁾ was assassinated in Sana'a allegedly by a bomb carried by an official

⁽⁶⁾ Who, incidentally, was widely believed to have been involved in the assassination of his prede-

envoy from Democratic Yemen. Salmine's rivals used this as an excuse to eliminate Salmine from the scene. After a day of unsuccessful 'negotiations', fighting started on the morning of 26 June in Aden. Salmine and some of his supporters were besieged in the presidential palace which was subjected to aerial bombing as well as other attacks. The forces supporting him elsewhere in the country were insufficient to reverse the situation and at the end of the day he was captured, summarily tried and executed with two of his closest associates. Why he could not be allowed to retire abroad, as his successor later was, is not clear to me.

According to the official version, an extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee of UPONF was called on the evening of 25 June to discuss the assassination of al Ghashmi. Salmine refused to attend but eventually resigned, and then attempted a coup by shelling the meeting at the headquarters of the Central Committee. As a result the Committee instructed the military institutions to control the situation. After fighting on the 26th, Salmine and two of his associates eventually surrendered, were tried by a special court and sentenced to death by firing squad. The sentence was carried out immediately after approval by the Presidential Council.⁶³

A new Presidential council of five members was named with Ali Nasser Mohammed as Chairman.⁶⁴ Salmine's supporters in the Central Committee were expelled and in the following weeks some party members and other state officials throughout the country were dismissed and some of them imprisoned; by the end of the year most were released. Other associates and supporters emigrated, mostly taking refuge in the YAR.

As is customary in such cases, Salmine was blamed for all the country's problems, and his politics later came to be described officially as the 'opportunistic adventurist left' while in the weeks following his downfall no official speech was made without his being accused of deviationism. The Central Committee meeting of 28 June provided the most comprehensive official analysis of his 'deviationist stance':

'Sometimes he would wear the veil of extreme leftism in front of the democratic vanguards: on other occasions he would wear in an exaggerated manner the veil of bogus realism. He opposed the unity of the groups of national democratic action, which we regard as a first basic step towards the establishment of the brand new party. [At the economic level]... he attempted to create confusion among all the groups capable at the present stage of the national democratic revolution of mobilising their potential for the construction of the national economy to form the material foundation for subsequent construction ... In foreign policy he adopted a reactionary attitude towards the Arab and world revolutionary movements ... On the

⁶³ See BBC SWB 5850 28 June 1978.

⁶⁴ The other four members were Abdul Fattah Ismail, Ali Antar, Mohammed Saleh Muti' and Ali Abdul Razzaq Badheeb. The Council was abolished when the new constitution came into effect in November 1978.

national Yemen arena he attempted to drag our Yemeni people into civil war again...'⁶⁵

As we have seen some of the criticisms of Salmine were justified, but these accusations were aimed at gaining popular support for his execution, which was badly received by the population. Salmine had undoubtedly been a popular leader and after his execution grief was openly visible in the faces of ordinary people in the country. His pragmatic and pro-Arab approach contrasted sharply with the rigid ideological positions of Abdul Fattah who was seen as the new strong man. Salmine's popularity was obviously connected with his populist politics and his constant tours of even the most remote parts of the country. In my view his failure is not due primarily to intrinsically wrong policies, but rather to an over-optimistic and idealist vision. Among a very highly politicised population, his reliance on local initiative might have succeeded without leading to 'individualist deviation', but in a country where socialist politics were barely ten years old and where the majority of the population was illiterate, success would have been a miracle. Further and more importantly, one of the major achievements of the régime has been the beginning of the transformation of a fragmented territory and people into a nation, and Salmine's policies, in their method of implementation, challenged this historically necessary process. I hope that in coming years his role in the first ten years of the country's history will be examined with greater sympathy and objectivity in a positive spirit of constructive criticism. It is already noticeable that while he was subjected to vilification in the First Congress of the YSP in October 1978, by the time of the Extraordinary Congress in 1980, this had abated.

Salmine was the most important figure of the first decade of independence. Although most of that time was marred by the struggle between conflicting policies and the fight for the survival of the régime, many of the early revolutionary reforms bore his mark and have had a lasting influence on the development of the country. Overall the achievements of that period included the defeat of the counter-revolutionary forces both internally and on the borders alongside a strengthening of the PDRY's international position. Starting from a position of almost total local isolation, by the late 1970s the régime had been recognised by most of its neighbours including Saudi Arabia whose early hostility had been intense. It had achieved a position of prominence and had gained respect on the Palestinian question and in 1977 was trying to establish itself as a local force. In March during a visit by the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, attempts at creating an alliance of progressive states in the region failed because they included both Ethiopia and Somalia which were already at loggerheads, although open war between them only broke out later that year. However a conference of Red Sea states brought

⁶⁵ BBC SWB 5852 30 June 1978.

together leaders of the PDRY, the YAR, Sudan and Somalia in March to discuss the security of the Red Sea.

Internally these ten years were marked by the consolidation of the régime and the creation of a national infrastructure at all levels, ranging from roads to a common culture, through material and social integration of the different parts of the country as a network of communications began to appear, schools became widespread with a common syllabus, health services were developed, Aden radio reached the whole country and the television network started to expand beyond Aden. Administratively centralist structures developed at the expense of Salmine's populism, while economically the new socialised means of production helped towards the development of new economic relations and structures, despite emerging difficulties.

A better known writer in the *Daily Telegraph* is Robert Moss of the Institute for the Study of Conflict, an example of whose press was published on 23 October 1978. He even goes so far to assert that Ethiopian troops were installed in Bayhan!

Chapter Four: The State in the 1980s

The period since the downfall of Salmine has been one of consolidation of the achievements of the 1970s. While the counter-revolution had been militarily defeated by the mid-1970s, the armed forces still played an important role as clashes on the Omani border continued till 1982 when an agreement was reached between the two states, while in 1979 full-scale war again broke out with the YAR. Internally the major problems for the population were the economy and developments in social policy, while the leadership remained involved in a number of disagreements.

The Presidency of Abdul Fattah Ismail

Although he only remained President for under two years, Abdul Fattah Ismail played a very important role in the politics of Democratic Yemen throughout the 1970s and the problems of his presidency need to be examined in relation to his ideological role in the earlier period. In 1978 following the dramatic events of 26 June, the major development was the First Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party.

1. The First Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP)

As we have seen one of the main points of disagreement between Salmine and Abdul Fattah Ismail concerned the role of the political organisation, and the elimination of Salmine opened the road for the transformation of UPONF into the Yemeni Socialist Party, whose foundation Congress was held in October 1978. There were no substantial changes in political line. In foreign policy for example, this Congress still asserted wholehearted support for the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman, despite the fact that it had ceased to be a significant force and that attempts had already been made at mediation between the PDRY and Oman. Economically the Congress debated the major problems of the period, namely those of supplies and the reorganisation of the cooperatives, and was more explicit than earlier congresses in encouraging private capital:

‘[Congress] stresses the importance of continuing the policy aimed at promoting the private sector and attracting national capital to participate in

the material production sectors and contribute to the projects of economic development on the basis of the state's plan.'¹

The two main differences between the YSP and its predecessor are in the role of the Party and on the national Yemeni question; the latter will be discussed below as it is central to the role of Abdul Fattah Ismail in Yemeni politics. The transformation of the UPONF into the YSP was accompanied by greater formalisation of Party statutes as well as by increasing the power of the Party in the country's politics. The 1970 Constitution defined the role of the UPONF as directing the state. This Congress, resolving to combine Party and state leadership, reduced the number of central organs of the state and strengthened the role of the Cabinet. This was done by the abolition of the Presidential Council which was replaced by the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council. These reforms were to be introduced after the first elected Supreme People's Council took over in December 1978. The new constitution was approved on 31 October 1978 and defines the role of the Party as follows:

'The Yemeni Socialist Party, armed with the theory of scientific socialism, is the leader and guide of the society and the state. It shall define the general horizon for the development of the society and the line of the state's internal and external policy.

The Yemeni Socialist Party shall lead the struggle of the people and their mass organisations towards the absolute victory of the Yemeni revolution's strategy and the achievement of the tasks of the national democratic revolution stage for the purpose of accomplishing the construction of socialism.'²

In practice this expansion of Party influence extended to its role throughout society as Party members were to assume positions of responsibility in all sectors. They are responsible to the Party as well as to their administrative hierarchy and are expected to have a strongly militant approach to their work.

Although Abdul Fattah Ismail had been Secretary General of the Political Organisation since 1968, this was the only period when his approach to politics was apparently unchallenged, and in this respect it is interesting to look at the report he presented to the Congress. As noted there was little change in policy but the language used on this occasion was remote from daily life and the obscurity of his prose made it clearly inaccessible to ordinary Yemenis; his distance from the people was a major problem of his leadership. His abstract thinking and approach to problems showed how far he was from the preoccupations of the people, as can be seen in the following example, taken at random from the Political Report:

¹ *Resolutions of the First Congress of YSP*—mimeo—Aden 1978 resolution 9 p. 17.

² *Constitution of the PDRY*, October 1978, Aden, pp. 5–6.

In all its activity the Party is aware of the close link between defining a political line and the method of implementing it. Since the adoption of political directives alone is insufficient to achieve this, adopted directives must be backed by tireless work and strict supervision. Development of methods of organisational work is the principal guarantee of harmony between the adoption of political decisions and their practical implementation. Ensuring this condition is the main factor in the Party's exercise of its leading role in order to achieve maximum realisation of the goals of the Yemeni revolution.³

Although the country was still going through the phase of national democratic revolution, the new Party aimed 'to transform society along revolutionary lines to complete the tasks of the national-democratic revolution and make transition to the building of socialism,'⁴ and this is why the party was given its name: 'the principal aim of the Party is socialist construction on the Yemeni land. The Yemeni Socialist Party which includes in its ranks all the vanguard struggling forces is considered to be the main implement for building the Yemeni socialist society.'⁵

All Salmine's supporters had been expelled from the Party and in particular its leading bodies. The meeting elected a Central Committee of 51 members and a Political Bureau of eleven members from the 400-odd delegates to the Congress.

2. Main Events of the Period

The Congress of the YSP decided on the changes which would be made to the constitution, which was duly amended by the Supreme People's Council at the end of October 1978. This was its last meeting since, at long last, elections for the Council were held in December 1978 for its 111 members.⁶ Thanks to the success of the Local People's Council elections the preceding year, the Party by then considered that its hold over the country and its organisational ability were such that elections could be held. While the single party system prevented the candidature of other parties, electors were presented with lists of candidates from which a number were to be chosen: of the 111 elected, 40 were not Party members. It is also interesting to note that candidates stood for constituencies with which they had no particular personal connection; this measure was designed to prevent the re-emergence of tribalist or regionalist tendencies in the government. The Supreme People's Council meets about 4 times a year and is supposed to be re-elected every five years, but the elections due in 1983 were postponed till after the Third Congress of the YSP, scheduled for October 1985.

³ Political Report to YSP 1st Congress, section 7 in *Proceedings of The First Congress of the YSP*, Moscow 1978, p. 133.

⁴ Programme of the YSP, *op cit* p. 149.

⁵ *Resolutions of 1st Congress of YSP* resolution 1 p. 3.

⁶ There were 10 more members than under the 1970 constitution. Unlike the earlier SPC no special

The new Supreme People's Council, following the new constitution, elected Abdul Fattah Ismail President of its Presidium and approved the appointments to the Council of Ministers, with Ali Nasser continuing as Prime Minister. As a result of the constitutional changes in 1978, the new power structure in the country gives clear primacy to the YSP. The Party's supreme authority is the Congress which meets every five years; the Congress elects various executive committees and in particular the Central Committee which is the highest Party body between Congresses. The Central Committee chooses from among its members the Secretary General and the Political Bureau. The Constitution states that the Secretary General of the Party will be the President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council which is elected by universal adult suffrage on a constituency basis from a list of candidates approved by the Central Committee of the YSP. The SPC meets four times a year, enacts laws, approves treaties, discusses and approves economic plans. It elects from among its members the Prime Minister who presents the Council of Ministers for approval by the SPC; the majority of members of the Council must be members of the SPC. The SPC elects a Presidium of 11 to 17 members who are in permanent session to deal with matters when the Council is not sitting. This Presidium represents the government, calls elections and has the role of a constitutional sovereign.

Given the dominant role of the Party in the state, the Supreme People's Council does not have the power it might otherwise have, but it would be a mistake to treat it as no more than a rubber stamp. Discussion is lively and the members, including those who are not in the Party, do not hesitate to question and amend the legislation put before them.

Having set up the Party and state structures on a new footing, Abdul Fattah Ismail could have been expected to initiate new policies in 1979. The First Five Year Development Plan had run its course in 1978 and the new Second Plan was discussed and approved in 1979 to last till 1983.⁷ Increased remittances from Yemeni workers abroad made it possible to ease certain import restrictions, and this again raised the question of emigration, which had been officially restricted in 1974. Despite this, many had emigrated and in October 1979 the President issued a decree giving an amnesty to those who had emigrated in the early years of this ban, but promising very stiff punishments for future infringement of the law and using this opportunity to appeal to the masses to be more productive.

Abdul Fattah Ismail's ideological closeness to the East European model of socialism was manifested in a spate of friendship and cooperation treaties which began in October 1979 with the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. In November a second was signed with the German Democratic Republic and a third in December with socialist Ethiopia. Later, in 1981, two more were signed with Czechoslovakia and

seats were reserved for women, or trade unionists etc ... Among those elected were 7 women.

⁷ It was later amended to run from 1981 to 1985, the years 1979 and 1980 being seen as a period of consolidation and completion of unfinished First Plan projects.

Hungary. In 1979, the PDRY also became an observer of the CMEA (COMECON). These moves were clearly meant by Abdul Fattah to integrate the PDRY further into the Soviet-led socialist community and indeed, at the First Congress of the YSP, where most of his language could well have come out of standard East European textbooks, a resolution on international relations saw the world situation thus:

‘The Congress stresses upon the consolidation and development of the relationships and bonds with the parties and states of the socialist community led by the friendly Soviet Union on the basis of the unity of fundamental and principled aims in the sphere of the struggle for economic development, social progress and the prosperity of peoples for the sake of peace in the whole world.’⁸

While relations with the socialist world continued to improve under Abdul Fattah Ismail, those with the Arab world could hardly have been worse. As a result of the events of June 1978, most Arab League states had decided to suspend relations with the PDRY which was considered responsible for the assassination of al Ghashmi. This decision was reversed in November 1978 at the Baghdad Summit when other Arab governments accepted that the decision had been unconstitutional as a number of progressive states had boycotted the July meeting, but relations with Arab states remained poor. Relations with Iraq in particular deteriorated to open hostility when in June 1979 Iraqi security officials based at their embassy in Aden murdered in broad daylight a Kurdish Iraqi communist who had taken political refuge in Aden and was a professor at the University. As a result the Yemenis forced their way into the embassy to arrest those responsible,⁹ and in retaliation Yemeni students in Iraq were first held in detention and later expelled, while the Yemeni embassy in Baghdad was besieged. Relations remained below freezing point but gradually recovered by 1982 when ambassadors were once again exchanged.

3. The question of Yemeni Unity

For Abdul Fattah Ismail, Yemeni unity was a necessary precondition for social progress in the country:

‘The YSP in its national policy proceeds from the truth that a correct solution to the national question which lies in the achievement of territorial integrity, the community of interests and means, is of major importance for the revolutionary movement of the popular masses for national and social emancipation. The YSP expresses the natural aspiration of the Yemeni

⁸ Resolution 10 p. 11 in *Resolutions ... op cit.*

⁹ Those arrested were tried and sentenced in September but thanks to their diplomatic immunity they were merely expelled from the country rather than serve their sentences.

people towards unity which would enable them to mobilise all available material and manpower resources for social progress and the building of a new society ... That is why the issue of Yemeni unity must be given a democratic content and serve the cause of the Yemeni revolution which received its tangible embodiment in the unity of the revolutions of September 26 and October 14 ...

The YSP is convinced that nothing but a broad-based popular movement backed by all patriotic forces can achieve genuine unity for the Yemeni homeland, can set up a single centralised state with its various organs to be formed and run by the popular masses as they build an independent national economy free from the fetters of world capitalism and developing on a scientific basis according to plan.¹⁰

Such statements, as well as the presence and participation of the National Democratic Front (NDF) at the First Congress of the Party were not designed to allay the fears of the régime in Sana'a with whom relations were positively hostile since June 1978. The National Democratic Front, formed in 1976, regrouped the various smaller organisations which had been on the left of the republican movement after its right took over in 1968.¹¹ Although Abdul Fattah Ismail's approach to the problem was essentially political, his insistence that progressive development could not take place successfully unless Yemen was united, encouraged those who thought the military option could achieve this end.

After June 1978 relations between the two parts of Yemen rapidly deteriorated, with intermittent border clashes, the massing of troops on both sides, and a violent propaganda war waged mainly in the media. Sana'a radio hardly used a moderate tone, for example claiming victories on 'gangs of saboteurs unloaded on us by the clique of agency, treason and conspiracy which dominates the southern part of the homeland.'¹²

Against this background of shadow war, the NDF was particularly active militarily in its strongholds of the isolated mountainous regions south and east of the Sana'a-Ta'iz road, known as the Central Region (*mantaqa al wusta*). In late October 1978 Adeni street life was also enlivened by the arrival of up to 2000 Northern tribesmen who had come to show their support for the progressive side. In PDRY the bearing of arms is illegal, but the régime found it inopportune in these circumstances to enforce regulations with these unexpected supporters, despite the risks presented by the

¹⁰ YSP Programme *op cit* pp. 165–6, 167, 168.

¹¹ The NDF was originally composed of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, a descendant of the MAN in the YAR, (*al Hizb al thawry ad dimuqrati*), The Tali'a Party (*al hizb at-tali'a*) which like the Southern Tali'a had split from the Ba'ath, in this case in 1970 officially but in 1968 unofficially; the Revolutionary Strugglers (*al muqawimin al thawriyin*); the Workers Party (*hizb al 'Umal*); The People's Union (*ittihad al Sha'b*). After 1978 these five parties within the NDF secretly formed into the Party of Popular Unity (*hizb al wahda ash sha'biya*) whose politics were close to those of the YSP at that time.

¹² BBC SWB ME 6019 12 January 1979.

presence of large numbers of armed tribesmen in the streets. In a show of trust and more generally because of confidence in internal security, the visiting tribesmen were allowed to bear arms, even at official meetings.

In 1979 the situation deteriorated further and in February war broke out openly with the involvement of the regular armies of both sides. Militarily this was an undisputed victory for Democratic Yemen whose forces soon took over the major border towns of Qa'taba, al Bayda and Harib, which were handed over for administration to the NDF, and its forces moved as far as 50 km inside YAR territory before finally being halted by a cease-fire agreement reached in early March. As is common in such cases, the cease-fire only came to be respected gradually when each side had ensured consolidation of more satisfactory positions. Mediation to bring about the cease-fire in early March came from a committee of Arab states: Syria, Iraq and Jordan. At the end of March Abdul Fattah Ismail met Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had been chosen in July 1978 as successor to al Ghashmi.¹³ On 30 March a joint statement was issued in Kuwait which, again, promised unity within a single agreed constitution which the people in both parts would approve by referendum, a unified parliament chosen by free elections and a provisional government until the first objectives were achieved.¹⁴ As a result of the Kuwait meeting, joint committees once again met regularly, alternately in Sana'a and Aden, and discussed most issues. Although there was a lessening of tension and a withdrawal of forces on the borders, the situation remained tense, particularly as the NDF was at that time achieving considerable military success and expanding its operations beyond its traditional strongholds and operating in the mountain ranges west of the Sana'a-Ta'iz road. Meanwhile the propaganda war continued with NDF radio operating daily, giving news of its activities as well as political discussion. The right retaliated with the South Yemen Freedom Radio which broadcast daily throughout 1979. Needless to say the unity agreed at Kuwait did not materialise, though eventually in the early 1980s, as we will see below, relations between the two parts of the homeland have improved significantly.

4. The 'Retirement' of Abdul Fattah Ismail

Abdul Fattah Ismail's position on Yemeni unity and consequently on relations with the YAR was such that a real improvement of relations between YAR and PDRY was extremely difficult while he was President, although on the whole he favoured political

¹³ When he first became President in July 1978 few expected Ali Abdullah Saleh to last. An obscure army officer not known for his skills, he successfully survived a number of assassination attempts in his first months in office and no one expected him to be the President of the YAR who remained in office longest since the republic was born. While many cast serious doubts on his abilities, he has certainly proved able to negotiate all the contradictory political forces within the YAR, and skilfully balanced the external pressures on his régime from right and left. As a politician he deserves unquestioned admiration for his survival skills, though it would be foolish to make any predictions on his future.

¹⁴ For text of communiqué see BBC SWB ME 6082 2 April 1979.

rather than military methods to achieve his objectives. Similarly in 1968 he had disagreed with the 14 May Movement because he believed that change should be achieved through politics, and his influence probably was one of the factors which also ensured the 22 June Move remained peaceful, as he had long argued in favour of collaborating with Haitham to oppose Qahtan, rather than enter into another military confrontation. Haitham's position as Minister of the Interior and member of the Presidential Council was clearly decisive.

A Cabinet reshuffle in August 1979 indicated disagreements within the leadership, this time between Abdul Fattah Ismail and Ali Nasser Mohammed, who had been Prime Minister since 1971, and had temporarily assumed the Presidency between June and December 1978. The disagreement focused on the responsibilities of the Ministry for State Security under the control of Mohammed Sa'id Abdullah, known as Mohsen, who had tried to extend his responsibilities over military security; this forced Ali Nasser to take action. Mohsen lost his job and his Ministry was abolished to be replaced by a Committee under Ali Nasser's chairmanship. Other changes took place in Foreign Affairs, Planning, and the Interior and in other ministries concerned with economic affairs. But the significance of the reshuffle lay in the removal from crucial positions of the two ministers of North Yemeni origin, Mohsen and Abdul Aziz Abdul Wali whose allegiance to Abdul Fattah was assumed. Altogether the move marked a shift towards the more pragmatic politics of Ali Nasser Mohammed. In the following months, rumours in Aden rapidly spread that the departure of Abdul Fattah had been decided and that he was negotiating an honourable exit. In early 1980 a special session of the Party Central Committee to be devoted to a major report on the economy and its problems, was postponed. It eventually took place in April and opened with the announcement of Abdul Fattah's resignation for health reasons, reasonable enough, given the serious damage to his health which might have resulted from non-resignation.

Although Abdul Fattah's tenure as President was very short, he had considerable influence on Democratic Yemen's politics throughout the 1970s. He was seen as the main theoretician of the left, and the structures of both UPONF and the YSP bear clear witness to his influence and, indirectly, to that of East European socialism. Their constitutions are based on the same models, and the rhetoric used in discussing international relations and local politics continues to bear remarkable similarity to that found in the Soviet Union. More importantly, Abdul Fattah's analysis of Yemen and its specific conditions reflected this orthodoxy of European communism, and certain statements are also caricatures of these models of analysis. The blanket description of traditional relations in the countryside as feudal for example, shows a crude interpretation of Marxism, while the suggestion that 'both light and heavy industrialisation'¹⁵ should have priority merely raises smiles at its indifference to Yemeni realities.

His obsession with abstract issues kept him aloof from the daily problems faced by the population, further damaging his popularity. In contrast to both Salmine and

¹⁵ *UPON F Programme*, London 1977, p. 23.

Ali Nasser he was more interested in reading than in meeting people. He was the only President who was practically never seen at public prayer on official religious occasions, thus adding to his unpopularity. As President he appeared to be ineffective, making decisions without regard to the problems of implementation.

In summary four main reasons seem to have been behind Abdul Fattah's downfall: his intransigent position on Yemeni unity prevented any improvement of relations between the two parts of the homeland, and his intellectualism made him unpopular while his inability to take effective decisions gave him no hold over the administration. Finally his tenure coincided with a period of great prosperity in the rest of the Arabian Peninsula while in contrast Democratic Yemen suffered economic difficulties. In particular, shortages in the shops had become serious causes of complaint, as import restrictions were enforced and production had dropped.

The leadership of Ali Nasser Mohammed

Ali Nasser Mohammed became Prime Minister in 1971 and retained this post till February 1985; at different times he has held other ministries, most importantly the Ministry of Defence from 1969 till 1977 when Ali Antar took that position. In 1978 he was President for six months between June and December when, by virtue of the new constitution, the Secretary General of the YSP, then Abdul Fattah Ismail, became President. By the time he became Secretary General and President in April 1980, he was the only remaining member of the Triumvirate which had been in power since 1971. His period of office is characterised by a great concern for efficiency and pragmatism. In the first few months of his government the Party held an Extraordinary Congress.

1. The Extraordinary Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party

Preceded by local congresses in the governorates, this was held two years after the First Congress in October 1980, and its main purpose seems to have been to consolidate the power of Ali Nasser Mohammed.

The preparatory local party congresses were interesting as their discussions focused on local development and organisational issues, tackling problems which were of immediate local concern such as, for example, conditions in the fish canning factory in Shuqra or the state farms and cooperatives in Abyan;¹⁶ the opening of Party libraries in small towns, the correction of mistakes in educational policy, the reorganisation of the agricultural Machinery Rental Stations, the opening of the Bir Ali refrigerated warehouse, improvements in housing, etc. in Shabwa governorate.¹⁷ Discussion of these issues indicate how the YSP functions at local level.

¹⁶ *Aden News Agency* 27 August 1980.

¹⁷ *Aden News Agency* 2 September 1980.

The Political Report presented by Ali Nasser to the Extraordinary Congress celebrated the continued good relations with the socialist states since the First Congress in its review of foreign affairs, indicated by the signing of Friendship and Cooperation treaties with the USSR and the GDR, and the POKY'S admission as an observer member of CMEA. This emphasis on continued good relations with the socialist community of states showed up the error of those observers who had considered the ousting of Abdul Fattah Ismail as an anti-socialist move which would bring about a distancing from the East and a rapprochement with the West.

Concerning Oman, despite the discussions which were already taking place for the normalisation of relations between the states the Political Report reasserts 'the support of our people for the people of Oman until the achievement of its aims of national freedom and social progress' after having pointed out that 'the struggle of the Omani people under the leadership of PFLO continues against foreign presence and the Qabus agent régime which agrees with the Camp David attempts.'¹⁸ In his report, Ali Nasser reviewed relations with other Arab states and the progress achieved in the preceding two years through agreements and visits.

Generally the Report was an assessment of developments since 1978 and concentrated mainly on the economy and the reforms which had been introduced, particularly the liberalisation in marketing a proportion of production in agriculture and fisheries cooperatives. Concern with community and administrative issues extended to the other main presentation to Congress, when Ali Nasser outlined the main features of the new Second Five Year Development Plan. Internal politics were discussed in a practical tone which contrasted with that of earlier congresses. Having surveyed the main political events since the First Congress, Ali Nasser unsurprisingly, first called for consolidation of the principles of democratic centralism and collective leadership, two pillars of PDRY politics for the previous decade, but he also called for the correction of many past mistakes and in particular complained of distortions in implementation which had resulted in the opposite result to that intended by the original decision. He went on to demand much greater efforts from Party members in raising their own level of political consciousness, in acting in the interests of the poor and deprived classes, and in observing internal Party rules.¹⁹

The new Central Committee of 47 full and 11 candidate members excluded 14 former members²⁰ and the new Political Bureau included only five members: as well as Ali Nasser himself and Ali Antar, the Chairman of the State Security Committee Saleh

¹⁸ *Al Mutamar al Istithna 'i Vilhizb al Ishtiraky al Yamani* - Beirut n.d. p. 112.

¹⁹ open pp. 195-204.

²⁰ Among those who were left out some had died of natural causes, like Ahmad Said Bakhubaira, others had been ousted for clear political reasons, such as Abdul Fattah Ismail, Mohammed Saleh Muti', Mohammed Said Abdullah (Mohsen), Mahmoud Ushaysh and Husayn Qumata, while yet others retained their jobs, but were not seen as requiring a position on the Central Committee: Aida Ali Said, Ahmad Hamid Mulhi, Shaikh Sumaih, Said Salem Al Khaiba, Mansur as Saruri, Najib Ibrahim, Abdul Wakil as Saruri and Ahmad al Khadr Za'bal.

Munaser as Siyali, Abu Bakr Badheeb representing the erstwhile PDU, and Abdul Ghani Abdul Qader the Ba'athists. The exclusion of early NLF leaders from the new Political Bureau was among the most notable events of the Congress.

2. The development of the Party

Throughout the period of the NLF's transformation into the Yemeni Socialist Party a number of significant changes have taken place. As we have seen, the decisions and policies decided at congresses changed over time in a dialectical relationship with concurrent changes in the country. The NLF developed from a liberation movement of a few thousand people few of whom had had any formal, let alone political education of any kind, to a political party by the 1980s with all the usual structures common to such an organisation. In 1978 among the 25,683 Party members only 1,028 were women; this, however, represented an increase of 101.6% compared to the situation in UPONF indicating how few women had originally been involved, and how difficult it was for the organisation to make its concerns relevant to women. There were 12.8% peasants and 13.2% workers among the membership.²¹ This membership has been educated, having at least taken courses at the Higher School for Scientific Socialism.

The School was founded in 1972 and since then branches have been opened in most governorates. By 1980 over 17,000 students had participated in short, medium and long-term courses²² and the education it provides deserves some consideration. Many of the staff are European mainly from the USSR and the GDR though other countries are represented and there is an increasing number of Yemeni teachers who teach the courses directly related to Yemen. Socialism is, however, taught within the East European framework, and is seriously lacking in democratic discussion of what, in Western European Marxist circles, would be considered the basic problems confronting socialism particularly in the Third World. The East European version of history, or rather its currently accepted version, is taught as if it were the revealed truth and thus a fundamental feature of Marxism, its dialectical approach, has been replaced by dogma. This does not allow students to develop their critical abilities, or their faculties of analysis in looking at their own society. The question of pre-capitalist class formation, which is fundamental to a new analysis of Yemen before independence, is consigned to the catch-all category of feudalism on an imported dogmatic model, ignoring the considerable research of recent decades on modes and relations of production in pre-capitalist societies. It is to be hoped that as more Yemenis graduate to high levels of education they will take over the schools and give them a more realistic and local flavour in their analysis of Yemen and the world, and further theoretical research. They also need to face the problems which have emerged in orthodox socialist countries, where

²¹ *First YSP Congress Documents* - Moscow 1979 p. 127.

²² *Extraordinary Congress Documents op cit* p. 173.

new forms of social differentiation and privileges have developed and raise serious questions in relation to the ideal of equality in a socialist society.

The main problem of the YSP, in my view, is one which it shares with all other similar parties after they have come to power. The militants who joined the armed struggle for independence were a very different type of person from those who join the ruling party. The former joined because of their belief in independence and their hostility to British occupation, the ruling sultans and amirs. They were willing to give their lives to achieve these aims and many of them did. Once the Party is in power, however, the situation is different. Joining it becomes a means of obtaining privileges and benefits, rather than commitment and sacrifice for the greater good of society. Party members often see themselves as a privileged group rather than as militants. The Party authorities may take great trouble to select members who are devoted and who will work for a better society and set a good example but they can never be sure whether people are merely after personal advancement. That Party membership may help in being selected for a scholarship abroad, for example, creates an ambiguous situation. The Party prefers to send its own members because their political commitment means that they are more likely to return and put their skills at the service of the country while non-Party members are more likely to be tempted by the *rials* of Saudi Arabia. It may however mean that people only join the Party to obtain scholarships, have easier access to consumer goods, cars etc ... and therefore do not have the concerns and commitment desirable in Party members. The YSP under Ali Nasser is well aware of this problem²³ and tries its best to recruit committed serious political people in its membership. It could be argued that privileges should not be given to Party members but at the same time selection for scholarships and training courses has to be done on complex criteria, and the loss of skills through emigration is important.

Other privileges are given, presumably following the example set in Eastern Europe, where Party membership is the principal means to personal advantage; there is, in my view, little justification for this. If the Party member's duty is 'to place public interests and the interests of the revolution above one's personal interests'²⁴, why should he have easier access to consumer goods? The example this sets only encourages all to seek personal benefit and to those outside it, the Party thus seems to be a source of privilege not a model of political commitment.

The original loose-knit NLF had, by 1980, developed into a Socialist Party with internal rules, a constitution, and local organisations throughout the country. Parallel to the local government institutions in every administrative centre, however small, there are Party representatives who play a significant political role, be it in education or in solving problems and difficulties. Although the Party could be criticised for being

²³ Extraordinary Congress Documents *op cit* pp. 198–206.

²⁴ *First YSP Documents, op cit* p. 241.

too much of a copy of East European communist parties, its structures are such that they cover the country comprehensively and in this way encourage national unity.

At times it may have seemed that the claim to collective leadership was mere rhetoric. Although ordinary Party members appear to have only limited influence in policy-making and while debate is not carried out in public, there is little doubt that discussion within the Party is lively. Similarly the decade of the triumvirate, in retrospect, shows that at no time was one of the factions within the NLF in total control: the policies implemented show the influence of all three leaders and counterbalance each other: the Seven Days, a movement clearly sponsored by Salmine, would most likely have been even more dramatic and reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution had it not been for the cooling influence of Abdul Fattah, and the development plans and continuity of administration are mainly to be credited to Ali Nasser's influence, while the ideological positions to Abdul Fattah.

Further, ever since the creation of the NLF, militants from different parts of the country formed groups based on shared political positions, rather than on tribal or regional origins. Today the leadership includes people from different parts of the country and from different strata of society. The ideological and political development of the NLF into the YSP has made it into a cohesive force which holds the country together on the basis of political positions and perspectives with a national, rather than a local or tribal vision of the world. That people from all parts of the country and from the three major left-wing political organisations of the earlier period are represented in the leadership as well as the base is an important way in which the Party participates in the efforts of create a unified nation. Because ordinary Party members as well as the leadership include members from all the pre-independence social strata, including the lowest, some opposition to the régime comes from members of old upper strata who both despise and envy the 'ignorant bedu' who are currently leading the country. This opposition has nothing to do with policy but is based on the prejudice that this traditional élite has an innate right to leadership and that the NLF/YSP lower status leaders are usurpers; this attitude remains common among non-Party people in Democratic Yemen and in the exiled opposition. It is sad to notice that some formally educated Party members of the younger generation have resurrected a similar attitude.

3. Internal politics

Ali Nasser's style of government contrasts with both his predecessors' insofar as it is marked by a greater emphasis on efficiency and an atmosphere of greater stability although many features of the earlier period have survived. While many observers including myself expected that his period would be one of internal political unity this has clearly not been so. In July 1980 the former Foreign Minister Mohammed Saleh Muti' who was then considered the second most important politician in the country was arrested and in March 1981 secretly executed. Nothing of this was ever announced officially, not even his 'resignation' and all news concerning him came from 'informed

sources' in Beirut and Kuwait papers.²⁵ Others who have had a checkered political career in recent years have had more luck but his case does illustrate a deplorable absence of acceptable methods of political retirement. With increased stability and maturity the régime could now be expected to find alternative methods of retiring politicians whose role has come to an end. In some cases, as we shall see, when they remain alive, politicians can make a comeback.

The fact that recent changes have occurred with less bloodshed than in earlier days is a credit to the régime, and should indicate a new trend for the future, but it is still true that life at the top of the political ladder is dangerous. Long-term changes in political direction, if any are considered, may emerge at the Third Congress of the YSP which is due to be held in October 1985.

Political struggle in the early 1980s involved Ali Ahmad Nasser Antar, usually known as Ali Antar. An early guerrilla leader who is reputed to have been the main military leader of the NLF during the independence struggle, he was appointed Minister of Defence in 1977 and became a candidate member of the Political Bureau at the First Congress of the YSP, and a full member at the Extraordinary Congress in 1980 while retaining his position as Minister of Defence. In May 1981 he lost this post and was appointed Minister for Local Government, a position which was specially revived for the occasion, having been abolished some years previously. This apparent downgrading did not terminate his political career, as had been widely expected, and he used his position as First Deputy Prime Minister to continue playing a very active role. In September 1982 he was named Vice President in a move which appears to have solved power relations within the ruling group for the time being.

Politicians who have had an erratic career include Mahmud Abdullah Ushaysh and Mohammed Said Abdullah 'Mohsen', both of whom were disgraced in the early 1980s; in 1982 there were rumours that Mohsen had been involved in plotting to bring back Abdul Fattah Ismail²⁶ and he was recalled from Belgrade where he had been ambassador, and imprisoned. While he was rumoured to have been executed, both he and Ushaysh were released in late 1983 and in May 1984 appointed Ministers. The question of why Muti' was executed while Mohsen, for example, was not remains open and the reason may be related to their respective origins. Leaders who have survived disgrace in recent years have mostly been of Northern descent while those who have been executed were natives of the South. Similarly the regime in Sana'a has shown reluctance to execute politicians of southern origin.²⁷

²⁵ He was accused of various crimes, including plotting with Saudi Arabia, and of having tried to create factions within the power group. As he was one of the NLF's old leaders, a member of the secondary leadership of the 1960s, it is more likely that his rise in the hierarchy was the decisive element in his downfall. He was supposedly tried and sentenced by the Political Bureau, an institution which has no judicial authority, and this is itself an indication of the illegitimacy of the action.

²⁶ *Arab News* 7 September 1982.

²⁷ This was seen particularly in the case of Abdullah al-Asnaj which has some parallels with that of Muti'. Al-Asnaj, an Adeni by origin, was the leader of the ATUC and the PSP in the 1960s and

After the surprise move at the Extraordinary Congress in 1980 when a number of longstanding members of the Political Bureau lost their positions with the contraction of the Bureau, four of them were reappointed in May 1984 while the new Minister for Foreign Affairs was also appointed to the Political Bureau for the first time although he had not previously been a member, presumably due to the importance of his Ministry.²⁸

The enlargement of the Political Bureau must be regarded as part of broader political change as it was linked to the reappointment of Mohsen and Ushaysh to ministerial positions. In this respect these developments indicate a number of trends: firstly a strengthening of the old NLF within the Party as the 1980 Political Bureau had given disproportionate representation to the former PDU and Tali'a. The reappearance of the old guard of the NLF in the Political Bureau reasserted the political significance of this tendency particularly as it took place when the remaining political prisoners associated with the Salmine period was being released. Secondly the reappointment of Mohsen and Ushaysh indicated a return of men of Northern origin in the government and raised questions concerning future relations between Aden and Sana'a. Finally this return to an old political balance of forces forecast the return of Abdul Fattah Ismail from exile, a return which took place in February 1985 when he was reappointed to a position in the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the YSP, presumably thanks to the support of his earlier associates whose politics of the 1970s have shown that such a balance may not be the best precondition for sustained socioeconomic development in the country as internal political rivalry cannot be excluded.

Other political events of the early 1980s focused on a strengthening of institutionalisation: following the YSP's Extraordinary Congress, the Higher Committee for Popular Control was formed in April 1981 with local branches in the governorates and economic institutions. This is a descendant of earlier organisations whose task was to control administration and improve operational standards in the interests of the people. The new committees' main task is to ensure the execution of production plans in the economy and to fight low productivity, whatever its cause. They are concerned both with improved efficiency through reforms, taking action against economic sabotage and protecting public property, combating waste and all activities which hinder production. These committees at the local level are elected and must include 60% of workers and

became Foreign Minister in the YAR in the 1970s. Ousted in 1979 after the Kuwait agreement between the YAR and PDRY which followed the interYemeni miniwar of that year, he was arrested in 1980 for plotting with Saudi Arabia against the régime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, a conspiracy for which there was both evidence and cause. Al-Asnaj's opposition to any rapprochement with the South would lead him to anything to prevent better relations with Aden. He was tried in 1981 and sentenced in secret, but not executed. After periods in prison and under house arrest, in 1984 he was freed. This can in part be explained by the Sana'ani régime's policy not to alienate Aden by executing South Yemenis, while Aden doesn't execute people of Northern origin.

²⁸ Thus, as of May 1984 the Political Bureau was composed of 10 full members: Ali Nasser Mohammed, Ali Antar, Abu Bakr Abdul Razzak Badheeb, Salih Munaser as Siyali, Abdul Ghani Abdul Qader, Anis Hassan Yahia, Salih Muslih Qasim, Ali Abdul Razzaq Badheeb, Salim Salih Muhammad, and Dr Abdul Aziz ad Dali*; with 2 candidate members: Ali Shaye Hadi and Abdulla al Khamri.

at least one woman. While the major problems which concern them relate to low productivity and the need to redistribute labour from unproductive to productive units, they are also empowered to deal with any cases of dishonesty.

In late 1980 a number of cases of corruption and economic crime were publicly discussed and dealt with, at a time when the Popular Control Law was in preparation and under discussion both centrally and locally. These included a case of attempted sabotage at the aluminium factory,²⁹ another of embezzlement in the Hadramaut branch of the Land Transport Corporation, which led to the imprisonment for two years of two accused who had embezzled YD 607 and YD 1,174 respectively,³⁰ as well as the comical case of wages drawn for the fictitious watchmen in the Aden branch of the National Company for Home Trade which involved the princely sum of YD 70,000.³¹ The manner in which such cases were dealt with indicated the régime's determination to prevent corruption from becoming a chronic problem; these cases were taken seriously, although there is no doubt that they do not compare with the situation in neighbouring countries where cases involving less than millions are unworthy of mention. In August 1981 there was also a crackdown on smuggling which went alongside an easing of import regulations.

While these cases received some publicity, mainly as a deterrent to others, another trial, in 1982, attracted enormous public interest. In February 1982 a group of 13 men were arrested just as they were about to blow up the country's major economic installations including the Aden power stations and refinery. They admitted at their trial that they had been recruited and trained in Saudi Arabia by US and UK citizens as well as others. Most were sentenced to death and were executed in April. Their trial was public and shown in hour-long daily episodes on television, presenting the first serious competition to the insipid Egyptian melodrama which is the usual addictive diet of Democratic Yemen's television audience. This clear threat to national security shows that the country's enemies have not given up hope of overthrowing the régime, and provide further rationale for the security consciousness which continues to pervade most aspects of life in the country, and which is often manifested in absurd oversensitivity.

While in recent years the traditional opponents of the régime have not made their presence felt, they are still there and present some threat. The SAL still maintains a fully trained army in Saudi Arabia with camps close to the PDRY's borders and FLOSY maintains offices in Cairo and Sana'a. In March 1980 when relations between the PDRY and Iraq were particularly bad, Baghdad tried to sponsor a new opposition grouping and invited Makkawi to Baghdad where a conference of opponents was held, forming the National Grouping of Patriotic Forces in South Yemen. This formation has sunk without trace, while its members seem to have returned to their former organisations and places of exile as the Iraqi régime no longer needed them. Propaganda wars by

²⁹ *Aden News Agency* 24 November 1980.

³⁰ *Aden News Agency* 7 January 1981.

³¹ *Aden News Agency* 31 December 1980.

radio and in print continue, though they are far less strident than in the early 1970s, and there is no doubt that the régime feels far more secure. The 1982 sabotage attempt, however, certainly discourages complacency.

In strengthening state institutions, the régime also issued a law creating an army reserve in 1981, and the second elections for the Local People's Council were held in 1983, after some delay. 80% of the electorate participated, including a majority of women, electing 305 councillors, 34 of whom are women and 120 workers, peasants or fishermen.

While economic development is discussed at length below, it is worth mentioning here that the long-awaited Investment Law was issued in December 1981 (see Chapter 9 for details), and that the period was marked by the signing of a number of bilateral and multilateral loan agreements to finance projects within the Second Five Year Development Plan, running from 1981 to 1985, while productivity improvements were expected as a result of the introduction of productivity payments and the direct marketing of some products of agriculture and fisheries cooperatives.

The period is marked by a number of events affecting society. The Second Emigrants Conference had been long announced but only took place in November 1980 after Ali Nasser became President; this aimed to integrate Yemeni emigrants into the national community both by facilitating administrative procedures and by encouraging them to participate more fully in the economic development of the country. The above-mentioned Investment Law was discussed and modified by the conference with its main objective to encourage Yemenis living abroad to invest in the productive sectors of the economy. Other decisions simplified customs and immigration regulations enabling migrants to travel with greater ease and sometimes with their families, lowered duties on personally imported consumer goods, and continued to allow special high interest rates on bank deposits. (Emigration is examined in greater detail in chapter 5.)

The growing legitimacy of the state is also seen in social life where the most important social laws of the 1970s are gradually seen to be enforced; this includes a crackdown on the consumption of qat on weekdays, with exemplary prison sentences imposed on a major contractor and a factory director in the most publicised cases.³² Similarly cases relating to the 1974 Family Law have regularly been tried. The most notorious of these took place in January 1981 when a Deputy Prime Minister (also a member of the Central Committee) was dismissed for marrying bigamously a member of the Supreme People's Council. The publicity surrounding the case was meant to produce increased respect for the Family Law though there may have been other political reasons for this action.³³

³² *Aden News Agency* 26 January 1981.

³³ Ali Salem al Beedh was later reinstated as candidate member of the Central Committee and became Minister of Local Government in September 1982, having solved his family problems in a more conventional way, through divorce and remarriage, though his wife had not regained her political positions by 1984.

Social projects, mainly in the housing field are being started as this sector has received priority after many years of neglect. In the early 1980s new housing estates started to spring up all over Aden and the main towns of the other governorates, many of them built with prefabricated materials and funded by foreign grants and loans. The relaxation of import restrictions has meant a dramatic increase in the number of private cars, and new supermarkets and hotels have become features of the Adeni skyline.

In brief the Ali Nasser period seems to be marked by pragmatism, with attempts to install dynamism in the country's economy and in social development and to operate policies to improve the standard of living of the population with less regard for ideological purity. It can be summarised in the words of Ali Nasser in 1982 on the 19th anniversary of the 14th October revolution:

‘We can say that every achievement, victory or gain made by the revolution at any level is attributable in the first place to the sacrifices of that generation that launched the revolution and preserved it against dangers and defeats, and to all those who preserved this revolution and ensured its safety... Our enthusiasm does not stop only at making plans and programmes, but also manifests itself in a serious and effective way during the implementation and the modification of those plans. The living standards of the people have improved remarkably. We are proud that this improvement has not been confined to a part or group or class of people. It has spread to all the toiling masses in the villages and cities.’³⁴

This speech avoids dwelling on the achievements of the revolution, and is of a completely different tone from those usually heard, particularly in the days of Abdul Fattah. The quotation above comes at the end of a long section reminiscing on the early days of the revolution and the support given to the NLF by the people, emphasising popular participation in the struggle. Ali Nasser later goes on to appeal to the people to participate more actively in the construction of the country, and once again to help rebuild after the disastrous floods of April 1982. In support of this he promises to continue a corruption-free administration and to halt the problems which were beginning to develop:

‘The means of economic production should be improved at the same time, in a manner which ensures economic sovereignty in order to eliminate negative elements in administration and state establishments and the daily life of the citizens, and in the areas of food supply, health, education, teaching and transport. In this regard, the complaints of citizens about individual irresponsible acts in some establishments should be dealt with and we will form special government bodies to maintain the laws, safeguard public .

³⁴ BBC SWB 7158 16 October 82.

property and take necessary measures to deter any illegal activities. These bodies will not tolerate any symptoms of disease in the areas of productive work.

In order to ensure law enforcement, everyone without exception should obey the law because all citizens are equal before the law. As long as everyone's rights are ensured they should fulfill their duties. This is not only with regard to the policy on law and order but also the policy on work in general. The 20th year of the revolution should see an intensified effort to develop the economic life of the country and enhance the participation of citizens in political life through elections to the People's Assembly and local People's Councils which should introduce qualified and loyal elements to the masses and enjoy the respect of people.'³⁵

As already mentioned, the creation of the Popular Control Committee as a permanent institution was part of that policy, as was the creation of various investigation commissions such as the 'Committee to Assess Negativism in State Institutions' which reported in late 1980, and in 1981 the Committee for Assessment of Administrative Conditions. Discussion of illegal economic behaviour reached the Central Committee at the session of August 1981 and in the same month an official campaign was launched against smuggling.

4. A United Yemen?

While the Kuwait agreement of 1979 put an end to the involvement of official PDRY forces in the fighting which was taking place in the YAR, sporadic fighting went on as the guerrillas of the National Democratic Front (NDF) continued their struggle. In January 1980 an agreement was reached between the NDF and the régime in Sana'a which should have led to the inclusion of the NDF in official political life, but the agreement was not implemented and relations between the

NDF and the Sana'ani authorities soon deteriorated as anti-NDF forces in Sana'a worked to sabotage the agreement. Breaking point was reached in August 1980 when Abdu Salam ad Dumayni, a leading member of the NDF, was assassinated near Sana'a. He had been there to try and negotiate an end to the fighting which had been taking place since April 1980 in the Ibb and Dharmar governorates. In October 1980 a Cabinet reshuffle in Sana'a excluded ministers sympathetic to the NDF's positions, and fighting continued. Throughout 1981 there was considerable fighting in the central region, as well as four cease-fires, none of which was observed, culminating in September when the Presidents of the YAR and the PDRY met in Ta'iz. Discussion eased the situation sufficiently to allow Ali Abdullah Saleh to pay his first official visit to Aden in November of that year for the celebrations of Independence Day. The situation however worsened

³⁵ *Ibid.*

in early 1982 when fighting once again became intense. In March the NDF successfully shot down two YAR Air Force planes in the Rada' region and the country was almost in a state of civil war. The Palestine Liberation Organisation tried to mediate and its leaders were involved in some shuttle diplomacy. In May 1982 Presidents Ali Nasser and Ali Abdullah Saleh again met in Ta'iz and reached an agreement which prevented the outbreak of full-scale war between the two parts of Yemen. YAR forces were involved in a major offensive against the NDF and by the summer of 1982 had regained control of most of the Rada' region and other NDF strongholds. Their success was assisted by the defection to Sana'a of a number of tribal groups from the NDF.

Throughout this period the official unity committees of the two governments had continued to meet, indicating that although there was a relationship of support between the PDRY government and the NDF, the two were distinct entities. The defeat of the NDF, however, obviously made it easier for a continued improvement in relations between the two régimes. In June 1980 the first three joint companies were officially created, the Yemeni Tourism Company, the Yemeni Land Transport Company and the Yemeni Sea Transport Company. In early 1982, a project for minerals exploration was added to these companies as a long-term joint venture.

Throughout 1983 meetings continued, culminating in the first meeting of the Supreme Yemeni Council in August 1983 in Sana'a, which was followed by two more such meetings in 1984, attended by both Presidents. While it is unlikely that the two states will unite formally, politically relations of cooperation between them are developing and the regular dialogue which takes place within the unity committees assists in bringing them together. The difference in state formation between the North and the South remains a very important factor and cannot be wished away. The joint companies and other common projects, as well as the creation of common laws, and common syllabi for the schools all lay the foundations for a future unity, should politics permit it, and in the meantime ensures that the feeling of a united Yemeni nation persists, as it has through the centuries. Brotherly dialogue is also a major way of avoiding the outbreak of new hostilities and of preventing the development of serious misunderstandings, and is taking place against a background of political liberalisation in both parts of the country, and in particular of developing popular participation in politics in the YAR. As long as these trends continue and present power structures remain in place, improvement in relations can be expected to take place. However past history makes concrete prediction foolhardy.

5. Recent developments in foreign relations

Despite many suggestions to the contrary, the foreign policy of the PDRY has not changed significantly under the Presidency of Ali Nasser Mohammed. The major development for the region was the agreement with the Sultanate of Oman in October 1982 which led to mutual diplomatic recognition in October 1983, ending the state of hostility which had flared up into occasional armed incursions up to 1981. The

fundamentally divergent political directions of the two states remain. Although the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman has stopped its daily broadcasts on Aden radio, it is still present in the country, as it has been since its military defeat in 1976, and maintains offices and welfare institutions for its refugees.

The régime in Aden has tried to improve relations around the Red Sea, mediating between Somalia and Ethiopia, and has very close relations with Ethiopia both at Party and state levels. In 1981 a Tripartite Agreement of Cooperation and Friendship was signed with Libya and Ethiopia after a summit held in Aden. The excellent relations with Ethiopia are shown in various cooperation agreements and symbolically in a plot of agricultural land given by Ethiopia to the PDRY which is being farmed.

Relations with Libya have been variable. Up to 1972 President Ghaddafi opposed the PDRY as he saw it as 'communist' but later he supported the régime and in the late 1970s provided some development aid. After the 1981 Tripartite Treaty, relations between Libya and its partners deteriorated until in 1983 and 1984 it cut off development aid and tried to sponsor opposition to the Presidency of Ali Nasser over disagreements concerning the Palestinian issue where Libya expected the PDRY to follow its lead.

Relations between the PDRY and other Arab states have on the whole improved, as the Gulf Cooperation Council participated in mediation between Oman and Democratic Yemen, mainly as a result of the positive approach to Democratic Yemen which Kuwait has maintained since the 1970s. In the 1980s there has been more aid from the various development funds set up by the oil-producing states, and this is making a significant difference to development investment, though the indirect impact of Yemeni emigration to these states has a different influence. In the summer of 1980 Ali Nasser Mohammed visited Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, which may have helped to improve relations and obtain more aid, though it had no immediate result.

Relations with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) continue to improve, the GCC sending a mission to Aden in May 1983. The hostility which had existed in the early days of the GCC has greatly diminished, if not disappeared altogether. In early 1981, when the Council was being formed, the PDRY tried to initiate a conference of all states of the Gulf, Horn and Peninsula, an initiative which failed due to the opposition of the majority of states in the Peninsula.

Although there are many political differences between Democratic Yemen and its neighbours, they are all Arab states and share a common concern for the Palestinian question, which creates a basis for mutual understanding and has saved the PDRY from being totally outcast by its right-wing neighbours whom the USA has failed to persuade that the Soviet Union is a greater threat than Israel.

The PDRY has maintained its very principled stand on the Palestinian question and it is worth noting, as it has been generally ignored, that at the time of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, while other Arab governments remained silent the Presidents of the PDRY and the YAR jointly went on a tour of the Arab world in an initiative to assist the besieged Palestinians. They were the only states to take any action and they were ignored, but this move is both an indication of the ability of Yemen

to act as a unit when necessary as well as of both régimes' commitment to Palestine. After the split within the Palestinian movement in 1983 and 1984, the PDRY played an active role in trying to reunite the PLO, acting as host and active mediator for many meetings, in the same way that the PLO had mediated between Sana'a and Aden in 1982 over the question of the National Democratic Front. Palestinians of all persuasions have been impressed by the RORY'S neutral position and unwillingness to interfere with their politics in the way of other Arab régimes.

Further afield, Democratic Yemen's relations with the socialist countries have continued to be good with regular visits by leaders to and from Democratic Yemen. As well as regular visits to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the President visited Cuba and Nicaragua in 1982 showing the régime's solidarity with the new Sandinista government. While occasionally uncertain, relations with China have remained fundamentally good, and Chinese aid in medicine and road construction is much appreciated by the people. The régime continues its efforts to establish and maintain good relations with many Third World states, particularly progressive ones, and sends senior politicians on regular tours of the continents; for example the former Minister of Construction, Hayder Abu Bakr al Attas visited socialist African states regularly before he was appointed Prime Minister in February 1985.

Relations with the West have shown some improvement in recent years. While for most of the 1970s France was the only Western state with an aid programme, however modest, this has been successful and helped France to obtain some commercial contracts, for example the construction of the New Aden Hotel with a French Government-backed loan, the rehabilitation of Aden's main hospital and the construction of a new terminal for Aden airport. These relations have remained satisfactory despite two armed attacks on the RORY'S embassy in Paris in February 1981 and August 1983 the first of which caused material damage and the second the death of a Yemeni employee. These attacks have been attributed to French racists, and have not marred state relations.

Italy and West Germany maintain good relations with the PDRY and participate in economic development. In particular AGIP's role in oil exploration is discussed in chapter 9.

Commercial relations with Britain have continued throughout the 1970s despite Britain's hostility to the régime which persisted into the early 1980s and only diminished in 1983 when Whitehall appointed its first ambassador to Aden. Aid is still restricted to a few British Council scholarships and assistance with the teaching of English which only began in 1983. As recently as 1981 the British police were openly interfering with freedom of movement in and out of the RORY'S embassy in London, while press slanders of the régime were commonplace in the 1970s. These were replaced in the early 1980s by a new suggestion that the PDRY was "turning to the West".

Increased economic contact with the West is due more to greater financial possibilities and to multilateral funding than to ideological positions, although costs and efficiency play a part. In some cases traditional association dating from the colonial

period may influence the PDRY authorities: for example the consultancy firm advising on the new Aden sewerage project is John Taylor and Co, the same company which originally built the sewers under British rule, although the construction contract has been awarded to a Japanese company. Traditional association may go some way towards explaining the number of consultancies given to British companies, given that British industry does not these days have a particularly impressive record at home or abroad.

The USA has maintained its hostile attitude to the PDRY. As recently as August 1984, Reagan's right-wing régime was accusing Democratic Yemen of being an evil force, a centre of terrorism, etc. It has made no effort to improve relations, having classified the country as hostile and communist. The last positive moves were made in June 1978 at the time of the upheavals, when a State Department delegation was on its way to Aden, but the visit was cancelled as a result of the crisis. Since 1981 the USA have been holding yearly manoeuvres of their Rapid Deployment Force in the states surrounding Democratic Yemen, namely Egypt, Oman and Somalia. At other times, the USA's aircraft carriers cruise in the Indian Ocean within easy reach of Aden, sometimes even within Yemen's territorial waters, threatening the country. Attempts at directly undermining the régime have been limited to supporting opponents and sponsoring sabotage groups such as the one which was sentenced in the spring of 1982.

The State in the 1980s

Prior to independence the country was divided into statelets and even the Federation of South Arabia did not establish any unifying structures; on the contrary the division and competition between the different mini-states increased and there was no attempt to create a sense of nationhood. This made it possible for the politically-aware youth to see themselves as part of the broader Arab nation when the concept emerged and was transmitted through radio. The concept of a Yemeni entity was a reality for those in the Western Protectorate who lived in a region culturally close to the Imamate which the Imam claimed as part of his territory. By the time independence was achieved the country totally lacked any 'infrastructure, having neither roads nor common services such as water and electricity, and only a very few schools and medical facilities scattered in the capitals of the various statelets. On assuming power the NLF, with its very limited means, started to create the structures which would bring the country together physically, politically and socially. One of the régime's major achievements has been the creation of a sense of a Yemeni nation among the whole population from Ras al Ara to Mahra.

1. Representative and mass organisations

Various state structures work to unify the country: as we have seen the Party plays a major role in this. The elected Supreme People's Council is made up of members representing constituencies but in most cases the candidates are not from the area which they represent. While on the one hand this means they have less local knowledge of the area's problems, on the other it helps to ensure that this Council is not an excuse to revive traditional relations of tribal leadership and clientship with members seeing themselves as local lords. The Local People's Councils meeting at governorate capitals, by contrast, are made up of members who live and work in their constituencies, remaining close to the immediate problems of the localities for which the Councils are responsible. At the administrative level, each ministry has a branch in the governorate capitals and some have offices in the main towns of the *mudiriyas* (the units into which governorates are subdivided). As the administration of the country becomes ever more complex, these are the places where people go to obtain documents and information on policies, as well as assistance when needed. The administration thus grew and by the late 1970s there were some 31,000 civil servants. Among these some are former administrators employed by the British in Aden, now mainly in the middle and upper management levels where their hostility to the régime's policies may be a factor in the slowness of the bureaucracy. They have a negative influence on the younger administrators whom they should be training. Many of the difficulties which the country is experiencing in the late 1970s and early 1980s are attributed to weak management, and this is mainly due to the absolute shortage of trained personnel. But the problem has also been blamed on the senior administrators and managers who were trained in British days and use their positions to obstruct new legislation and regulations with which they disagree. The régime is trying to improve the situation by various means, including political education. Many in-service training courses for young administrators are run and students are trained both in Aden University and abroad. Personnel are also sent on short and medium courses abroad and various institutes have set up courses locally, such as the Cooperatives Institute which trains cooperative managers and accountants. Many of the courses run in Democratic Yemen are organised with the assistance of various UN agencies.

Aside from the administrative and political structures, the régime has been trying to unify the country through nationwide mass organisations, which have particular purposes. The first after independence was the successor to the ATUC, the General Union of Yemeni Workers, formed in 1968. By the late 1970s it included some 85,000 members distributed in different trade unions; the union's new constitution is such that its character is closer to that of unions in Eastern Europe, and its responsibilities include the improvement of productivity as well as of working conditions on the shopfloor. Despite this institutionalisation of trade unionism, unions act to protect their members' interests and their role in the determination of salaries and bonuses is not negligible. Although there have been few strikes, it has often been the case that

their intervention and mediation has solved problems just short of the workers' going on strike.

The Peasants' Union was formed in 1976 although the NLF had been calling for it since the late 1960s; it organises literacy and other classes, and is supposed to resolve problems of peasants in cooperatives. The Youth Union, known as Asheed, was set up in 1973 and by the late 1970s had over 30,000 members with a children's branch called the Pioneers which is involved in summer camps, sports, weekend outings etc. Both are closely connected to the Students' Union which represents the educational problems of students and has active branches abroad where there are concentrations of Yemeni students. Asheed plays a more political role.

The General Union of Yemeni Women, formed in 1968, has a membership of about 15,000. Its aim is to increase women's role in society and the economy and to 'raise their educational, cultural, vocational and technical standard'.³⁶ It has organised literacy classes throughout the country, as well as sewing, nutrition and hygiene programmes. It helps women to study in non-traditional fields and this social programme has been effective, particularly in the rural areas. At the political level its impact is much smaller; its role is defined by the Party and it shows little concern for feminist issues, as understood in the West. The Union is represented on the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council, but over the years the number of women in Party leadership and in the SPC itself has decreased. In the Central Committee of UPONF elected in October 1975 there were one full and two candidate women members. In 1978 in the YSP Central Committee there were also one full and two candidate members, while in 1980 there was only one full member. Tokenism appears to be the order of the day and women in leading political positions are a rarity and are not often promoted. A former President of the Women's Union was appointed Deputy Minister of Culture and soon lost her position on the Central Committee where she was replaced by her successor in the Union, giving the clear impression that membership of the Central Committee is awarded to the President of the Union *ex officio*.

In the residential areas, the People's Defence Committees (PDC) were set up in 1973 on the Cuban model as neighbourhood groups with wide responsibilities ranging from the protection of strategic installations against sabotage or robbery to the distribution of cards for subsidised foods. Their social role is clear in family disputes and in divorce proceedings. The approval of the PDC is necessary for a divorce to be granted by the court, and they must attempt reconciliation between the parties. They are composed of people from the neighbourhood and discuss local problems which may have to be taken to relevant authorities for action. They have been particularly successful in villages where they are a form of local community administration. In Aden for a long time their security function affected their image and many people regarded them as a surveillance organisation which interfered unnecessarily in people's lives. However, in

³⁶ *PDRY Constitution*, 1978, article 67.

the early 1980s as they increased their cultural and community activities, this attitude changed and they have become more popular. In 1982 they had 160,000 members.

The country's military institutions have also played a major role in uniting the population. They are mainly the armed forces and the militia. The militia was established formally in 1973 and can mobilise up to 100,000 members, mostly men, including about 60% peasants and 30% workers. It was formed from the various smaller groupings which had existed informally since independence and which played an active role in the defence of the country's borders against the attacks which were mounted up to 1973. Organised on a part-time basis with up to 60 days training annually the militia is important mainly in guarding strategic places: in June 1978, it is reputed to have played a major role against Salmine. It remains an important reserve of militarily trained people who can be mobilised rapidly in an emergency.

2. The armed forces

The army has thoroughly changed in character since independence. It began as the South Arabian Army, trained by the British and created through the merger of the Federal Guards and the Aden Levies which were themselves composed of earlier local forces trained and commanded by British officers. Prior to independence it was the only existing 'national' institution, at least in the Western Protectorate, there being no link with the armed forces in the Eastern Protectorate. However, it was tribally based with the vast majority of its officers and men from the Awlaqi tribe; some from Maisari, Dhali' and Yafi', and hardly anyone from other tribes.

At independence the armed forces in the entire country numbered about 10,000 men including those of the Eastern Protectorate.³⁷ In the summer of 1967 when the conflict between FLOSY and the NLF dominated life in the region, the army 'eventually sided with the NLF for a number of reasons. The officers who were linked with FLOSY had, by September, come to the conclusion that this organisation would be defeated and they had left the army, leaving it under the control of the supporters of the NLF. Much of the officer support for the NLF was not for its socialist wing but for the right; many officers thought the NLF weak and hoped to play a dominant political role after independence. In the ranks, by contrast, there was considerable support for the left of the NLF, and this influenced the army as a whole, shifting the balance of power against FLOSY.

In March 1968, as we have seen, the Army took part in politics when it joined forces with the right of the NLF in an effort to defeat the left after the Fourth Congress; its failure was an indication of the relative military strength of the two forces at that time, and particularly of the importance of the NLF's own military groups. It is significant that the first Minister of Defence was a member of the left of the NLF, Ali Salem al Beedh, who was dismissed after the failure of the 14 May Movement in 1968.

³⁷ R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British rule* p. 442 note 74.

In January 1970 Ali Nasser Mohammed became Minister of Defence, and rapidly implemented deep changes in the structure of the army to help it become an instrument of socialist transformation in the country. This was done despite the fact that at that time the army was badly needed to defend the country from constant military attacks from across the borders. The British-trained officers were soon dismissed and Soviet advisers brought in. While some NLF cadres had received military training in Egypt prior to independence there was a great need for cadres and many promising soldiers were sent for training in the Soviet Union. The NLF appointed political secretaries at all levels of the armed forces to educate the soldiers politically. Conscription was instituted which resulted in a rapid détribalisation of the army as it was linked to efforts to distribute training and promotion equally among the people from different parts of the country.

As was stated in the programme of UPONF in 1975 and restated at other congresses, 'The military institutions are subject to the political leadership of the Unified Political Organisation, the National Front, its general programme and resolutions. They are to be based on the toiling classes and especially the workers and peasants and should support the interests of the workers and peasants ...'³⁸ Throughout the armed forces political secretaries play an important role in ensuring that the party remains in control and that the army remains 'immune to the widespread disease of pronunciamientos',³⁹ as Ali Nasser put it when he was Minister of Defence. Another important feature of the armed forces is their participation in productive activities, whose political purpose is described as follows: 'the participation of the military institutions in the productive process alongside the other forces of the revolution in the implementation of the agricultural and industrial projects of the development plan, and in the service industries will guarantee that the armed forces are not a burden on the revolution, but on the contrary a force which shares in the process of production while defending the revolution and its achievements.'⁴⁰

Although the emphasis on participation in production is no longer part of the programme of the YSP, the armed forces do play an important role in running some farms and in construction. At times of emergency, as for example during the major floods of 1982, they were sent to the disaster areas to assist the population in making emergency repairs. Another important role is in education: while there is still a large number of illiterates, conscripts are given basic education in the army and can also learn skills which will be useful later in a number of fields in civilian life. In August 1983 a General Department of Civil Defence was created under the command of the Popular Militia, to be supervised by the Minister of Defence.⁴¹

The armed forces' main role was, of course, defence of the borders in the early years when they were under constant attack. Since then it has also played an important role

³⁸ *UPONF Programme, op cit* p. 33.

³⁹ *Ie Monde* 30 May 1972.

⁴⁰ *UPONF Programme, op cit* p. 32-3.

⁴¹ SWB ME 7418 22 August 83.

in the country's policies at home and abroad: it was clearly divided in the events of 1978, as some sections of it supported Salmine, and later that year there were important changes in the officer corps, indicating political differences. On the whole there is no doubt about the armed forces' loyalty as was proved in the conflict between the two parts of Yemen in 1972 and 1979.

The armed forces have also played a role in the country's foreign policy when the PDRY sent a token unit to the Lebanese peace-keeping force in 1976, which was withdrawn in December 1977. In 1977 and 1978 in a gesture of solidarity with the new revolutionary régime in Ethiopia the PDRY sent troops to assist Ethiopia in the Ogaden war; this aroused considerable hostile publicity in the West where it was wrongly asserted that the Yemenis had been sending troops to fight against the Eritrean guerrillas. The PDRY position on Eritrea is that the conflict should be resolved peacefully through discussion, and the PDRY is unwilling to support Ethiopia militarily in this conflict. The Ogaden war, on the other hand, which involved a clear breach of recognised international frontiers, was an occasion on which the PDRY felt it suitable to show practical solidarity with the Ethiopian régime. Later rumours in the 1980s that there were PDRY troops in Afghanistan are merely another example of black propaganda against the régime. Where PDRY troops have been involved, no secret is made of it, and in the Military Museum in Aden there are photographs of martyrs and comments on the activities of the PDRY's troops in Ogaden.

Nor does the régime make much secret of the fact that it obtains training and equipment from its allies in Eastern Europe. Among the less hysterical estimates of foreign military advisers is one by the US State Department which estimated at 1,300 the total number of Soviet, East German and Cuban experts. The report continues to say that more than half of these are civilians, and that the military advisers include about 300 Cubans who train the militia, 300 Soviets who train the army and 100 East Germans involved in the reorganisation of internal security.⁴² As for the size of the armed forces, the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London estimates the total number of armed forces in 1984 at 27,500, including 18,000 conscripts, who serve for 2 years including 1,000 in the Navy and 2,500 in the Air Force, and estimates the militia numbers at 15,000.⁴³

Overall it is clear that in the PDRY 'politics is in command' and the army, although it includes many Party members, takes its orders as a body from civilian authority. In this way the régime contrasts sharply with other 'progressive' Arab states where the army plays a dominant political role.

A side effect of this incident was the suddenly developed support of Iraq's Ba'athist clique for the opposition in the PDRY. FLOSY leaders were welcomed in Baghdad

⁴² Statement by Hodding Carter spokesman of the State Department *le Monde* 28 February 1979.

⁴³ *The Military Balance*, IISS, London 1984, p. 73.

and formed the *National Grouping of Patriotic Forces in South Yemen* under the Chairmanship of Abdul Qawi Makkawi — BBC SWB ME 6382 28 March 1980.

However after the assassination of Hamdi and the shift to the right experienced in the North, other progressive groups joined the NDF, including the Front of 13 June (*al Jabha HJuniu*), formed of Hamdi supporters, whose organisation was named after the day he took power. The Nasserist Movement (*Harakat al Nasriyin*) also joined as well as supporters of the Syrian Ba'ath tendency.

Chapter Five: The Transformation of Society.

Since its early days in 1965 the NLF's aims included 'the radical transformation of the social reality created by colonialism' and it advocated a complete transformation of social relations in the country. This objective it has achieved: the traditional social hierarchy has been overthrown, the former tribal rulers are either dead or in exile. The country's new leaders include people of low-status origin, something inconceivable in earlier days; land and water can no longer be used to accumulate wealth at the expense of the peasants; the public retail sector in trade and subsidised prices for basic commodities make it impossible for small traders to act as loansharks; women have a claim to equal rights with men according to the constitution, and religious notables have lost their political power over their neighbours.

Many of these changes still require ongoing struggle by those who are to benefit as the law cannot change collective consciousness, but only support those who are willing to work for the changes. While outstanding inequality has been abolished and the means for exploitation of the lower classes by the powerful have been abolished, equality has not been achieved and there are still many difficulties in its path: the urban-rural gap is still enormous, women do not yet play an equal role in many fields including politics, and many old attitudes of arrogance and superiority are still found among people of *sada* origin.

Society before independence.

There have been few studies of the social structure of Southern Yemen during the period of British rule and none since; the outstanding research is that of A. S. Bujra¹ who made a detailed study of a small town in Wadi Hadramaut and also published a survey of Aden's social structure in the 1950s. In the following pages I give a crude sketch of the social structure: its brevity requires oversimplification.

In the hinterland there were a multiplicity of social groups, not all of which were present everywhere and their relationships were somewhat flexible. The nature of social stratification is also problematic insofar as the pre-capitalist structure was based on

¹ A. S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification, a Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*. Oxford University Press, 1971. A. S. Bujra 'Political Conflict and Stratification in Hadramaut' in *Middle East Studies* vol. 3 no. 4 July 1967 and vol. 4 no. 1 October 1967.

inherited status and mobility could only take place downwards, if at all. The stratification system was closed, allowing only hypergamous² marriage, and social protocol was determined by the hierarchy. As a result there has been debate as to whether these groups should be described as classes or castes, a question I shall not enter into here. Although this structure was presented as immutable it had some flexibility over long periods, and there was no necessary correlation between wealth and status.

The highest level was that of the *sada* (sing, *sayyed*) whose superiority and nobility was based on their claim to direct descent from the prophet Mohammed, which also led others to attribute supernatural powers to them. They were identifiable through their dress as their *jambiya* (a short dagger) only had a mildly curved sheath, they also wore mainly white clothing and distinctive turbans and headdresses. Their sacred inherited qualities gave them a role which was educational, teaching Islam to other social groups as the holders of other forms of knowledge. Their political role included mediation in disputes and providing safe conduct through tribal territory for travellers. As an extension of their mediation and protective role they gradually gained control over towns which became *haw tas*, places where tribal conflicts are forbidden and in which warring groups could trade and operate without fear of their enemies as all feuds were suspended at the gates of the city. The rada's political role gave them power, particularly in Wadi Hadramaut where their ascendancy was augmented by wealth. While in the Wadi *sada* would not indulge in trading, an activity considered below their rank, but when they emigrated to Indonesia they became successful traders and accumulated considerable capital. Combined with their traditional political role this allowed certain *sada* families, for example the al-Kaf in Tarim to become effectively the rulers of most of Wadi Hadramaut. The Kathiri Sultan was poor and became financially dependent on them while the Qu'ayti Sultan was far away in Mukalla and needed them for investment capital. In other parts of the country the *sada's* role was limited to mediation and religious education and although they obtained respect, they did not monopolise politics at the expense of the tribal leaders.

The second level of the social structure was shared on a more or less equal footing by two groups: the *mashaykh* whose claim to status was also religious and the *qaba'il* (tribes) whose claim was based on descent. Both groups regarded Qahtan, the legendary ancestor of all south Arabian peoples, as their forefather but *mashaykh* status was due to religious scholarship while the *qaba'ls* came from their descent and lineage. The former's status was lower than that of the *sada*, so their less exclusive descent meant that their spiritual inheritance was also less, and while their religious authority was due to scholarship rather than birth, they also controlled some territory, usually towns which were also areas of peace for tribesmen.

The *qaba'il* (sing, *qabila*) were the median stratum of society to whom all others referred; they traced their ancestry to the founders of their tribes which were subdivided

² This means that a man was allowed to marry a woman of lower status, as status was inherited through the male line, while women were never allowed to marry below their status.

on a segmentary basis along the male line. All areas were under the domination of one or another tribe or tribal section or lineage, but were not particularly wealthy given the poverty of agriculture and the absence of other resources. Settled tribes people lived in villages and worked the surrounding fields. Small trading towns acted as capitals of the areas under each tribe's control. Their men were armed and their social role was that of warriors who were in a constant state of war with all those who were neither close kin nor allies.

Occupationally they were peasants and herdsmen as well as fighters but did not indulge in lowly urban activities such as trade or manufacture. Within the borders of what became the PDRY there were no major tribal confederations such as are found further north in the Peninsula; fragmentation was intense, and this explains why the British signed so many Protectorate Treaties with minor tribal leaders.

The third level was that of the *masakin* or *du 'afa*, the weak people, who lived in towns and villages. They worked as traders and artisans and went about unarmed. They had no common descent group to support them nor did they control any land. As they were unarmed, when travelling, they needed the protection of members of the other groups, thus providing work for the tribesmen in protecting and controlling the caravan trade.

Outside and far below the *masakin* were the groups sometimes considered to be outcast as they were not considered to even be part of the system described above. They were the *akhdam* and *hujur*, small groups of distinct racial origin, some of them said to be the descendants of African slaves. They were involved in the most despised unclean occupations such as butchering, refuse disposal and cleaning, though the *hujur* also worked in agriculture, and had slightly higher status.

While this structure, with modifications, prevailed in the hinterland, Adeni society had been fundamentally transformed in the 19th and 20th Centuries under British influence and through immigration from India and Somalia. Yemenis in Aden formed the lower classes of hinterland and Imamate immigrant workers, but a few of them eventually joined the trading class. The workers were of low status in the British hierarchy though they were mainly from the tribal class at home and maintained their high status there. This continued addition in their position influenced their political and other choices. Adeni society was dominated by the European, mainly British, administrators, traders and military who had the highest status in their own eyes, followed by the other foreign immigrant merchant classes of Indians and Parsees, and lower down the Yemeni workers and Somali coolies.

Although too brief to allow social development or the creation of a progressive culture within the NLF, the short period of armed struggle laid the foundations of a new social order. At independence the NLF had a major advantage: the old leadership structures had been destroyed and sultanic authority had lost its hold on the people. The former rulers had left the hinterland with their supporters and dependent élite, the Adeni bourgeoisie left before and shortly after independence, leaving the field open everywhere for the creation of new social relations.

The declared aims of the régime include the creation of a society where all citizens, including women, are equal without distinction of wealth or birth, a society in which all can achieve an adequate standard of living both in town and in the countryside, a society in which status is achieved through merit and ability rather than through descent. Even if there were no financial and economic constraints, these aims would be slow and difficult to achieve, given the universally slow pace of ideological and social change. The main constraints the régime continues to encounter in changing social attitudes and social relations come first and foremost from the in-built inertia and fundamental stability of social structures which is found everywhere: this means that new approaches to social relations develop only slowly in a dialectical relationship with legislation and other government-decreed measures. Progressive social measures can encounter opposition not only among those who by continuing to claim inherited status can crudely be described as ‘class enemies’ but also from militant supporters of the revolution. Even progressive cadres and Party members may object to a daughter appearing in public or studying outside the village, fearing ‘public opinion’ or they may insist on marrying her to a partner of their choice with the traditional rituals, a partner chosen for his tribal relationship to the family or his inherited status rather than his personal qualities. Similarly payments of bridewealth may be far higher than those set by law, to maintain the family’s public status. People of *sada* origin have also been known to describe as ‘ignorant bedu’ the current political leadership which includes people of low social origins; such remarks are not related to policies but are a challenge to the right of low status people to rule. Such prejudices are not about to disappear overnight and they create an ideological climate which contributes to the slow pace of social change.

Limited media access in the rural areas has also made a change of attitudes more difficult. While most of the country could receive Aden radio by 1973, television which is very popular, has only penetrated the remote areas in the 1980s, while some regions could receive Saudi Arabian, Omani or North Yemeni television before they could get Aden. These stations, given the ideology of these régimes, do not transmit programmes likely to encourage in viewers the development of socialist social consciousness, but on the contrary promote the more retrograde and conservative interpretations of Islam and other conservative ideas.

Islam

Contrary to the often quoted propaganda that the régime has closed down all the mosques and encourages atheism, Islam appears to be healthy and doing well in Democratic Yemen. Traditionally a region where almost everyone follows the Shafi’i branch of Sunni Islam, southern Arabia includes areas which observers in the 19th and early 20th Centuries regarded as being only marginally islamised. This was probably true

of the nomadic tribal areas more than of the towns. Wadi Hadramaut, for example, has a long tradition of Muslim scholarship, Tarim being a town renowned for centuries for its scholars as well as for its 360 or more mosques and its libraries of historic and religious manuscripts.

'Islam is the state religion'³ according to the constitution. The religious trusts in the form of land holdings (*awqaf*) are no longer managed by the mosques and are now under the care of the Ministry of Justice and Awqaf, which is also responsible for the maintenance of mosques and the payment of full-time prayer leaders who receive civil service salaries. As elsewhere in the Muslim world mosques are found everywhere and their style varies from flamboyant and impressive architecture, the most prominent example of which in PDRY is the al Mohdar mosque in Tarim, to ordinary houses and huts indistinguishable from surrounding housing except for the extension of the *mihrab*, which indicates the direction of Mecca. Attendance at Friday prayers varies from place to place, but on major religious festivals and on the occasion of funerals, the leaders of the country attend and this is reported by the media. Although maintenance of mosques is the responsibility of the Ministry, in some cases, where the building has been financed by emigrant workers, for example, they and local communities continue to look after them. While official discourse avoids appeal to Islam either in support of policies or in opposition to tendencies regarded as 'backward', preaching at the main Friday prayer is informed by the more progressive and liberal interpretations of the Quran. Similarly Islam is part of the compulsory school syllabus where it is taught alongside more 'revolutionary' subjects, like the history of the Yemeni revolution and Party policy. Major religious figures also play a political role, the country's leading imam is a member of the Supreme People's Council and participates publicly in his religious capacity at major functions where this is appropriate.

Islam is the religion of the Yemeni population but there are still a few believers in other religions, mainly descendants of immigrants during the British period, and their freedom of religion is also guaranteed by the constitution.⁴ This is openly exercised and there is one functioning Catholic church in Aden, as well as a few temples for the other minority religious groups. The PDRY is a country where freedom of religion seems to prevail, and there is no public social pressure either in support of or against religion. This is quite unlike other countries I have visited, and in Aden I have clearly felt this lack of pressure: I rarely saw people praying in public places, nor do high ranking officials leave work in order to pray. Where I have seen ordinary workers going to pray, they showed no sign of feeling any disapproval of their actions and as a matter of course stated that they were going off to pray, interrupting their work, as this was considered to be quite legitimate. Similarly during Ramadan modified working hours apply to accommodate those who fast, although fasting appears to be entirely an individual choice with no pressure put on anyone either way in Aden. It is likely that conformism

³ 1978 *Constitution* article 47, p. 23.

⁴ *ibid.*

is stronger in the more religious areas, in Wadi Hadramaut for example, and generally in the smaller towns which tend to be more conservative than either large towns or the countryside.

The conservative influence of tradition clothed in religious language can still be found in many spheres and can only be expected to decrease gradually. It is however significant that in the PDRY one can talk in the 1980s of a decrease of conservative attitudes at a time when elsewhere in the Muslim world conservatism is on the ascendant and its main manifestation is in fundamentalist Muslim ideology and the repressive norms of social behaviour associated with it. This revival does not appear to be a significant political force in Democratic Yemen, probably because some parts of the country never were strongly Muslim while in others the liberal religious policies of the régime have not created a virulent opposition. It was only for a short time, in the early 1970s, that efforts were made to implement by force radical social policies, thus alienating many people. Since then the pace has slowed to a level where change is noticeable without incurring significant hostility. For example in 1980 I visited a large, brand new and superbly equipped secondary school for girls in Shihr, a conservative town in Hadramaut. This school, the most luxurious I saw in the country, was designed to receive up to 250 girl students and was entirely staffed by women in order not to offend traditionalists. Despite this, at the time of my visit the school had only 83 pupils distributed in three classes because the town families were opposed to secondary schooling for their daughters. The staff spent much of their time visiting families and trying to persuade them to send their daughters to school. It may be relevant that most migrants from Shihr work in Saudi Arabia.

Religious conservatism varies greatly from one area to another: Aden as the capital and largest city is by far the most liberal part of the country, where the pressures of tradition are least as anonymity is almost possible. Rural areas and villages allow more freedom than the small towns where status is often associated with the observation of tradition. Here the former élite *sada* and *mashaykh* may encourage backward traditions and support the authority of the male head of the family, not religious grounds directly on but in retaliation against the régime and its policies which have destroyed their inherited authority and replaced them with officials whose claim to authority is based on their acquired ability and merit rather than their birth.

Détribalisation

The most important anti-tribalist measures were taken immediately after independence. In March 1968, a Tribal Reconciliation Decree was issued:

1. A general reconciliation is declared among all tribes in the PRS Y for a period of five years with effect from Monday 1 January 1968.
2. Any dispute forming the subject of a feud before that date must cease.

3. Anyone contravening this order or challenging it will be considered a criminal and brought to trial and punished in accordance with the authority of the government.
4. No individual or tribe may take revenge, whatever the cause; any such person or tribe must file a complaint with the Government in such cases.⁵

Although feuding ceased almost immediately, this Decree like others designed to affect the social structure did not bring about an instant solution to all problems, and in the early years much armed opposition to the régime was tribally based, encouraged by the old rulers, as for example in Bayhan, Sa'id and former Awdhali. However, great efforts have been made by the judiciary and the administration to enforce the laws against tribal feuds, and on occasion the armed forces intervene to prevent a tribal feud from developing after an initial murder, and to bring the culprit before the official courts. This happened, for example, in Bayhan in March 1980 when I was visiting the area. Forcible intervention by the régime to stop tribal feuding has played a significant part in reducing it.

A further attempt to control feuding and reduce social differentiation was made in November 1969 when the bearing of arms was banned. Men may no longer carry weapons except with special permits. As a result daily life in the PDRY differs markedly from that in the YAR where most men wear jambiyas and submachine guns of one sort or another, which they are ready to use at the slightest provocation resulting in a high death rate. In the small town in the YAR where I lived for six months, on a single day six people were killed over an argument about 2 riyals (about \$0.50), and this case was not unique. In Democratic Yemen since independence such an occurrence is unheard of, men walk about unarmed and although most of them still have jambiyas and even guns at home, arguments rarely result in their use. People fear retribution by the government and besides cannot react immediately, as fetching the weapon from home requires time, allowing tempers to cool. In border and other strategic areas many men are armed, but this is as members of the militia in which context the bearing of arms is not a mark of social differentiation.

An early measure aimed at creating national unity was the division of the country's internal administrative areas into six governorates whose borders were intentionally delineated neither on a tribal basis nor on that of the earlier amirates. Although at first only numbered, in March 1980 slight redefinitions were made to the boundaries and the governorates were given names which do not revive tribalism. They are *Aden* for the Governorate which includes the capital, *Lahej* referring to the main town in that area, *Abyan* named after its most important wadi, Shabwa named after the ancient capital of the Hadramaut kingdom whose ruins lie within the governorate. *Hadramaut*, the generally accepted geographical name for that region, and *Mahra* the name of the people and pre-Islamic language spoken there. Minor changes were made to the borders of the *mudiriya*s, to improve communications and social cohesion.

⁵ BBC SWB ME 2709 1 March 1968.

In 1968 the Governor of Aden announced:

‘that he will not accept any complaint or request submitted to him through an intermediary as was the practice in the defunct era ... The revolution has come to serve young and old without exception thus removing all distinctions. Accordingly any citizen who has a complaint which he wants to report to the Governor is requested to submit it directly to him without any kind of intercessions.’⁶

This move to prevent influence peddling shows determination to enforce equality among citizens and prevent privilege from developing as a result of brokerage.

Similarly efforts are made, not always successfully, to ensure that employment is based on qualifications and ability rather than on tribal or family connections, but personal contacts are still important as they are in advanced capitalist countries where ‘old boy networks’ are still very influential. To weaken social relations based merely on tribal origin a Decree was issued in 1970 cancelling the licences of all clubs, societies and organisations of a tribal character and closing their branches. These had been used mainly as a means to retain contacts and strengthen tribal links between those who had migrated to Aden and remained at that time centres of tribally-based opposition to the régime. It is still true however that social life still revolves around the family and extends to others from the same region.

The trial in 1982 of the sabotage group which had planned to blow up the country’s main economic installations revealed the strength of family and tribal ties. All the defendants came from the same village or its surroundings, and some were close relatives, brothers and cousins; they had evidently all gone to work in the same part of Saudi Arabia using a tribal solidarity network to get jobs. The same network served for recruitment to the sabotage group.

The *bedu*

The nomadic population represents about 10% of the total but ranges over 67% of the country’s territory which cannot be used in any other way as it is very sparse grazing but still produces a third of home-produced meat. Official policy concerning the *bedu* recognises their important role in the semi-desert, but also considers that the rangeland is unable to provide a reasonable standard of living for the nomads and certainly not to sustain an increase in livestock or in human population. The government therefore encourages the settlement of the *bedu* and the development of alternative occupations. In these aims it has had some success.

Life for the nomads has improved through the drilling of boreholes and the construction of water tanks as well as the opening of shops and other basic facilities at

⁶ BBC SWB ME 2879 21 October 1968.

some of the new watering points. While in 1973 permanent water holes were as far apart as 100 km, this figure had decreased to about 35 km by 1981 thanks to a major programme of drilling in the Beduin Development Project area, which covers the northern semi-desert including most of Mahra and Hadramaut governorates as well as substantial sections of Shabwa governorate (excluding the Rub' al Khali and Ramlat as Sabatain which are barren desert areas). Social surveys⁷ carried out in 1974 and 1981 show marked improvements in the standard of living of nomads: while in 1974 only 1% lived in permanently built houses, by 1981 16% did; those earning a cash income of over YD 201 had risen from 1.3% in 1974 to 55.7% in 1981 though inflation accounts for some of this difference. Literacy had increased from 25 to 35% and more significantly school attendance had increased from 2.3% to 20% for boys and from 0.5% to 8% for girls. Most parents approved of education for their children of both sexes. Such changes in the educational level of youth are important trends for the future, as are new attitudes about what work is acceptable: 85% of parents approved of cultivation as a suitable occupation for *bedu* in 1981 indicating a rapid dying out of old prejudices against settled occupations. Between 1974 and 1981 the number of people involved in herding as an economic activity dropped from 90 to 73% showing an increase in settled activities either in connection with the Project or otherwise taking up manual skills as well as professional occupations. Another sign for the future was the number who were willing to resort to non-tribal organisations for assistance with their problems which reached the high figure of 67% in 1981. Equally surprisingly 32% of the nomads in the survey had joined one of the mass organisations (see Chapter 4) set up by the government. This indicates a very high degree of mobilisation, since these organisations are not particularly widespread in the semi-deserts where the nomads roam.

The Beduin Development Project, active throughout the area where nomads are virtually the only inhabitants, has a multiple role. As well as improving the standard of living through the drilling of 52 boreholes by 1981, the Project also built and rehabilitated traditional water collection cisterns in areas where groundwater is insufficient for drilling. It is also studying the question of overgrazing, which is becoming urgent in the areas surrounding the new water supplies and the Project benefits from considerable cooperation and advice from the nomads themselves: research is being done into supplementary feeding crops for the livestock near the water supplies as well as to test the suitability of crushed date stones or dried sardines as additional feeds. To prevent serious overgrazing rotational grazing and water retention schemes are planned. To ensure success the number of livestock will have to be kept within sustainable limits and the cooperation of the *bedu* will be crucial at all stages.

The other major feature of policy towards the *bedu* concerns the provision of facilities which, by their very nature, are liable to encourage settlement: these range from basic shopping facilities and health units at the main boreholes to six commu-

⁷ PDRY *Bedouin Development Project: Socio-economic impact*, by A. M. Mostafa, Aden 1981.

nity development centres providing a wide range of services and training: educational programmes for women and men include home economics, health education, literacy, sewing, carpentry, carpet making, and mechanics. The centres also provide veterinary and medical services and are the local branch of government for the surrounding nomadic population. These centres and other facilities at water points, combined with the development of animal feed crops where irrigation is possible, are encouraging the nomads to settle. Another major element in this policy is the opening of schools for the children: these are mainly boarding schools allowing the parents to travel with their herds but their presence encourages parents to visit and perhaps eventually to settle nearby.

While cultivation was traditionally despised by nomads, this had changed in recent years and the 1981 survey established that 11% of *bedu* had some experience of it. Although the number who turn to cultivation is still small, it is significant and happening mainly on the edges of nomadic herding areas. I met former nomads who had settled and been given agricultural land in Bayhan, where they were very close to semi-desert pastoral land; met others on the coast near Mukalla where some had taken up agriculture in the mid-1970s. Other former nomads take up driving as a favourite alternative, as long-distance work involves a way of life very similar to that of nomadic herding, but a few have studied and become professionals. The current policy is to ensure that the fragile grazing land is used within sustainable limits in human and animal capacity; therefore the natural increase in population must be shifted to alternative occupations such as cultivation and other productive and professional occupations.

The position of women

I will briefly survey policies and legislation specifically concerning women as well as the changes which are taking place in their social position and the difficulties they face in striving for equality. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the questions discussed in the rest of this book are as relevant to women as they are to men.

Alone among the states of the Mashreq, the constitution of the PDRY asserts equality of the sexes: 'The State shall ensure equal rights for men and women in all fields of life, the political, economical and social, and shall provide the necessary conditions for the realization of that equality.'⁸ To make this theoretical equality a practical possibility: 'The state shall also work for the creation of the circumstances that will enable the woman to combine participation in the productive and social work and her role within the family sphere. It shall render special care to the vocational qualifying of the working woman.'⁹

This constitutional equality has not yet deeply changed what was a traditional Muslim, male-oriented society, but the signs of change are visible: women are increasingly

⁸ 1978 *Constitution* article 36.

⁹ *ibid.*

being educated at all levels and by the early 1980s some of the colleges of Aden University had a majority of female students, a promising sign for the future. For example in 1981–82 the College of Education had 639 female and 242 male students, the Faculty of Medicine 228 and 231 respectively, while in Technology there were 312 men and 133 women.

Although not statistically measured, the economic role of women nationally is substantial and increasing due both to male migration and to the increased need for skilled and unskilled labour which results from economic expansion.

In Aden women are found in large numbers in the various ministries, but mostly in low positions, as clerks and secretaries. However the higher echelons of the administration are almost entirely staffed by men, shifting the real test to the next decade when an increasing number of qualified and experienced women will be available. Male prejudice is visible in the case of the few women senior executives whose promotion has not been welcomed by their male colleagues, often leading to groundless hostile personal rumours. It is only through professionalism on the part of women and determined official efforts to promote equality of opportunity that such ingrained prejudice will be defeated in the long run. Women have already made an impact in the judiciary, where there are a number of women lawyers and a woman judge. This is particularly important as it means that women can bring their legal problems to them and expect a more sympathetic approach than they would get from male lawyers.

Women's participation in agriculture is not new: they have always participated in the work and certain tasks are known as women's work, though in practice they often perform others, either with men or replacing them in the fields. Their role may have increased as a consequence of male emigration from agricultural districts in the highlands in the first half of this Century. With many men away women simply had to take up additional tasks except when remittances were high enough to allow the hiring of male workers. This increased work load was not accompanied by increased responsibility as the departing men always left a male representative in the village who would be responsible for decisions which were traditionally taken by the male head of the household; these decisions ranged from cropping patterns, times of planting, and expenditure to family matters.

Since independence little has changed for private agriculture in the mountainous areas, but elsewhere women have taken jobs in state farms, usually as casual labour at times when demand was high, such as harvesting. In spite of their important role in agriculture a major problem, particularly in cooperatives is that they are not considered to be heads of households and they are therefore kept in a subordinate position when negotiating with officials. This is likely to become a greater problem as reforms in the cooperative sector take hold.

A few women have demanded and obtained training in the use of agricultural machinery. Though this is still exceptional it has served as an important example. The Ministry of Agriculture's mechanical departments have been training women for some

time and it is hoped that there will soon be significant numbers of women engineers; in 1981–82 the College of Agriculture of Aden University had 91 women students.

In other productive fields women's role varies: in fishing it is almost non-existent as women hardly ever go out to sea, but in processing and packing they form almost the entire production line staff of the two fish canning factories. Many are involved in building and other industries, mainly in unskilled or semi-skilled work.¹⁰ It is traditional for women to participate in construction of their houses. Women employed in factories and building are among the lowest paid, and have the worst jobs with the lowest status: and those who have these jobs are often of *akhdam* origin, Somali immigrants or their children. Higher status families do not allow their daughters to take up such jobs although attitudes towards work are changing and some jobs have become acceptable for girls. These are, unsurprisingly, teaching at all levels and medicine, while nursing and other paramedical positions are gradually becoming more respectable. Women office workers are increasingly numerous, particularly clerks and secretaries mainly in Aden where they occupy the overwhelming majority of these posts. Aden society has long been more liberal and traditions against women's work were weaker than in the smaller towns; in this respect women in Aden have benefited from the town's heterogeneity and impersonality. However, as I have mentioned above, the promotion of substantial numbers of women to positions of higher responsibility has yet to take place and it is only likely in future if women fight for themselves and are successful in reducing the prejudices which still prevail.

Women in smaller towns find it very difficult to work outside the home. Even when prejudice has been overcome and they have been able to achieve a reasonable educational standard, this does not mean that their male relatives will allow them to do paid work. Getting any education beyond the elementary is in itself a struggle against family pressures which start as soon as the girl reaches puberty, with all kinds of excuses to prevent her from continuing her school career, even when high quality facilities are available (as in the case of Shihr). Even when all these obstacles have been overcome and a young woman has obtained a secondary school certificate or even a degree, that is no guarantee that she will be able to practise the profession she has trained for. In traditional families, particularly those of high status going out to work is often considered dishonourable. Only exceptionally strong-minded young women can resist these pressures, though the state's legislation may help them confront their families. Change is slow and such a process cannot be forced but only encouraged to develop, while the example of those who manage to get work and who do it well can help their sisters. Despite legislation conditions are worse for women in smaller towns than in Aden or the rural areas, at least for freedom of self-expression. In the rural areas women are too essential for farming and looking after family and house for the men to restrict

¹⁰ A sociological survey of 120 women factory workers was carried out in 1977 and its results published in M. Molyneux, *State Policies and the position of women workers in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 1967–77*, ILO 1982. She also discusses 'how the combination of Islam and socialism affects the position of women' (p. v).

them much and their economic role is too visible to be ignored while Adeni society has been far more liberal due to the cosmopolitan origins of people and the absence of long-standing unifying traditions.

There is a clear correlation between the type of work women do and their social origin, something which the régime has not yet tackled. Traditionally high status women, when they work, are in high status occupations, while factory work and building are low status occupations.

The most important legislation concerning women is the 1974 Family Law which provides legal support for equal relations within the household and resistance to family pressures to subordinate women to men. The tone is clear from the outset: '[The law] organises family relations in a manner which provides creative opportunities and revolutionary relations of equality which will lead to increased production, development and initiative.'¹¹

Given the Yemeni historical background and the role of marriage in Muslim countries, its definition of marriage is revolutionary: 'Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman, equal in rights and responsibilities, made on the basis of mutual understanding and respect with the aim of creating a cohesive family which is the cornerstone of society.'¹² The law sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 for men and 16 for women, and forbids marriage between partners where the age difference is more than 20 years unless the woman is over 35. It limits the brideprice to a maximum of YD 100 and allocates equal economic responsibility within the household: 'both husband and wife shall share in bearing the costs of their married life and where one party is unable to do so, the other party shall be responsible for maintenance and the costs of married life.'¹³

The Law prohibits unilateral divorce, allowing both men and women to petition for divorce on the same grounds and giving women the added right to sue for divorce if the husband takes a second wife. The conditions under which a second wife may be taken at all are severely restricted to cases where the first wife has been proved to be sterile, or is suffering from an incurable disease, and only after written permission from a court.¹⁴

Along with the Tunisian Family Code, this Law is the most progressive to be found in any Arab or any other Muslim state. Legislation alone cannot change the position of women, but its importance should not be underestimated, as it gives women the possibility to challenge traditional family restrictions on their freedom and therefore affects their status considerably. Some cases have come to court with considerable impact on the lives of others. This has proved that the existence of the law and threat of its use can help to change social attitudes.

¹¹ *PDYFamily Law, 1974*, London 1978, p. 29.

¹² *op cit* p. 30.

¹³ *op cit* p. 32.

¹⁴ *op cit* art. 11 p. 31.

The Law is not always strictly applied, sometimes because facts are difficult to prove: for example the clauses concerning the age of marriage are difficult to enforce when civil registration is unreliable. Similarly the bridewealth paid is almost always way above the legal maximum of YD 100, a sum which both women and men regard as a devaluation of the bride. In areas of recent emigration, bridewealth can reach levels comparable to those prevailing in the YAR: in 1984 in Shihr, for example, it was reported to be between YD 2,500 and YD 3,000. But other aspects of this Law are strictly implemented and in recent years efforts have been concentrated on preventing second marriages.

Equality in the household is not easy to achieve as even middle class Western women know to their cost. Very few men in the West take half the burden of domestic and childcare chores, and it would be unreasonable to expect a comparable performance from a recently traditionalist society, despite its socialist aims. The division of labour in the home in Eastern European socialist states appears to be even worse for women than in the West. There may be a few Yemeni men who 'help' their wives in traditional female activities in the home, but equal sharing is still a dream for most women. Their main hopes of a lightened burden rest in the expansion of kindergartens, whose hours of opening may be extended to allow mothers to work on a full-time basis without having to make alternative child-care arrangements. Childcare, incidentally, is one of the few activities in which men have traditionally been involved and mothers can expect to be relieved of the presence of children for a few hours a week while fathers take them out to pleasure gardens, the beach or elsewhere. Similarly it is traditional for men to do the shopping, and this also relieves mothers, though modernisation in this respect may mean that women now also have to do this task.

It is also important to make distinction between traditional pressures on women to conform and cultural distinctions. Marriage is the norm in Yemen for both men and women, and remaining single is not a sign of happy independence for either sex in a culture where being alone and unattached makes one an object of pity, or at best curiosity. Yemenis see themselves as individuals only insofar as they are part of a wider body, a family at least, and in the past a tribal or other larger social group. Individual self-assertion is acceptable only within social norms accepted by the group. In this respect being married is a basic matter of status expected and desired by all adult men and women, giving both partners greater freedom from their families of birth. The extended family still plays an important role ideologically and often young couples live with relatives partly because of the housing shortage in Aden, and in large extended family houses in the countryside.

Women in Aden itself have clearly seen major changes in their lives now that most girls go to school and many young women are studying at university or working in factories and offices. Many now wear European-style clothing when at work or social gatherings though the *chador* is always worn over the very revealing traditional *dera*, a voile dress worn in the lowlands where the weather is permanently hot.

In the countryside, by contrast, the change in women's position has been far slower. The main instrument of progress are the branches of the General Union of Yemeni Women which, as we have seen, is nationally responsible for promoting their interests as defined by the Constitution.

‘[It] shall work for the widest participation of Yemeni women in the economic, social and political life, the structuring of the new life and the raising of their educational, cultural, vocational and technical standard. It shall struggle vigorously for the purpose of affirming and protecting the rights guaranteed to women by the Constitution and the laws on the basis of parity with men.’¹⁵

The Women's Union plays an important role, not only in educating and training women, but also in educating men and women on women's issues, but it cannot in any way be compared to the Western European women's movements whose perspectives on feminism are in the realm of fantasy for Yemeni women. The Union's primary role is one of education in most fields relevant to women; they run literacy classes, which incorporate health education, nutrition, hygiene, and basic principles of healthy childcare. To improve women's economic position in some places vocational training classes have been opened for secretarial skills, sewing and embroidery which are very popular, and even for mechanical skills. The Union's overall effort is to expand women's perspectives beyond the domestic sphere.

In a broader sense the Union, through the activities of its members, tries to set an example showing that women can participate fully and equally in society. Politically, particularly in smaller towns and villages they are actively engaged in debate to promote the equality of women and to fight male prejudice and they occasionally intervene in specific cases. For example, when a family tries to marry off a girl against her will, the Union may intervene on her behalf and try to prevent the marriage, or if an attempt is made to arrange a marriage forbidden by the Family Law, the Union will take action to ensure that the Law is enforced. Similarly if a girl wants to continue her schooling but meets with opposition from her family, members of the Union may try persuasion to make her continued education possible. Such actions can gradually change people's expectations and attitudes to women as well as have an immediate positive impact for those involved.

Politics, in particular, is one area where women's participation is little more than symbolic. Women have for the first time the right to vote which was denied them under the British. In the first, nominated, Supreme People's Council there were five women, while in the SPC elected in 1978 there were six, but this does not indicate an increase in women's influence. The President of the GUYW is a member both of the Central Committee of the YSP and of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council, but these positions are offshoots of her role in the Union, rather than recognition of her personal

¹⁵ *PDRY Constitution*, 1978, art. 67.

political abilities. As we have seen, the number of women in the Central Committee actually decreased in 1980. Although prejudice is slow and difficult to overcome, it is also true that the current male leaders of the country give little indication that they consider the question of women's equality a top priority.

Culture

Yemenis have confidence in their own identity as Yemenis. This is largely a result of the specific features of Yemeni culture, which is clearly distinguishable from the mainstream of Arab culture and is not derived from vague ideas of Arab identity. It is on this base of Yemeni culture that the régime has been trying to promote a consciousness-raising 'progressive' culture.

Qat¹⁶ chewing is the most famous part of Yemeni culture and the main focus of social life particularly for men. On weekend afternoons, men gather in sitting rooms where they chew, drink *qishr* (a hot drink made from coffee husks, cardamon, other spices and sugar) or cola, make music or listen to it, read poetry, and talk about any subject ranging from the trivial to the most important. They are sessions where issues are discussed or occasions for joking and relaxing. Qat chewing is an opportunity for friends to get together, often the same group regularly, and these social meeting groups appear to me to be the basic unit of social solidarity as they bring together work colleagues, family members and people from the same part of the country, as well as political associates or old school friends. Members will intervene on each others' behalf in trying to solve administrative and other problems and will help each other when necessary. Those who do not chew, and women, are excluded from this main social network of the country.

While qat chewing is a form of conspicuous consumption for men, attitudes to women chewing vary; in some areas it is accepted but in others women who chew are regarded with less respect than those who do not.

Many criticisms have been made of qat chewing, mainly on health and economic grounds. While the health effects of this drug have not been clearly established it is blamed for all kinds of evils and praised for its qualities by consumers, it is clear that the economic features of chewing are important. The problems range from cost of

¹⁶ Qat (*catha edulis*) is a mild narcotic, widely consumed in Yemen and Somalia, Djibouti and Ethiopia on the other side of the Red Sea. It grows in the form of shrubs and the young soft leaves are chewed and retained in the mouth between cheek and teeth for a number of hours to achieve a mild 'high'. Debate concerning its health hazards rages among experts who are divided as to whether it is harmful or not. Its effect on the economy is also under debate, though the accepted view is that it causes heavy loss of productivity as men sit and chew for many hours at a time, (nowadays in the Y AR for example, often daily for 3 to 4 hours), removing them from the productive sector. Qat grows well under similar conditions to coffee and its local high cash value means that it often replaces coffee which could be exported.

consumption to the use of land.¹⁷ Qat chewing is a very expensive habit, average quality qat cost about YD 5 in 1984 for a good day's chew for one person and to this must be added the cost of soft drinks and alcohol. As the basic salary of a factory worker is about YD 35, chewing can create serious problems for poorer families who may have to go without necessities to allow the father to chew. Another major argument against qat is that it reduces working efficiency, that while chewing for endless afternoons men are not working, although many chewers say that qat helps them work and writers claim that it helps writing, particularly at night thanks to its effect as a stimulant. Finally as qat grows best in the areas where coffee can be cultivated, it is blamed for displacing a crop which could be sold for foreign exchange.

The régime has made considerable efforts to control and reduce qat consumption, essentially through legislation. The 1977 Qat Law makes different provisions according to circumstances. In Aden and the lowlands of the Lahej, Abyan and Shabwa governorates, consumption is restricted to Thursday afternoons, Fridays and public holidays. In the qat growing areas there are no restrictions and they would be impossible to enforce, while in Hadramaut and Mahra, which are not traditionally qat chewing cultures, it is forbidden. This Law appears to be well observed, and qat has disappeared from the markets when its consumption is not allowed. The fact that it must be consumed very fresh has made control easier.

Heavy penalties have been imposed on those found chewing when it is prohibited. In 1981 for example there were well-publicised cases of people sent to prison for up to three years for chewing qat on weekdays. However there are certainly some who attempt to conserve it and chew during the week, although stale qat is pretty foul. The asphaltting of the road to Kirsh has brought the area where daily qat consumption is allowed within reach of Aden for those whose determination to chew is great enough. Just over two hours' drive away from Aden people can purchase and chew qat legally any day if they have a car, and can afford the time, petrol and qat.

Another recent measure has been a law in 1981 preventing the expansion of qat growing to areas where it was not previously grown, and to prevent some of the qat fields being replanted with the shrub. This law follows a similar earlier one which clearly failed. Although statistics are not available it appears that in recent years qat growers have, if not expanded, at least retained their qat areas despite the law; this is largely because qat growing is by far the most profitable cash crop and takes place entirely in the private sector. It is also a major source of income for the state through taxes which form a substantial proportion of its consumer price.

A complete ban on qat could not be enforced; an attempt to do this was made by the British in Aden in the 1950s and resulted simply in an instant boom in Dar Sa'ad which was then on the other side of the Colony border (about 5 km from Shaykh Othman)

¹⁷ Whether coffee and other useful crops are uprooted to be replaced by the high-returns of qat is one of the questions under debate in the Y AR. For a view challenging accepted wisdom on qat see S. Weir, *Consuming leaves, Qat and Social Change in Yemen*, British Museum Publications, London 1985.

which became a fashionable resort as everyone with any money at all started up a little qat chewing café or built a country house to chew qat. Current restrictions on qat do have a significant effect in reducing its consumption. It remains the favourite Yemeni pastime and is enjoyed by most men including those in the highest leadership as well as the poor. Should it be proved to be really dangerous it is possible that stronger measures against it might be taken. But it seems to be less of a threat to health than alcohol whose consumption has risen considerably in recent years and although still modest (about 20 million bottles of beer a year), it is easy to foresee a fairly serious alcohol problem in coming years.

Qat chewing sessions are occasions for other aspects of Yemeni culture, poetry and music in particular. With its long tradition, poetry has remained a particularly important cultural phenomenon in Yemen. It has long been a means of introducing new ideas, particularly political ones, and since early in the Century poets have played a major role in spreading nationalist and progressive ideas throughout Yemen. Some of the main nationalist personalities in the country have also been famous poets. Tribal poets have transmitted the history of feuds and other tribal events through their poems, major archives in an oral culture. These traditions have been maintained and continue to flourish. Modern technology, in this respect, helps to spread poetry further through cassettes and the publication of poems.

Poetry and literature are fields in which the unity of Yemeni culture can be seen in practice. Indeed, the only unified association is the Yemeni Writers' Union. Its founders deliberately insisted on a single union as they believed that only through united mass and popular organisations could the country's political unity eventually be achieved. The Union meets regularly, alternately in Sana'a and Aden and its influence is far greater than that of comparable institutions in the West reflecting the greater authority of intellectuals, although some of its demands, such as its insistence on free speech, are sometimes unpalatable to the authorities.

Live Yemeni music also flourishes in social gatherings and the modern technology of cassettes allows it to spread widely, creating contact between musicians and audience throughout the country, with recordings made at informal gatherings and distributed in both parts of the homeland. Although young people claim to like western pop music, this is not so widespread, and local imitations are of such low standard that they do not seriously compete with Yemeni music which is very varied and has an increasing number of practitioners. Similarly folk dancing is alive and well in the villages at traditional celebrations though officially-sponsored troupes have suffered from the intrusion of 'choreography' and uniforms. On television they have become part of official culture.

While qat and its associated activities show the strength of Yemeni culture and give no indication of being replaced by foreign imported habits, other cultural features are more threatened, clothing in particular. Men increasingly wear western clothes for work and this had led to a change in the manufacture of *futas*-, these are now used for going out in the evenings or holidays, and the ordinary working *futa* is less frequently worn. *Futas* continue to be manufactured, though they suffer from competition from

foreign mass manufacture, home-made artisanal futas maintain their position as status clothing, and are consequently increasingly expensive. Women's clothing uses mainly imported materials, be it printed voile for the traditional *dera* of the lowlands or ready-made western style clothing. In the highlands imported cloth is also used and sewn into traditional women's styles as most traditionally home-produced cloth has disappeared, found only today in antique shops for tourists and museums. Traditional weaves are worn almost exclusively by older women in the countryside, and carpet weaving now has to be taught in community development centres.

Even traditional jewellery has greatly declined. This is in part a result of the emigration of the Jews in the late 1940s as they had previously been responsible for most of the jewellery manufacture. Since then other silversmiths have learnt the trade though their work is far less delicate and is found now mainly in Hadramaut; the wearing of silver has almost disappeared, only a few *bedu* women still wear it, and silver is now only sought by foreign visitors. Gold by contrast is very popular and is a means for women to display their wealth. While some gold is worked locally, much of the jewellery is imported.

This unfortunate trend away from home-manufacture is compensated by a profound awareness of the value of the national heritage. Ordinary people sometimes discover ancient sites or find significant archaeological objects and the immediate reaction is often to build a local museum with voluntary labour to exhibit the discoveries. Archaeology and museums are the preserve of the Yemeni Centre for Cultural Research, Archaeology and Museums, which manages and organises these museums and finds.

Apart from general archaeological and historical museums in Aden, Mukalla, Seiyun, Zinjibar, Dhali' and Bayhan, there are ethnographic and military museums in Aden, and a Museum of the Revolution in Habilain, near the Radfan area where the armed struggle started in October 1963. These museums, although they are small, are interesting and should get more attention than they do, for school children rarely come on conducted tours with their schools as they do in many countries. The outstanding museum is in my view, the Museum of Customs in Seiyun. Started at the personal initiative of the curator in his home, the Museum is now located in the former Palace of the Kathiri Sultan, and includes examples of traditional handicrafts, agricultural tools, and all the necessities of traditional life.

Archaeological research is limited drastically by the lack of funds available. Although Democratic Yemen is situated on territory which has an interesting and largely unexplored pre-Islamic history, few sites have been identified, and even fewer studied. Of course, in a country so devoid of resources and expertise, such work cannot be allocated resources as a priority, and foreign cooperation has been used to develop the field. Cooperation with the French government has since 1976 produced yearly digs at Shabwa,¹⁸ the capital of the ancient Hadramaut Kingdom, and in 1981 an agreement was reached with Soviet archaeologists for exploration in Hadramaut governorate. Ar-

¹⁸ Some preliminary results of this research have been published in *le Wadi Hadramaut: Prospections*

chaeologists are being trained on the job and abroad thanks to scholarships, mainly to France. Some of the results of digs during the colonial period and since independence can be seen in the museums, as well as in a number of exhibitions held recently in Aden and Paris.

A major UNESCO-assisted project of preservation and restoration of Shibam and the historic sites in Wadi Hadramaut is starting in the 1980s aimed at retaining this city of 500 year old mud-brick skyscrapers as a living and active city.

The Centre is also responsible for a number of cultural centres in smaller towns around the country: these are used for film shows, music and folk dancing, plays from touring companies, either Yemeni or sometimes foreign usually from Palestine or Lebanon, political meetings on national occasions and other community activities; most centres have small libraries.

The régime's commitment to promoting culture takes many forms, such as folk music and folk dancing and particularly the preservation of the national heritage. The written word is increasingly important; although by 1980 the literacy rate was only about 40% this has considerably improved with the major literacy campaign mounted in 1984. To sustain literacy among those who have acquired it, it is important to make reading materials relevant and interesting and in this respect it is only in the mid-1980s that the country has a publishing house which produces substantial numbers of books for the general reader. The Hamadani Publishing House was officially formed in 1982 as an organisation separate from the 14th October Company for Printing and Publishing and has since then been very active although by 1984 it had still not taken charge of its new enlarged premises with modern printing equipment. In spite of this it already has an impressive record in publishing Yemeni poetry and fiction and translations of foreign fiction and nonfiction works on the country; these are sold cheaply and should become readily available even in the more remote parts of the country. Bookshops are few and far between and mainly in the towns. There are small libraries in many places, but distribution of printed material is still a major problem.

The press is government-controlled and there is only one daily, *14th October*. Among the weeklies the most important is *al Thawry* the Party's paper and others are specialised publications such as those for sports, trade unions, women. The political press, while largely representing official opinion on internal affairs attempts to have a reasonably broad coverage of foreign affairs concentrating on the matters of greatest interest to the Yemeni public, particularly Palestine and Arab issues, followed by Third World problems, and it takes a clearly socialist line. In 1984 certain new trends emerged including serious criticisms of administrative inadequacies in certain specific institutions and letter pages, allowing more readers' Comments and more open criticism of official action.

In a culture where the spoken word has been the traditional means of mass communication and where radio and television penetrate the remote regions with greater ease than newspapers, it is clear that the press cannot play a major role. By contrast

almost every home, including the poorest has a radio-cassette recorder, while most have access to a television either in a village café or at home even in remote places.

Television is particularly popular, and a major medium of Yemen's perception of the outside world. It is now increasingly widespread as the Aden transmission system expands to cover the whole country; in many places it is also possible to receive Sana'a and in the east some transmissions from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Oman. I am unable to comment on the latter, not having seen them, but in the capital both Sana'a and Aden programmes are clearly seen. An increasing number of people have television sets, either bought locally or brought back by migrant workers. In most houses sets are switched on from opening till closing time, the only form of audience choice lying in the changeover from Sana'a to Aden; this seems to take place in favour of serials, sports and films at the expense of news and educational programmes. In remote areas where there is no electricity supply, television sets are sometimes operated off car batteries.

Programmes on both stations are dominated by bad Egyptian serials or films made either in Cairo or Dubai. These are very popular, although the authorities, in Aden at least, would rightly consider them to be anti-socialist and not educational in any way. They usually retail the story of some extremely wealthy Egyptian bourgeois family, living in luxurious villas furnished in the most lavish style and travelling to and from their equally luxurious offices in gas-guzzling sports cars and limousines. The men wear expensive suits while the women's dress varies in its degree of décolleté. The plots, such as they are, usually concern frustrated romance or minor office intrigue of corruption or personal competition. Their Western equivalents are *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. They are unreservedly escapist and bear no relationship to Yemeni living conditions. What has always amazed me is why they are so popular. What can these ridiculous stories tell a rural Yemeni woman who spends two hours a day collecting water, and the rest of her waking hours cooking, cleaning and bringing up many children, as well as possibly also working in the fields or holding an office job? For her evening entertainment she seems happy to watch ladies of leisure with numerous servants gossip over silver tea sets with their friends in shaded gardens by the swimming pool.

Other offerings on Aden TV include educational programmes covering a wide range of topics from health and literacy, the family, the army and police, literature and art to rural and industrial development, while Sana'a offers vast quantities of religious debate. Interviews on PDRY TV are often ponderous but there has been a marked improvement in the 1980s with more lively and open questioning of policies and criticism. News programmes on both channels are similar to those elsewhere in the Arab world, regardless of politics, and specialise in airport protocol scenes and announcements of who met whom in whose office where matters of mutual interest were discussed in a friendly atmosphere. The occasional locally produced drama on Sana'ani and Adeni television can be a refreshing change, often being both entertaining and educational.

by J. F. Breton, L. Badre, R. Audouin, J. Seigne, n.d. Yemeni Centre for Culture and Archaeological Research, Aden.

While Egyptian soap forms the bulk of the diet, other imports from the Arab world are of higher standard but far less frequently broadcast: they include good serials from Syria and Kuwait and some outstanding imported children's programmes including the Kuwaiti *Iftaha ya simsim* an arabised version of the successful American *Sesame Street* which is far more interesting and informative than the original and plays a major educational role. Adeni television also has regular showings of very old British series left behind in 1967 and newer French and East European films, which vary in quality from the excellent to the abysmal just as they do in other countries.

While television sets are increasingly widespread in the 1980s, in the 1970s the national medium of communication was radio. This is still very important and its programmes include more audience participation in the form of letters, while in the early 1980s phone-in programmes have been introduced. In practice however only the few who have telephones, and those are mostly in Aden, can participate in discussions of various topical subjects including the administrative problems of the country with representatives of the ministries responsible. In 1984 for example there was a programme in which families and their emigrant relatives could communicate, while musical requests have always been a feature of Aden radio. Most of the music played is popular Yemeni music, which is developing unhindered and is in great demand, apparently not suffering from competition from foreign imports.

Forms which are less traditionally Yemeni are more sensitive to the influence of foreign advisers. This is particularly true for theatre and the plastic arts. Officially-sponsored theatre troupes operate on an amateur basis and few of their productions have a genuinely Yemeni atmosphere. Plots often focus on a basic story of good socialists struggling against colonialism and imperialism in an imitation Yemeni context: scenes such as live versions of an Eastern European statue of the revolutionary hero brandishing a flag and held up by a human pyramid of struggling workers look particularly crass on a Yemeni stage.

Similarly paintings showing large wheat fields decorated by a realistic combine-harvester with a vaguely Yemeni traditional house in the background compete with equally social-realist pictures of the leaders of the revolution with a background of happy people or portraits of Marx and Lenin. Most schoolchildren who are encouraged to produce similar imaginative work often do, though sometimes art of a far higher standard is found, probably if the teacher is both talented and has escaped 'training': on a visit to a primary school in Mukalla in 1980 I saw some outstanding drawings and paintings of scenes of daily life and of the surrounding landscape.

The high point of official art can be seen in the Tomb to the Unknown Soldier which has replaced the simple and aesthetic Martyrs' Garden for the laying of wreaths by officials on national occasions. This was completed in 1982 as a gift from the USSR to the people of Yemen and was designed in a grandiose style suitable to the vast expanses of empty avenues of Eastern European cities. In the enclosed space of the Crescent in Tawahi, surrounded by modern buildings and occupying a former sports field, it is totally out of place. The symbolic statue of a mother holding a falling soldier

has not a single Yemeni feature. While it was being built, at a time of cement shortage, Aden was rife with suggestions for better uses for the enormous amounts of cement it gobbled up.

The Urban-Rural divide

The gap between urban and rural areas in Democratic Yemen has its origin in the colonial period. The towns of the countryside filled the usual functions of markets and political centres for the local political units and did not present a dramatic distinction from the rural environment. But the development of Aden under direct colonial control created a vast gap between it and the rest of the country.

Aden had a population of about 600 in 1839 when the British invaded, grew rapidly to 140,000 in the mid-1950s and was 240,000 in 1973 and 274,000 by 1978. The dramatic increase in population was due to Aden's international role, and in the early days, the British imported many Indians to staff their bureaucracy and Somalis for the labouring jobs. In the twentieth Century, many Yemenis came to Aden from North Yemen as well as from the rural areas in the Protectorates to work in the port and in services as well as for the various commercial companies which were set up in the town. Aden, as a Colony while the rest of the area was a mere Protectorate, got almost all of the money spent by Britain and obtained an infrastructure of modern housing, with electricity and water networks, as well as roads and telecommunications. All these features have made it a focus of attraction for the rest of the country, particularly after independence when it became the capital and therefore the place where all administrative decisions were taken. Aden's image is that of a modern city which is a better place to live than the smaller towns, despite its atrocious colonial architecture which compares very unfavourably with that of other towns like Mukalla or Seiyun. This is partly because many Yemenis equate modern with Western with beautiful. For rural people the facilities, the city's administrative role, and work opportunities all combine to encourage steady immigration.

The push factors out of the rural areas are different but complementary forces. Many parts are totally isolated due to the country's large size (333,000 square kilometres) and small population of about 2 million. The national density is 5 inhabitants per sq km, but this includes a range from 56 in Aden to 1 in the Mahra governorate, with an average rural density of 4 per sq km. There are now about 300,000 people in Aden, 50,000 in Mukalla, and about 45,000 in the three main towns of Wadi Hadramaut, altogether an estimated 650,000 urban, leaving barely 1.35 million in the rest of the country, mostly dispersed in the smaller towns and villages in the agricultural areas. The nomads constitute about 10% of the population and live in the semi-desert areas. A look at the map goes a long way to demonstrate the isolation of many parts: the most isolated is Mahra governorate, the largest in area but smallest in population, with 70,000 inhabitants; its capital al Ghayda has only about 2,000 people. While the

new road from Mukalla to Sayhut eased land communications, there is still no paved road reaching the easternmost part of the country, though it is planned. Al Ghayda's easiest link to the rest of the country remains the twice-weekly air service of a plane with about 50 seats capacity, and a new airport is under construction.

Al Ghayda has electricity for only a few hours a day from a small generator, and most national institutions have ignored the governorate in their planning for many years. For example the Fruit and Vegetable Marketing, Fish Marketing and Meat Marketing Corporations do not operate there. It remains an area of considerable poverty and high emigration; apart from fishing the main economic activities have been nomadic herding and a little cultivation. Its situation however is being gradually alleviated. In 1984 the opening of the Nishtun project has assisted the exploitation of its fishing grounds, rich in high-value lobsters, cuttlefish and other fish, and to export them and produce a substantial income for the people of the area. This new complex provides the governorate with a small commercial port which can be used to export fish and also to import necessities such as fuel oil for electricity production, groceries and fresh vegetables. The complex also has small workshops for the repair of boats and other equipment, a fuel depot, constant electricity and refrigeration, and it is linked by a 60 km paved road to al Ghayda.

While certainly the poorest area in a poor country, the Mahra governorate is not the only isolated region. All places more than a few miles distant from the main road network of the country are equally remote. In 1984 this network included the Aden-Mukalla-Shihr road, Aden-Kirsh towards the Y AR, and Mukalla-Seiyun, with another offshoot of the Aden-Mukalla road being built from Naqaba to Nisab in Shabwa governorate. Remote places are without resources or services. Except in Aden, Mukalla and most of Wadi Hadramaut, there is no permanent supply of electricity; only the more privileged towns have electricity daily for 5 to 6 hours, which is insufficient to run fridges and freezers. Hospitals and health centres are difficult to reach for those who live in outlying hamlets or are nomads; there is no telephone link in most small towns, except for the few which have just internal lines in the town, with either very difficult or non-existent access to the governorate capital, or even to Aden. In 1980 only 2% of the rural population had access to electricity and 5% to piped water. The difficulty of access makes the distribution of imports and locally-produced commodities very unreliable. Many goods are damaged in transit across deserts, rocky passes, bumpy tracks and the almost invariable heat.

Although regular airlinks have been established with the main towns, Bayhan, Ataq, Mukayras, Seiyun, Mukalla and al Ghayda, these are not always reliable as weather conditions often make flying unsafe. Not surprisingly emigration is traditional from such places where bare survival requires extraordinary effort and endurance. Cultivation is likely to be ruined by drought or flood, fishing is also unreliable for small fishermen, and alternative economic activity is nonexistent. Emigration rates and destinations have varied through history, though in the 1980s the recession in the Gulf has reduced it considerably and development policies at home make return more attractive.

The present urban-rural gap has no easy solutions: there is nothing in the rural areas to attract productive investment as this is dependent on availability of water, electricity, and communications for raw materials and distribution of the final product. The unit cost of anything produced in these places is exorbitant. Because of this most new productive units are planned and installed in and around the capital and Mukalla which is the second city of the country with adequate port facilities by 1985. This concentration further encourages immigration to these towns and depopulation of the countryside.

To counter this trend would require a massive outlay of capital to establish communications networks and install facilities for the rural areas, turning them into desirable and pleasant places to live in rather than the very tough ones they are at present, making it more attractive to stay home than to leave and send money back to more or less abandoned families. But the investment would be very high with no hope of economic return, and neither the government nor foreign development agencies are willing or able to invest in such projects.

Meanwhile the vicious circle continues, the big towns get bigger with more facilities, consumer goods and opportunities to work, while the poorer and more isolated places remain isolated, lose their population to emigration, and the few resources they have go to waste due to lack of labour power to look after them.

Such differences between the rural and urban areas and the increasing gap between their standards of living is compensated by the remittance of money by emigrants, and the arrival of consumer goods has alleviated some of the difficulties of rural life, though many of these commodities are not very useful without electricity. It is government policy to improve services in the rural areas and, according to the constitution the rural-urban gap is to be eliminated: 'The state shall work for raising the standard of the underdeveloped areas with the aim of gradually obliterating the differences in the standard of living between the various parts of the republic'¹⁹

Improved communications have to some extent helped the development of rural areas, and increased their supply of necessities and luxuries. This has extended to a higher intensity of human contact between regions and hence the development of friendships and even marriages, assisting in the development of a national identity and diminishing tribal and local ties. Such communications however also encourage rural emigration.

Another positive factor for the rural regions has been the development of regional planning which has created jobs locally, but usually in towns rather than villages. This makes services more accessible, or less inaccessible, to the rural population. The Local People's Councils and People's Defence Committees have been important as links between the centre and the periphery, even to the extent of enriching the cultural and material life of the rural areas.

¹⁹ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 28.

Although, as we have seen, efforts are being made to improve rural conditions the dispersal of so much of the rural population in remote areas makes this difficult and expensive to achieve. Even the more developed areas like Wadi Hadramaut and the smaller towns have considerable emigration abroad and to Aden which acts as the magnet of the big city with all facilities. In spite of themselves the leaders subscribe to this and have been influenced by themselves living in Aden and becoming intimate with its problems, while the problems of the remote rural areas languish as 'files to be dealt with'. Prospects for abolishing the urban-rural gap other than by depopulation of the countryside are remote.

Emigration

Emigration has been a feature of Yemeni life for centuries and is mentioned as early as the first Century AD in the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, and later in the *Arabian Nights*. The country's position on ancient trade routes may have combined with its meagre natural resources to develop this tradition.

In recent history an important flow has been that of the Hadramis in the 19th Century to Indonesia, where they engaged in trade and some became extremely wealthy. Some *sada* merchants in Indonesia used their wealth to achieve political domination in Wadi Hadramaut, but most were content with building schools, mosques and the luxurious mud-brick palaces which can be found throughout the Wadi but are mainly concentrated in Tarim and Seiyun, those in Tarim showing a marked Indonesian influence in their architecture and decoration. By the end of the Century there were about 20,000 Hadramis in Indonesia.

The other main area of immigration in the 19th Century was India and specifically Hyderabad to which Hadramis of Yafi'i origin and Yafi'is from Yafi' migrated and took up mainly military occupations. They were soon in control of the armed forces, obtaining posts at all ranks, and through this some became wealthy and powerful, the most outstanding example being the Qu'ayti family who eventually with British assistance used their wealth and power to become the sultans of Mukalla after a power struggle in the mid-19th Century.

Emigration in the twentieth Century has taken new forms appropriate to the transformation of the world economy. Hadrami migration to the East continued in the early decades on a reduced basis, but came to a complete halt with the Second World War, though a number of the migrants remained in India and Indonesia after independence while retaining certain links with their families at home. The significance of Hadrami emigration can be seen in the estimates for remittances, which in 1939 were £900,000, rising to £2 million in 1963, a small rise given the rate of inflation in this period.²⁰

²⁰ A. S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification op cit* p. 5.

With colonialism Aden became a focus for emigration as men came down from the hinterland, from what is now the PDRY and the Y AR, mainly from areas like the Hujjiriyah, Yafi' and Rada'. Some stayed and worked in Aden but many took jobs as sailors and eventually settled throughout the world in ports moving later to heavy industry areas, notably in Britain where there are communities of Yemenis in Cardiff, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bradford and Sheffield. Other communities were formed in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States, mainly in Detroit and the Californian agricultural areas.

In the 1960s and 1970s western industrialized countries imposed restrictions on immigration while expansion in the Arab Peninsula oil states attracted the bulk of migration. Migration to the Gulf states and to the East coast of Saudi Arabia had been taking place on a small scale for decades, either to the oil fields or to join the British-controlled armed forces of the Trucial States. Particularly in the 1970s the oil boom vastly expanded this migration from all parts of Yemen, North and South, and included people from villages which had not previously been dependent on emigration. Despite the harsh conditions for immigrant workers the Peninsula presents certain advantages for Yemenis: common language and closeness to home, as well as the high incomes which make it possible to finance substantial expenditure on houses and consumer goods as well as some potentially incomegenerating investment such as cars or workshops.

Immediately after independence there was enormous unemployment in the country and particularly in Aden, so many workers returned to their villages but more went abroad in search of work. At that time, as we have seen, the Adeni bourgeoisie and the traditional leadership of the sultanates emigrated for political reasons.

Emigration in those years was not hindered by the régime but during the 1970s, as more people were absorbed into the administration, education and the new productive industrial sector, a shortage of labour developed. The industrial sector also needed experienced staff. These factors combined to bring about a ban on emigration which was issued in 1974 to keep needed labour and skills in the country. Although it is likely that in its early years this Law was aimed primarily at keeping trained and educated cadres rather than unskilled labour, it shows that at that time the régime considered the need to keep the labour force at home more important than remittances to fill the balance of payments deficit.

Since then new emigration has been illegal and without statistics it is difficult to estimate how many emigrants there are: even the definition of an emigrant is problematic as there are people of Yemeni origin born in many other places: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia among others. Some don't even speak Arabic but are given Yemeni passports and welcomed back if they choose to return to Democratic Yemen. Temporary migrants are usually classified as Yemeni in their host country without distinction between citizens of the Y AR and PDRY and in any case these statistics are usually unreliable. Besides in the late 1970s when emigration was severely restricted, many Yemenis from the Southern part of the homeland crossed the border

unofficially and then obtained Y AR passports for further travel. One estimate for 1980 was that the country had 210,000 emigrants; in 1982 the World Bank estimated that a third of able-bodied men aged 15 to 34 or 18% of the total Yemeni workforce was abroad. The trend was, however, towards a return home at that time due to increased difficulty in finding work abroad and economic expansion at home. The fall in real oil prices in the early 1980s continues to encourage this trend.

This drain of labour is particularly serious as the regime's development policies require labour at all levels of skill and some of the younger migrants are men who have completed their studies at the expense of the government and then go and use these skills elsewhere. For example out of a class of final year secondary school students I taught in 1977–1978, four had emigrated illegally by 1982. Shortages of labour are rapidly becoming serious, hindering the productivity of industry and agriculture.

The situation is reaching absurdity when we see the PDRY, one of the poorest countries in the Third World, exporting labour to the Gulf states and simultaneously importing labour to complete its own development projects. In 1984, according to the Ministry of Labour there were 7,000 foreign workers in Democratic Yemen, ranging from a few professionals to Chinese and Indian construction workers on major construction projects. Professionals are gradually being replaced by Yemenis as more people qualify from Aden University or return from scholarships abroad. Only Yemeni teachers now staff Unity schools, and the Medical school's output of doctors will soon enable the Ministry of Health to employ Arabic-speaking Yemeni doctors instead of Indians and Pakistanis who cannot communicate with the patients.

The unbalanced distribution of the labour force, with overstaffing in the administration and shortages in industry and construction may appear to be confusing when one thinks that abroad Yemenis work mainly in the latter fields but it can be explained socially. Because physical labouring jobs required in industry and construction have both low status and low pay in the PDRY itself, workers avoid them since they expose themselves to public shame without financial compensation. On the other hand, performing such tasks in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Peninsula is *far* less dishonourable since everyone keeps very quiet about it while knowing that people are doing such work. The migrant worker earns substantial wages which he sends home as remittances and which allow him to buy impressive gifts when he comes back for holidays. Holiday time is the one good time for the migrant worker who can be generous. He can enjoy endless qat parties and socialise as he has gained added status for his family and himself by building a house, filling it with appliances and generally bringing back good news. He has a few weeks or at most a few months to enjoy life, look after his fields and spend his earnings before he goes back to hideously overcrowded wooden barracks and a twelve hour working day to start over again earning enough money for another visit a year or two later.

The régime is now in an ambiguous position. On the one hand it wants its workers at home, the inexperienced ones to learn and the former migrants to use their skills and to train others. On the other hand there is an enormous trade deficit which is

only reduced substantially by the remittances of the migrant workers. The dilemma has been reflected in policy. New emigration is still prohibited and at various times other laws have been adopted imposing heavy penalties on people caught crossing the border illegally. But in practice few are caught and an amnesty has been given to all those who migrated before 1979 and these people now have the same privileges as earlier emigrants. They can visit their families, import goods for their personal use at special concessionary customs rates, they benefit from favourable deposit rates in the bank, and can get a passport and other immigration facilities. It is also difficult for the régime to be tough on the migration issue given that any Yemeni is officially allowed to visit the other part of the homeland without formality.

As mentioned before, a Congress of Emigrants was held in Aden in 1980. This had the aim of integrating migrants into Yemeni society, making them feel the importance of their contribution to national development. The Congress discussed the new Investment Law aimed at encouraging migrants to invest in productive enterprises at home in either the private or mixed sectors. The new Law, issued in December 1981, reinforced the liberal concessions enacted in the 1969 Investment Law.

The Congress also discussed the establishment of a Free Trade Zone in Aden port for manufactured exports and the setting up of industrial estates in Mansura and Hadramaut. These measures as well as relaxation of travel and customs formalities aim at making migrants feel more welcome and less harassed by bureaucratic difficulties, encouraging them to send more money home and to assist the economy; getting the support of the Yemeni community abroad seems to take priority over trying to get them to come home and work.

In summary, the government's dilemma is reflected in its ambiguous practice. The late 1970s have shown a more positive attitude towards emigration, with the statement in the new constitution that: 'The state shall patronize the Yemeni citizens residing abroad and strengthen their relations with the homeland.'²¹

This goes some way towards recognizing their vital role in the economy, helping to pay for imports of both consumer and capital goods without which the country would be unable to sustain its present standard of living nor service its foreign debt. Another positive feature of emigration is that it allows the rural population to have a standard of living far higher than could otherwise be achieved in such a poor countryside where life would otherwise depend entirely on spate irrigation. The negative direct effects of emigration are also important and include the longterm absence of men, resulting in a tougher life for women in the families of emigrants. Nationally the shortage of labour has considerable impact on development possibilities.

The indirect effects are much broader and affect the régime's policies politically, socially and economically. The proximity of labour-attracting rich oil-exporting countries distorts the economies of their poor labour-exporting neighbours, particularly the YAR and the PDRY. The régime in Aden is sometimes compelled to implement policies

²¹ *PDRY Constitution 1978* art. 11.

in contradiction with its aims. For example, qualified cadres like doctors, engineers and other technicians can command what are by Yemeni standards very high salaries and material advantages, such as lower taxed cars, etc ... simply to keep them in the country. If they do not get the status and working conditions they expect they can easily get very highly paid jobs in the Peninsula, wasting the investment the government has made in educating them, as well as depriving the country of their necessary skills. Compared with other countries, these people are not particularly privileged. Indeed, they make sacrifices to work at home, but they are far better off than many others.

Another indirect effect of the remittances sent by workers abroad is the large number of people who could work but who are not attracted by the low salaries and prefer to stay at home and live on remittances rather than take a job. In 1976 for example, out of a labour power potential of 812,000 people 396,000 were unemployed but not seeking jobs; the bulk of these people are adult men and women who for social reasons do not want to work; many women do not work because enough income is generated by their husbands and relatives abroad to support them without needing jobs, while many men prefer to be idle rather than take jobs which they consider to be of low status. The ideological impact of emigration has been discussed in the introduction.

Although it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which the country's social structure has changed since independence it is clear that deep transformation has taken place and that the foundations for new social formations have been laid. Already tribal relations had been undermined during the colonial period, followed by the disintegration of the traditional leadership at independence and shortly afterwards. The new regime's social policies have assisted this process: the broadening of education, social legislation and the activities of the Party and the mass organisations are contributing to the gradual development of new social structures. The strength of Yemeni culture can be gauged by its ability to survive despite the strong competition presented by Western and Arab media and the undermining ideological effect of emigration. It is successfully adapting to the more egalitarian society which is emerging.

A. S. Bura: 'Urban Élites and Colonialism: The Nationalist Elites of Aden and South Arabia', in *Middle East Studies* vol. 6 No. 2 May 1970.

PDRY *Bedouin Development Project: Socio-economic impact* by A. W. A. Salem, Aden, May 1983.

PDRY *A Reconnaissance survey of socio-economic conditions of the project area* by G. Farahat, Seiyun 1973.

Chapter Six: Social Policies and their Influence on Social Change

Despite its position as one of the poorest countries in the world the PDRY's provision of social services is impressive, particularly in their distribution which indicates a consistent effort to spread benefits to the remoter and less accessible rural areas, and not to limit them only to the capital and larger towns. Although there are some tendencies to give privileges to certain people, these are insignificant compared with the chasm seen in other Third World countries between the standard of living of the bourgeoisie and that of the majority of the population. In this chapter I will look at education, health, welfare and housing policies.

The bases for social policies are enshrined in the constitution which asserts that 'all citizens have the same right to education'¹, that 'medical care is the right of all citizens'² and that 'every citizen has the right to accommodation'³ while it also states that 'workers have the right to social security and to vocational safety and health'.⁴ The social sector has absorbed considerable development investment, with education expenditure at about 10% of total expenditure in most years since independence, and social services including health expenditure rising to 6% in 1980, being 4-5% in earlier years.

Before discussing these policies in detail, it is worth recalling some of the difficulties faced by the régime in trying to improve living conditions: they have a vast area and a very low population density. Many settlements are difficult of access, distant from cities with few communications, much of the land being semidesert or arid mountains with the population in small, isolated hamlets. In such a situation the per capita cost of creating basic services, be they in communications or in social services, is very high. This is regardless of whether staff can be found who are willing to live in rural conditions as the ideological pull of the 'modern city with all facilities' is very strong. In this context, even an enlightened policy involving the training of local people as teachers or health workers is likely to fail as, once trained they are likely to use their qualifications to achieve their ambitions to be city dwellers. To these difficulties must be added the overall shortage of staff. At independence the PDRY had hardly any

¹ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 40.

² *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 41.

³ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 42.

⁴ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 39.

teachers, doctors or experienced administrators, and those few who were qualified were Adenis, many of whom emigrated in the first years. Social services had to be built from scratch with very little money and in a difficult environment.

Education

In education the achievements of the régime are most outstanding. The budgetary allocation to education has risen from 14% in 1972–73 to almost 18% in 1982, giving an indication of the importance attached to it. In quantitative terms expansion since independence is particularly impressive, starting with a total school enrolment of 64,502 students in the last pre-independence year 1966–67, rising to over 270,000 in 1979–80, and in 1981–82, to 220,000 in the unity Schools alone. The increase in girls' education is even more spectacular, rising from 13,397 in 1966–67 to 86,496 in 1979–80 in all schools, and 64,000 in 1981–82 at the unity Schools level. In addition to this record, it is important to note that these figures exclude higher education, which was only introduced after independence, where enrolment was over 3,000 in 1979–80.

The structure of education during the colonial period is disguised by the figures for enrollment in 1966–67. During most of the colonial period, education was practically non-existent, being restricted mainly to traditional Islamic mosque schools. It was only in the 1930s that European-style schools were opened, including at first the School for the Sons of Chiefs whose main 'objectives were to be character training, physical training and literary education, in that order of importance'⁵ for the sons of recognized tribal leaders. Later other schools were opened in Aden and in Hadramaut, leaving the rest of the country as empty as ever of educational facilities. It was only after the Second World War, under pressure from Arab nationalism, that education was started on a more general scale in Aden Colony itself, and in the 1950s that the prestigious Aden College, a secondary school, was opened. Parallel with the development of government schools in Aden, where admission was restricted to citizens of Aden Colony, many Yemenis got together in benevolent societies to open schools for their children who would otherwise have received no schooling. In the late 1950s and the 1960s expansion was considerable, giving rise to the statistics mentioned above. The geographical distribution of educational facilities and their almost total absence in the Protectorates except for Hadramaut had a considerable influence and meant that after independence education had to be totally redefined and restructured: apart from the need for buildings in the countryside, the system had to be changed from the British system with teaching in English to one in Arabic adapted to the special needs of the country.

The government's aim is to provide basic education for every citizen and to meet the demand for technically qualified manpower for the public services and the modern

⁵ H. Ingrams *Arabia and the Isles op cit* p. 96 where further details of the school's ideology and organisation are given.

economic sector. It has committed itself to providing universal primary education by 1985 which, if achieved, will accomplish its first aim and ensure that all young people have some literacy and numeracy as well as a preparation for the adult world.

The other important objective is to fill the enormous gaps which currently exist in skills at all levels; this is to be achieved by increasing the number of vocational school and university graduates. By 1983, 37% of unity school graduates were expected to go to general secondary school, 20% to technical and vocational schools and the rest directly to the labour force. Efforts are also being made to reduce the disparities between the governorates and to make education more available in the rural areas, despite the high unit cost due to the low population density. It is also worth recording that education is free at all levels, textbooks are provided free of charge as well as transportation to and from school for those who live far away. Boarding is free for those who need it, while in higher education and vocational education all students get modest grants of YD 15 per month, enabling students from poorer families to study without being a burden on their families.

The political role of education is to create a new generation of Yemenis who are socially and politically aware members of society, and take their share of responsibility for building the country and are willing to devote their energies not just to self-improvement but also to the development of the country. The curriculum includes the study of the main political texts of the Party and also takes into consideration the specificity of the country, while not neglecting the outside world.

The new educational system, which is modelled on the structures existing in Eastern Europe, includes a first stage of 8 years, known in the PDRY as the 'Unity' school (and elsewhere in the socialist world as the 'unitary' system) followed by 4 years of secondary school. The principle behind this structure is that of 'polytechnic' education, meaning that practical work is supposed to be an integral part of the educational experience, raising the status of manual labour and reducing the ideological gap between the 'educated' who do not want to 'dirty' their hands and the mass of workers. This distinction is prevalent not only in the industrialised world, but is also very important in Third World countries where education is seen as a means to escape the countryside and its harsh work and replace it by a clean office job. This attitude to education, which is widespread even in the PDRY, is one of the explanations for the failure of vocational schools in many Third World countries. 'Polytechnic' education in the PDRY is aimed at preventing such a tendency, and goes alongside the creation of vocational schools for different fields (fisheries, industry, agriculture, etc). How successful this will be remains to be seen, as the new system has been introduced only recently and has only just reached the higher grades of the educational system in schools. It has been hindered by a number of obstacles including the limited number of teachers with the special training necessary, and in some cases the hostility of teachers who share the belief that their status should preserve them from having to do 'dirty' work.

Efforts have also been made to create new and adapted textbooks for the new system; some of these are of higher standard than others. Among the more impressive

are the history and geography books designed to be relevant to Yemeni students and which draw on the realities of life in the PDRY. In other fields ignorance of modern teaching methods has led to textbooks which are practically unusable, presenting a particularly serious problem for young and inexperienced teachers.

To sustain the remarkable expansion of education, a massive effort has been made in teacher training both in institutes and later with the development of Aden University which produces teachers for secondary schools. Teacher training colleges increased from 3 to 6 by 1980 with a student intake rising from 240 in 1966–67 to 1 200 in 1979–80; these institutes train teachers for the unity school, while those for higher levels study in the University. Starting with very few teachers, mostly untrained, the situation has improved rapidly thanks to the development of these institutes which take graduates from intermediate (and now the unity) level who then train for a further four years. University education for secondary school graduates provides either a four-year BA course or a two year teacher's diploma course. The latter is available in Aden, and in the University's branches in Lahej, Zinjibar and Mukalla. It has thus been possible to reduce to almost zero the number of foreign teachers in the school system. Staffing is now almost exclusively Yemeni, in marked contrast with many Arab states. In the YAR for example foreign mostly Egyptian teachers are everywhere, even in rural schools. They speak a different Arabic, bring foreign ideas and culture and are often arrogant to their students and host country; in the 1980s the Egyptian teachers in the YAR are reputed to be encouraging support for the Muslim Brotherhood. In Aden University, however, there is still a majority of foreign staff in most faculties, coming from a variety of countries, including many Indians who have to teach in English: this is a problem as few students are fluent in English.

The dramatic growth of education since independence has not taken place without problems; these are numerous and substantial and need to be examined for their implication for the future. The following comments do not in any way detract from the remarkable achievements. The major problem relates to the quality of education provided. Having expanded so rapidly, it is not surprising that quality has suffered. Many teachers started off untrained and unqualified, with only a little more knowledge than their students. Over the years, the development of training both for new teachers and in-service for those already practising the profession has improved the situation. However the ingrained attitude, prevalent throughout the Arab world, of teaching being nothing more than the transmission of knowledge which the student must learn by heart religiously and unquestioningly still has a strong following in the PDRY. Within this interpretation teachers are seen as the holders of all knowledge and can be neither questioned nor challenged. Not only does this prevent the development of initiative and original thinking in the students, but it can also lead to ridiculous situations when teachers make mistakes and students then go home and learn falsehoods by rote, in the hope of passing the exams at the end of the academic year.

Modelled as they are on the East European system, the new unity schools are unlikely to bring about any deep change in this approach as there is little opportunity for self-expression and self-development of the students.

Another difficulty has arisen from the attempts to implement the 'Plan' in education, which has led to a reluctance on the part of examiners to fail students, as this would bring about a lower implementation rate of the Plan. This has often meant that quite unsatisfactory students, including some who made no attempt to study, successfully passed their examinations by various means and were launched into the world of work as 'qualified'. The tradition of cheating in exams seems to be widespread in many countries and is by no means a Yemeni speciality. It has also meant that those who went on to further studies in Aden University or elsewhere, had an educational standard below that required, thus forcing the University to adapt to this situation and reduce its level of expectation from students. In recent years policy has changed in this respect: failure rates at school have increased and examination conditions been tightened.

Throughout the system, the drop-out rate is very high, 50% at primary and 66% at secondary level in the late 1970s. The reasons for this should be examined: in some cases, and for girls in particular this is likely to be due to family pressure, a problem which cannot be ignored. Since independence, the government's policy has been to make education available to all everywhere, including girls. A particularly impressive effort was made to encourage girls to be educated, despite a strongly traditionalist attitude from families particularly in the hinterland. As we have seen, this opposition has been difficult to counter and cannot be expected to vanish overnight whatever policies the government might decree. Progress has however been substantial: while total primary involvement in the first decade after independence rose by 15.3% annually, girls' enrolment increased by 21.5% annually in the same period; despite this by 1976-77 girls comprised only 35% of total enrolment. It is hoped to achieve 50% enrolment in the unity system by 1985 but this aim is, in my view, overoptimistic.

The government's policy of co-education at the unity level has both advantages and drawbacks. It is clearly a major step towards reducing the differences in the lives of boys and girls to encourage them to study the same things together; it also makes economic sense in a poor and vast country, particularly in the more remote rural areas with small populations. On the other hand more conservative families will be encouraged to keep their daughters at home under the pretext that the classes are mixed. Many girls who are allowed to go to co-educational schools in the early years of education are withdrawn by parents as soon as they approach puberty. For those girls who get there, secondary school presents problems: most are sexually segregated and therefore present no threat to the tradition of keeping the sexes apart. In the more traditional areas families are fearful that education will give girls ideas which undermine traditional roles and the expectations their families have of them. In some cases girls are not allowed by their families to go to secondary school because this would mean travelling to another town, even if it is close. I met girls in towns in

Hadramaut who had this problem. In other cases purely ideological factors prevail, as we saw concerning the girls secondary school in Shihr.

Adult education

With a rate of 60% in 1980, illiteracy has remained a major problem for the régime. A special department for the eradication of illiteracy was established in 1970 headed by a Deputy Minister of Education; excellent books have been specially designed with their content relevant to the lives of Yemeni peasant and fishing families. In 1979 there were 446 adult literacy centres with 44,000 participants. Over 70,000 people had graduated from literacy classes by 1980 and classes are graded from basic literacy to advanced courses to prepare mature students for the exams of unity and secondary school levels.

In many areas branches of the Women's Union have been holding literacy classes on a residential area basis, making it possible for women to learn near their homes. Based both on neighbourhoods on the workplace, the programmes should cover most of the population, except the nomads and smaller settlements where there is neither a literate person able to teach the others nor a teacher. The difficulty in achieving 100% literacy probably rests largely with the fact that older people find it particularly difficult to learn and at the same time feel the need for literacy less than the young who are increasingly being brought up in a world where familiarity with the printed word is a necessity of life.

However, the Law promulgated in 1973 was felt to be too weak to achieve the aim of universal literacy throughout the country and a new one was issued in 1980 making it compulsory for employers to provide literacy classes on work premises and tightening the regulations concerning the employment of illiterate people. But the main innovation of this Law was that a comprehensive national campaign was to be organized.

To overcome the slow pace of eradication of illiteracy since the new Law was issued in 1980, the department responsible prepared a national campaign which took place from July to December 1984. This has mobilized all the secondary school students, all the teachers of unity and secondary schools as well as higher education, and postponed the beginning of the 1984-5 academic year till January 1985. The objective was to achieve 100% literacy in the target group of 12 to 40 year old men and 12 to 35 year old women. Organized on a pyramidal structure, the school students formed the base, each student being responsible for teaching 7 illiterates; a unity school teacher was then responsible for five students or 35 illiterates, and each secondary school teachers for 7 unity school teachers.

Unlike earlier efforts which concentrated on classroom teaching, this one aimed at making illiterates feel more comfortable by not taking them into a strange environment; each person was taught where and when he/she wanted, and could get individual tuition at home at whatever time of day was personally convenient. While every effort

has been made to allow the staff to work near their homes so that they could continue living with their families and did not need to be fed and housed by strangers, this was not always possible as there were areas where the ratio of staff to student was inadequate. In these cases the student-teachers were brought from the nearest available area and looked after by the people in the community; women were taught by girls and men by boys. The Plan projected teaching 193,000 people. Of the 187,000 who studied 158,000 were successful in the final examination of the campaign.

Recognizing that illiteracy is encouraged by the unavailability of interesting materials and of further education, the department also operates and expands a long-term adult-education programme throughout the country and a better distribution of literature.

Health

1. Initial situation and problems

The health services situation at independence was similar to that of education: modern advanced facilities were available in the Aden area, lesser services in the Hadramaut and basic services in the capitals of some of the old sultanates. Altogether this amounted to very little: most of the qualified staff who worked in Aden were foreign, had been employed by the British and left before or at independence. Many of the Adeni British-educated doctors, disaffected by the socialization of medicine, departed to make their fortunes elsewhere in the Peninsula in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Thus at independence and in the following few years medical facilities were almost non-existent despite the régime's efforts. Results of the régime's health policies have only started to be visible in the late 1970s with marked improvements in the facilities available throughout the country.

The health of the population was bleak in the past and remains so in many respects. Infant mortality (for which statistics are not available for the late 1960s) was estimated by the World Bank to be 140 per thousand in 1980. The only existing field study carried out in 1982–83 found a rural infant mortality rate of about 90 per thousand and child mortality at 20 per thousand. This indicates a remarkable improvement over the World Bank estimates and is attributed mainly to improved social and sanitary conditions.⁶ The major diseases are diarrhoeal, protein-energy malnutrition, measles, whooping cough, pneumonia and in some areas malaria.

The high level of endemic disease and general bad health can be attributed to poor nutrition and to lack of public health facilities, most importantly the lack of pure drinking water, sewerage systems, and adequate garbage disposal. For those who are sick access to modern medicine is still difficult, although it has improved considerably.

⁶ B. Kristiansson, G. Bâgenholm, A. Nasher, *Growth and Health among pre-school children in PDRYemen* 1982–83, World Bank, Radda Barnen, WHO 1985.

Malnutrition can to a large extent be attributed to the gap which exists between average incomes and the cost of a basic nutritional food basket. Although it does not take into consideration home-produced foods, or total household income, a recent study⁷ established that a basic adequate diet for 3 adults and 3 children would cost YD 64 per month, while the median income of household fathers was worked out at YD 60 per month in urban and rural families alike, but only YD 50 in slums. Most families have more than one breadwinner and also produce some of their own food, particularly in rural areas, but in spite of this 40% of children were found to be suffering from malnutrition. Nutritional deficiencies are widespread among of all ages of the population: this is due in part to the lack of resources and particularly the unpredictability and low yields of rainfed agriculture. However, apart from such 'natural' causes, malnutrition can also in part be attributed to ignorance and to the diversion of cash income towards status consumer goods (which must include qat) rather than an improvement in basic family diet.

In the case of infants and children, an added danger is the developing fashion in bottle feeding and processed baby-foods. Although this problem is less serious than in the Yemen Arab Republic, it does exist in the PDRY for a number of reasons: first television advertising of these products on YAR TV is also seen by many in the PDRY and therefore creates demand for these goods, even when they are not available in the local market. Emigrant husbands also bring them back from the Gulf as symbols of 'modernity' equated with health in their minds. Finally although the products are not advertised in the PDRY and the plethora of competing brands cannot be seen, the basic products, powdered milk and baby foods are generally available in the stores and small shops even in the remotest parts of the country. The reasons which lead women in the YAR to adopt them are equally valid in the PDRY: firstly, the 'convenience' of dried milk which can be prepared in advance, put in a bottle and left with whoever is in charge of the baby. With bottled milk this can be anyone, often an elder brother or sister even if this child is only 5 years old her/himself, and this allows the mother to go out and work in the fields or elsewhere and continue her normal working day. The second reason is associated with the ideological connotations of these packaged foods which are linked with the modern advanced world in people's consciousness and therefore connected with 'progress'. Bottle feeding also fits into the traditional interpretation of a 'balanced diet'.

The reality is serious: powdered milk is mixed with contaminated water in dirty bottles and kept for long hours while the product itself deteriorates; it is often over-diluted. Moreover dried skim milk is not suitable for babies despite the pictures on the tins which are meant to mislead people, whatever manufacturers in the West may claim to the contrary. Even specially designed baby milks do not contain all the benefits of breastmilk and babies even when fed from clean bottles, with boiled water and

⁷ *ibid.*

properly diluted babymilk, will still not get as good a deal as those who are breastfed. The dangers of artificial milks on babies' health have been well demonstrated.⁸

Malnutrition among adults is also due to insufficient food, but again is aggravated by the increased availability of refined imported staples which are gradually replacing locally-grown grains, the latter having higher status and costing more. Imported foods include refined wheat flour used in bread-making, white rice and dried skim milk, discussed above in the context of infant nutrition. Pulses, which used to be a staple food, are becoming less important in the diet because they are 'low-status foods' while white imported wheatflour is replacing sorghum and barley in bread-making and imported rice (which is always refined) has long been a basic item of diet. An average adult's diet is therefore not particularly nutritious, or at least less so than it used to be in relation to total food intake as the shift takes place from unrefined to refined foods. A further aspect of negative food consumption is the advent of 'junk' foods on the markets: many people spend scarce financial resources on carbonated cold drinks whose nutritional value is practically nil, and a few imported sweets and processed foods like pop-corn. Soft drinks are also drunk with qat; qat consumption also negatively influences nutrition as it diverts cash away from food, while also reducing hunger.

Government policy on nutrition is not clear. Despite assertions concerning health programmes, soft drinks factories have been expanded and others are planned, while some efforts have been made to improve the availability of nutritious foods throughout the country. A milk and milk products plant has opened in Aden, producing cartons of fresh and UHT milk; the latter is distributed throughout the country and is available alongside soft drinks in village refrigerators. The plant also produces a high quality soft cheese and yogourt but these are available only to people who live within easy reach, effectively Aden and the more accessible parts of the Lahej and Abyan governorates.

Fish used to be consumed fresh on the coast and dried and salted for the interior. In recent years dried fish has become scarcer, but in the 1970s the Ministry of Fish Wealth built cold stores for fish in most towns throughout the country, in places as far apart as Dhali', Mukayras, Wadi Hadramaut and elsewhere. This means that fresh frozen fish is now regularly available in these places at government-regulated, and therefore reasonable, prices. Fish has become an important and nutritious part of the national diet with a per capita annual consumption of 20 kg. This compares favourably with the world consumption of 14 kg/year, while in the rest of the region consumption is as low as 4 kg/year. Meat marketed through the Meat Marketing Board is mainly imported, the Board sells to private retailers who sell at prices far lower than those of privately produced and slaughtered meat which is also available throughout the country. Prejudices in favour of expensive local meats will probably gradually be overcome by the availability of cheaper imported meat. The distribution of vegetables is still poor, largely due to production problems, (discussed in the chapter on agriculture)

⁸ Firebrace, J. *Infant Feeding in the Yemen Arab Republic* CIIR London 1981. D. Melrose *The Great Health Robbery: Babymilk and Medicines in Yemen*, Oxfam 1982.

but is improving for both seasonal and for imported vegetables. In the rural areas, a few families have garden plots producing some fresh vegetables when water is available.

2. Government health policies

These are embedded in the constitution which states that:

‘Medical care is the right of all citizens. The state shall guarantee this right through the spreading of free medical services throughout the republic and through its plans which shall aim towards the protection and improvement of the environment, the care for preventive medicine and vocational health and safety and the development of all types of hospitals, health institutions and people’s clinics.’⁹

A ministerial order of 1978 gives the guidelines for health planning: Top priority is to be given to preventive and social medicine ‘especially in the fields of control or eradication of endemic and communicable diseases and improvement of environmental health conditions’, with special emphasis on maternal and child services. Next comes ‘maximum coverage of the population especially in the rural areas with basic health services, primary health care’. Third is ‘integration between preventive and curative services’ followed by ‘consolidation of existing curative health care facilities to provide better services for the population and allow for some expansion of curative health care facilities in the less developed areas’. ‘Provision of training facilities at all levels of professional, technical and auxiliary health manpower’ is seen to be important and ‘outpatient services are considered to be the best approach for the medical care of the people. The polyclinic system is to be applied with due consideration to population density.’¹⁰

As these guidelines show, the health priorities of the government emphasise preventive measures and public health. The development of ‘modern’ medical facilities such as large hospitals is also envisaged. The current Development Plan projects the building of another modern hospital in the capital which already has a recently modernised major general hospital. However by 1984 no funding had been found for this project, largely because it is not expected to contribute to improved public health.

Medical policy appears to be two-pronged with on the one hand the expansion of medical services locally and centrally through the training of many doctors. The medical school of Aden University is run with Cuban assistance. Its policy is to train doctors in large numbers, thus removing medicine from its tradition as a privileged and high-status occupation restricted to the capital. On the other hand the WHO policies of primary health care also play an important role in the country. This is based on a combination of public health improvements (hygiene, supply of clean water,

⁹ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 41.

¹⁰ Radda Barnen, *Annual Report for 1978 for Work in the PDRY*, Stockholm 1978, pp. 1–2.

sewerage, pest control) and the widespread distribution of community-health guides with a minimal amount of formal medical training.¹¹ With many other countries, the PDRY subscribes to the WHO's project aimed at achieving 'health for all by the year 2000'. Within this framework they are projecting to establish a network of rural health guides responsible for prevention, immunisation and environmental health.

3. Developments in health since independence

While there were only 71 doctors in 1970, by 1980 there were 114 Yemeni and 74 foreign doctors working. This increase took place despite the emigration of many who rejected socialist policies in medicine, particularly after 1973 when private practice was abolished throughout the country. This measure was aimed at preventing the common practice of doctors being too busy to see patients in the hospitals and arranging to see them after hours in their private practices, ie at great cost to the patients.

The current Plan forecasts an increase of Yemeni doctors to 400 by 1985, an increase which should have a dramatic effect on the availability of medical treatment to people throughout the country. This would mean one doctor for every 4,000 inhabitants, when in 1982 there was one doctor for every 6,000 people and in 1970 there was only one doctor for every 10,000.

A continuing problem is the reluctance of most doctors to practise in the rural areas, as they consider leaving the capital and its modern hospitals an insult to their status. The pressures which can be put on doctors to move to the rural areas and to redefine their work in terms of public health are limited. Doctors have got used to seeing themselves as members of the élite in most countries in the world except in socialist countries. But in Third World countries doctors' attitudes are more often inspired by the West than the East and they want to work in modern facilities in advanced specialist medicine rather than cope with basic preventive medicine and endemic diseases. These require care and devotion but give little status to the treatment giver. The régime, despite its progressive objectives, is limited by its inability to force doctors to accept these objectives. Doctors in the PDRY are already a privileged group as they have good houses, obtain cars easily and have higher incomes than average. However any effort to bring them into line could bring about their mass emigration as they can get highly-paid positions in the oil-producing states of the Peninsula, resulting in an absolute loss for the PDRY.

The new locally-trained doctors may become a generation of more publicly-minded doctors. To reduce the urban-rural gap a number of measures have been taken to encourage doctors to practise in rural areas. New graduates have to spend two years there and those who originate from the hinterland must now by law return to practise

¹¹ The development of Primary Health Care is described in H. Segall and G. Williams 'Primary Health Care in Democratic Yemen: an evaluation of policy and commitment' in D. Morley, J. G. Rohde, G. Williams, *Practising Health for All*, OUP 1983

in their home areas. They are compensated for this remoteness from the city lights by special allowances, good accommodation, import licences for cars and the promise that they will have priority in scholarships to go and specialise abroad. This new policy was introduced in 1983 and it may be some time before its effectiveness can be evaluated. However as the total number of doctors from Aden University's medical school is increasing fast, improvements in medical services in rural areas should soon be visible; and as Yemenis completely replace non Arabic-speaking, mainly Indian doctors, life for patients should be a lot easier.

The number of beds available in hospitals, health centres and other medical units has risen from 1,278 in 1970 to 2,953 in 1980 and is projected to increase to 4,183 in 1985, representing an increase of over 41% during the Plan period. In 1982 there were also 38 mother and child health centres throughout the country providing ante- and post-natal care as well as family planning advice and supplies. In the towns there were 23 people's clinics in the Aden governorate and 15 in the Hadramaut governorate. Health centres are large with in-patient facilities and are usually staffed by at least one fully-qualified doctor; they are distributed throughout the country and their number is to increase from 17 in 1981 to 22 in 1985. Health units, some of which are mobile, are staffed by paramedical staff and numbered 300 in 1982 and by 1985 there should be 416. The number of nurses is to rise from 1,063 in 1981 to 2,524 in 1985, while other paramedical staff numbers are also expected to rise comparably.¹²

Training takes place in two main institutions: doctors are trained at the faculty of medicine of the University of Aden, in six-year courses. The first group graduated in 1982 and the number of graduates is expected to rise slowly to 100 annually while in the 1980s it is about 50. Other staff are trained at the Institute for Health Manpower Development (IHMD) which was founded in 1970 in Aden; since then it has opened branches in three other governorates. Between 1970 and 1978 1,434 students graduated from 14 different courses; the annual intake is about 450 students. The length of courses varies from a few months to three years, and qualifications offered are as nurses, medical assistants, laboratory technicians, dentists, community midwives and auxiliary health staff. All students of the Institute receive monthly grants as well as getting free education. Contributions to these grants and other expenses are borne mostly by the government but some outside assistance has been obtained from UNICEF, UNFPA, and the Swedish Save the Children Fund (which is the only nongovernmental aid organisation operating in the PDRY).

As we have seen above, training in medicine focuses on both the formation of doctors and of middle-level medical staff, though the doctor/support staff ratio is still highly unbalanced. The IHMD trains not only nurses and other staff for hospitals, but also medical assistants who after 3 years of training staff health units in the various regions and rural areas. This indicates a welcome commitment to provide rural medical services.

¹² PDRY Ministry of Planning, *Second Five Year Development Plan* (Arabic) 1981-85 Aden 1981 vol. 1 p. 95.

In this respect the PDRY, as I have mentioned, adopted the resolutions of the WHO's 1978 Alma Ata Conference. Discussions on the implementation of this programme started in the late 1970s. In the long term the intention is to transfer all responsibility for preventive medicine to this programme, but at the moment responsibility is dispersed among a number of institutions. In 1980–81 pilot PHC (Primary Health Care) projects were set up in three areas, two of them in Lahej governorate (Museimir and Tor al Baha) and one in Abyan (Batis) where educated people from the villages working in other activities were given a training course mainly in prevention, particularly sanitation and also in elementary diagnostic and curative medicine. These people then returned to their villages to promote what they had learnt and lead the improvement in public health facilities in their villages. In the pilot projects they are in one case working on a voluntary basis, in another they are paid a token amount, and in the third area the intention is to have a full-time paid health worker.

Health guides training is organised in three-month sessions, including two months of formal courses separated by one month of practical work in health units under the supervision of medical assistants. The Ministry expects to train 40 health guides a year in each governorate, and each health guide should serve a community of about 300 people. The main problem is that most of them are men, and have therefore limited access to women. Training of traditional birth attendants in hygiene, sanitation, nutrition and family planning will be essential if women are to benefit from primary health care.

Currently there are a number of preventive health programmes, including the Communicable Diseases Programme, and the Schistosomiasis Programme. The mother and child health centres are responsible for the vaccination of small children against TB, measles, whooping cough and polio. This project is undertaken under the auspices of the Expanded Programme for Immunisation run with the assistance of the World Health Organisation.

The supply of pure water for domestic use and the disposal of sewerage waters and other waste products are the problems of sanitation. The provision of clean water alone is insufficient to bring about a substantial improvement in health as it often leads to dramatically increased water usage and unless disposal of used waters is given as much priority as supply, situations can easily arise where ponds of stagnant used waters are created around villages where mosquitoes and other dangerous insects can breed, increasing rather than reducing the incidence of disease. Many villages have used their own initiative to equip themselves with piped water from their shallow wells, but in 1980 only 5% of the rural population had access to piped water, and little has yet been done to purify this water or to create drainage and sewerage systems. Simultaneously the increased consumption of canned and processed foods has created a substantial garbage-disposal problem. These problems threaten the constructive efforts to improve health as new diseases will replace the traditional ones.

Aden has an old water and sewerage system, both of which are being replaced in the 1980s and Mukalla and the surrounding area are also being provided with a new

system; in Wadi Hadramaut, systems are being designed and planned which will fit in with the conservation scheme for the area. These programmes are being implemented by the municipalities and the major problems which they face are due to increased use of water which threatens the structure of the mud-brick buildings in Wadi Hadramaut in particular, and also lowers the water table.

The importance of health education is recognised. There are health education programmes on the radio and television, usually connected or integrated into the 'family' or 'women's' programmes. Produced in Aden by urban people, they tend to be somewhat ill-adapted to the specific needs of rural people. Assumptions that people have tables in their houses and running water cannot be made of the rural areas or even, indeed, of urban families, many of whom live in a traditional lifestyle where imported Western tables and chairs have little place. All health programmes are careful to emphasise the importance of breastfeeding and the Ministry of Health is committed to its promotion. Health education is expected to develop under the direction of the Directorate of Health Education created in the early 1980s. Its aim is to create a nationwide community health education system, starting with the Lahej, Abyan and Hadramaut governorates. This will work through the mass organisations and health guides. The initial priorities are: measles, nutrition, infant diarrhoea, malaria, personal hygiene, drugs and alcohol, breastfeeding, mother and child care, TB, and family planning.

The final aspect of health policy which I shall briefly mention is that of medicines and their distribution. The disregard for human health displayed by pharmaceutical companies whose profit rates are commonly described as 'excessive' has been widely discussed¹³ and government control of medicine imports and their distribution is essential to compensate for the aggressive sales policies of the manufacturers. Drug imports are the responsibility of the National Drug Company which has an independently operating branch in the Hadramaut governorate. A doctor is in charge of the company and when possible it imports generic drugs rather than brand names. Distribution is through government and privately owned pharmacies and a prescription system is in operation, though it is still occasionally possible to obtain drugs without one. Medicines obtained from hospital or clinic dispensaries are free, while those obtained from pharmacies must be paid for; sometimes patients find that the medicines they have been prescribed are not all available from the clinic and have to be bought. The phenomenon of overprescribing common to many Third World countries also seems to be a feature of medical practice in the PDRY. This is a difficult problem as patients feel neglected if they are not given elaborate prescriptions and have a low opinion of doctors who do not prescribe in this way.

Since independence, medical services have claimed an average of 5.5% of the government's annual budget and this has enabled the expansion I have discussed. While there is a long way to go, the country's achievements are significant: a reasonably well-functioning, free health service available for all, without the corruption to be found

¹³ See D. Melrose *Bitter Pills, Medicines and the Third World Poor*, Oxfam 1982.

in neighbouring countries; a medical staff which at all levels is increasingly trained in the country; and a programme of improving services throughout, including the more remote area. The health service does extend at least minimally to the remote rural areas with some attention given to public and preventive health. Despite this, estimated life expectancy at birth was 45 for men and 48 for women in 1982, compared to 43 and 45 in the YAR and 38 and 40 in Somalia. Infant and child mortality rates have improved significantly. The dual approach of producing both a traditionally qualified conventional medical staff and providing primary health care with local health guides on short basic training courses may help to improve health standards rapidly and make *Health for all by the year 2000* more than a fantasy.

Housing

In the countryside most housing is privately owned and occupied by extended families; the rise in remittances in the 1970s allowed many younger men to build houses for their nuclear families. In the early years after independence and particularly following the 1972 Housing Law which nationalised houses not occupied by their owners and reduced rents, people were reluctant to build as they thought their houses would be taken over by the state. It took a number of years before confidence was restored and the building of private houses took off again in the areas of heavy emigration. This boom was particularly noticeable in Wadi Hadramaut in the late 1970s when houses started sprouting up all over the place. Their cost rose sharply as most of this work was carried out by private sector builders and the shortage of labour brought costs close to those of the neighbouring countries. Visits to Seiyun in 1979 showed that the building boom was beginning, and by 1982 the number of new houses had risen dramatically. Similarly a visit to Shihr, on the coast, in 1980, gave the impression of a sleepy and declining town, particularly as the old centre was in ruins. Returning in 1984 I found the centre still in ruins, but the outskirts doubled in size with row upon row of modern stone-built houses which had been built with the remittances of emigrants. In 1975 private investment in housing was YD 2.7 million, rising to YD 14 million in 1980, ie over 10% of estimated remittances.

The countryside has many large houses designed for extended families and in some areas like Wadi Hadramaut there is now network electricity. In more remote areas groups of houses are supplied by privately-owned small generators operating from dusk till midnight.

In Aden and Mukalla, the situation is very different and a serious housing shortage exists, particularly in the capital. The departure of the British in 1967 meant the vacation of substantial amounts of high quality housing, ranging from the large and pleasant villas of Khormaksar to the apartment blocks of Ma'alla. All these were soon occupied by Yemenis but this was not enough to empty the shanty towns perched on the steep slopes of the Aden volcano.

Despite a constitutional commitment to providing housing for all¹⁴, in its early years the regime built very little, and by 1977 only 500 new units of public housing had been built throughout the country. The current Development Plan, in contrast with earlier neglect, allocates 18% of total investment expenditure to housing and since the early 1980s there have been substantial changes to the skyline of Aden with large numbers of projects undertaken: they include 600 flats in Mansura financed by Kuwait, another 600 flats in Mansura financed by the UAE, 1,000 flats in Shaykh Othman financed by Libya, 500 flats in Khormaksar financed by Algeria and another 600 flats in Khormaksar and Mansura which are locally financed. After the disastrous floods of 1982 new foreign assistance commitments were made towards housing.

The current plan for the period up to 1985 includes the building of 760 housing units in Lahej, 670 in Abyan, 90 in Shabwa and 140 in Mahra, as well as another 4,000 units whose location had not been chosen at the time of writing. This last figure appears optimistic, given previous experience and resources. Most of these new housing units are to be apartments or pre-fabricated villas, and some of the building materials are manufactured locally in a recently opened plant. Other units are fully imported. The main problem with these housing projects is that they are designed on the Western model of small units with kitchen, bathroom, sitting room and two bedrooms. Such units are designed for small nuclear families, which are uncommon in Yemeni society where the two-child family is not yet seen as desirable except by a few highly educated couples. Most families still want a substantial number of children and even if they live in nuclear units without brothers, sisters, parents, or other relatives, they form households which will inevitably overcrowd these units, whose size has been determined by financial constraints.

Another substantial problem with this housing is that it is built with materials not designed to keep out the heat of the tropical sun, air-conditioning is essential and this increases the demand for expensive power. Traditional construction was discarded in Aden by the British but it has not been given the opportunity to revive in public-sector housing, while private houses continue the tradition with stone and cement.

Most modern architecture suffers from the problem found in many Arab countries, namely the unfortunate idea that air-conditioned glass, steel, and concrete structures, or pre-fabricated plasterboard are signs of progress and modernity and better than local architecture. Aden consists mainly of boring concrete colonial buildings. New buildings follow the same principles: there are few Yemeni architects and they are not asked to design prestige buildings such as new hotels, the School for Scientific Socialism or the new ministries, but are relegated to private construction and the occasional public building which will be kept out of public sight, such as the new Mental Hospital which, from outside, is the most pleasingly designed modern building I've seen in the city.

New housing projects are determined by cost and speed of construction and have very little in the way of traditional features: as the housing shortage increases and

¹⁴ *PDRY Constitution* 1978 art. 42.

the need for new housing is being more strongly felt, pre-fabricated buildings are becoming the standard and they again follow straightforward European models with no concession to local conditions beyond gaps for the installation of airconditioning units. Outside the main towns there is little public sector housing thus limiting the number of eyesores, but cement and prefabrication are unfortunately considered to reflect the national aim of development, and displayed to passers-by.

In the countryside however, traditional building methods persist, with the erection of tall and small mud-brick or stone houses, which are beautiful to look at and far more suited to local conditions as the houses remain cool in summer and warm in winter without the need for air-conditioning or fans, thanks to the thick, insulating mud walls; they also include storage space and are large enough for entire extended families to live comfortably. However some of the builders now mix cement with mud brick and the long-term effect of this on the quality of the building is unclear. In Mukalla, new houses are still built according to the traditional system with large stones and do not look out of place.

Conditions of tenure of accommodation vary. Immediately after independence there was private ownership and letting of apartments. The 1972 Housing Law effectively nationalised all housing that was not owner-occupied, leaving a substantial owner-occupier sector and transforming all other housing, including that left behind by the British, into public sector tenancies. At the same time a rent reduction of 25% was decreed in line with the other reductions in income which took place in the same year. Rents have remained remarkably cheap ever since for Yemenis. The Ministry of Housing has a policy of determining rents according to the tenancies: foreign embassies and UN personnel pay very high rents, expatriates on lower salaries lower rents, and Yemenis very low rents. The low rents policy has meant that people can live within their official incomes, although these are low. They have also meant, unfortunately, that funds for maintenance have been low and consequently many houses have fallen into disrepair. As a result in 1982, 12,000 properties whose rent was YD 1.0 or less per month were given to the residents. Higher-value properties are maintained by the Ministry, but often residents participate to speed things up. For example someone may obtain the necessary materials for a major repair, like rebuilding a roof, from the Ministry and employ private builders to do the job with the Ministry's materials. The new housing projects are all being undertaken by the public sector, either by the Ministry of Housing or by other Ministries or Corporations to provide their employees with accommodation. Most of these are to be sold off to the occupants on long-term low interest loans, after payment of an initial deposit. This policy is popular as most people wish to own their own houses and the prices prevailing in these projects are substantially below those quoted by the private sector. Privately constructed houses are generally of a better design and materials and much larger, but on a square footage rate the public sector houses are remarkably cheap to buy and very heavily subsidised by the government; repayments are based on the purchaser's salary not the price of the house. Allocation of dwellings is therefore a hotly debated public issue as demand is

far above supply. In the allocation of new housing units the government gives priority to workers dependent on their public sector salaries in preference to those who have access to remittances.

Recent increases in investment in public sector housing have all taken place in urban areas, and show the new concern for the town. Although as we have seen private housing construction is considerable in rural areas, this new policy represents a higher investment of public funds in the towns, depriving the countryside.

Other Social Policies

While it does not provide the range of social security services available in the West, the régime has, despite the scarcity of funds, achieved something. There is a system of old age pensions based on income and years of work. A Social Insurance law issued in 1982 sets out conditions for the payment of sickness and disablement pensions, as well as long-term pensions for families of people who die or are incapacitated in work accidents. It is also important to note that no state provisions exist for those outside the public sector, except for *ad hoc* contributions in the cooperatives.

There are no unemployment or child benefits and in this respect the country still relies on traditional systems, mainly the continuing role of the extended family which operates as an informal security network helping its poorer as well as its younger and older members, although there are a few homes for old people.

There are schools, assistance and training schemes for blind and other disabled people, but there are no official regular payments for destitute people. These are supported on an *ad hoc* basis from funds in the local authorities, which must be applied for on a single payment basis. There are no statistics on the number of destitutes but in a society where emigration and remittances are widespread and where family solidarity is still very strong, they are not many. If the number of beggars is accepted as an indication of the level of poverty then compared to most other Third World countries, this problem is insignificant.

Altogether the régime's social achievements are substantial as its resources have been severely restricted. Provision of educational and health services have reached a comparatively high standard for a Third World country and the effort to create an adequate infrastructure has been impressive. The main question which arises concerns the level of investment in these services when the country has such a high rate of emigration, in effect a subsidy by the government to the labour importing countries who receive healthy trained workers for whom they do not have to provide social services, either before or after working life. The régime's planning for future labour power is mainly oriented towards the country's own needs, and appears to take no account of emigration which is expected to decline in coming years.

Chapter Seven: The Economy

As we have seen, the economic base of the colonial period collapsed in 1967: port activities fell dramatically after the closure of the Suez Canal, and the services economy evaporated with the departure of the British. Just as in many other ex-colonies the régime which took over at independence found an unbalanced country with a high level of infrastructure in the capital but practically nothing in the rural areas. But unlike most former colonies, the PDRY is a fundamentally poor state lacking the advantages that many other Third World countries have. It has no natural resources such as minerals to export, its agricultural land forms 0.3% of the total territory and cannot be used to develop export-oriented cash crops. Its small population hinders development in a number of ways: the internal market is small making industrial development expensive, the low population density and isolation of the rural population mean that distribution of goods is expensive, and there is a shortage of labour of all kinds. A further constraint is the harsh climate. In this situation the problems of economic development are not those usually associated with the Third World, namely the exploitation of the country's natural resources and labour by foreign transnational companies. Nor are these companies fighting to gain control of the country's market. This lack of potential may be one reason why there has been little pressure from transnational capitalist companies to prevent the emergence of a socialist régime, as they had nothing to lose so the challenge to the régime in its early years was purely political.

These must be remembered when evaluating both the regime's stated economic policies and its actual achievements. The devastating floods of March 1982 were a cruel reminder that whatever the government may plan, development remains at the mercy of an unfavourable and unpredictable climate. The cycle of drought and flood not only affects agriculture but can also destroy development work already completed. Indeed the floods of 1982 following those of 1981 wrecked much that had been painfully built in the previous decade. Government estimates of material losses amounted to YD 325 million.¹ This represents the total amounts invested in the Three Year Development Plan, the First Five Year Development Plan and the first year of the Second Five Year Development Plan. In effect this cancelled the achievements of the previous decade.

¹ BBC SWB ME 6999 8 April 1982.

Economic Policy

It is my purpose to argue that the fundamental economic philosophy of the régime has not changed and can be summarised in the following statement:

‘The process of change includes the transformation of a service economy into a national economy based on industrial and agricultural production organised according to the principles of scientific planning in order to build a material and technical base to allow the renaissance of our country and our people, so that they can put an end to exploitation and underdevelopment and, consequently, to unemployment and poverty.’²

Such aims ignore the constraints to development which raise serious doubts as to the possibility of achieving these objectives. In real life economic policy has been concerned with the immediate problems of the country and its language has also gradually developed to become more pragmatic. The following pages outline the policies as stated in the YSP’s political statements, the problems that have been encountered in their implementation and the resulting adjustments and accommodations which have followed. While remaining within a fundamentally socialist framework economic policies have changed as a result of their relative success and of the changes in political tendencies which have successively dominated Yemeni politics.

Early revolutionary enthusiasm for radical measures against any forces remotely associated with the bourgeoisie or with oppression was reflected in the economic policies of the 4th Congress of the NLF, held in March 1968. This was the occasion when the ‘secondary’ leadership established its ascendancy over the ‘reactionary’ traditional leadership associated with tribal forces, the army and the ‘bourgeoisie’. Although they were not to achieve power till June 1969, the policies decided by this Congress directed development until the 5th Congress in 1972, and cover the period of the most radical reforms. The Congress called for the liberation of the Yemeni economy from foreign capitalism and exploitation, and ‘deems necessary ... the transformation of the services economy into a productive industrial economy, and the construction of a public sector able to play the leading and directing role in economic life.’³ At this point, the régime had nothing favourable to say about any form of bourgeoisie, making a lengthy attack against the petty bourgeoisie in general and petty bourgeois régimes in particular, stating that: ‘by nature and by necessity, the petty bourgeoisie is closer to the positions of the exploiting classes and liable to ally with them if it finds itself in a crisis in which its class interests and privileges are threatened by the revolutionary movement of the workers, soldiers and poor peasants ..’⁴

It was as a result of this thinking that radical policies were implemented such as the Agrarian Reform Law and the nationalisation of foreign assets. Some reservations

² *Programme of the UPONF*, London 1977 p. 22.

³ Resolutions of Fourth Congress of NLF in *Orient 1969* p. 32.

⁴ *op cit* p. 40.

were visible with the enactment of legislation which was supposed to encourage local capitalists to invest: the 1969 Investment Law failed in its purpose as the remaining bourgeoisie continued to pack and move out.

These early development policies failed for a number of reasons. The new republic's planners suffered from lack of data. There was no body of reliable statistics on the country's economy and society, and no socio-economic studies had been carried out by the NLF prior to independence, which might have been used to prepare needed projects or reforms. Politically the new rulers of the country had been deeply affected by the Arab defeat of 1967 and were influenced by the Arab left's analysis of it. The MAN left explained this defeat as the necessary result of a petty bourgeois revolution such as had taken place in Egypt under Nasser. According to this, the petty bourgeoisie was incapable of bringing about socialism and was as counter-revolutionary as the bourgeoisie. The acceptance of this argument by the left wing of the NLF led it to attack the petty bourgeoisie and to ignore the positive role it might play in development, particularly in the poverty which prevailed. Those who suffered and whose support was alienated included many small shopkeepers and taxi drivers. In the late 1970s and early 1980s regaining the support of this class has been a very slow and laborious process.

The Fifth Congress in 1972 had little to add on the economic front; most emphasis was placed on agriculture. Generally it:

‘approved the leading role of the working class and its peasant allies enabling them to increase political and productive economic action in the field of agriculture and industry for implementation of the development plan’ and ‘stressed the necessity of developing the public sector and increasing the cadres of the revolution and increasing their effectiveness so that the public sector plays a leading and guiding role for the national economy in the country.’⁵

For the next few years the earlier policies were continued, concentrating on the internal reorganisation of the different economic sectors and on largely unsuccessful efforts to attract foreign aid.

This meant the creation of cooperatives and state farms in agriculture, of cooperatives and a national fleet in fisheries, public and mixed sector manufacturing and the transfer of most trade to the public and cooperative sectors, while a national infrastructure was being built as part of the public sector.

The revolutionary fervour which still prevailed was seen in action a few months after the Congress when in August 1972 the Seven Days of organised uprisings took place in Aden under the leadership of the political militants; this brought about a further

⁵ *Fifth General Congress of the National Front Political Organisation of the PDRY*. Aden, 1972, duplicated p. 11.

reduction in salaries in the public sector and the nationalisation of non owner-occupied housing.

1. Early Planning

The first Development Plan, due to run for the three years 1971/72 to 73/74 had a very modest original investment target of YD 40 million. Due to the regime's inability to raise funding and the desertion of the Adeni bourgeoisie with its capital, only 77% of planned investment was achieved. Total expenditure was YD 25 million including 16.7% for industry, 30.7% for agriculture and fisheries, 37.9% for communications and 10% for the social sector — mainly health and education. This was not really a plan, it was more an investment programme, as it ignored major planning issues such as macroeconomic outlook, labour force policies or any long-term projections. This was due to the weakness of the planning sector.

In 1975, during the second year of the First Five Year Plan, the Unification Congress brought together the progressive political organisations. Its Political Report summarises the economic achievements since independence:

‘The revolution’s economic measures were aimed at transforming the class structure of the society, at destroying the forces of exploitation and oppression in town and country and at putting an end to the barriers which block the development of productive forces in this country.

Nationalisation of most foreign monopoly companies, the implementation of the Agricultural Reform Law achieved by peasant uprisings, as well as the implementation of the Housing Law and other measures directed against the alliance of foreign capitalist forces and comprador, feudal, and semi-feudal forces, put an end to these exploitative class forces and raised in their place the alliance of workers, peasants and petit bourgeois. The measures are also aimed at changing old relations of production and setting up new ones, based on the public sector, the cooperative sector and the mixed sector.

Our programme confirms that the theoretical basis of our revolution and our national régime is scientific socialism, on which all our policies are based. Thus our economic philosophy is based not on private but on public ownership represented by the public sector managed by our national democratic régime. But public ownership via the public sector does not prevent any other forms of ownership.

The characteristics of the laws governing the national democratic stage of the revolution confirm, as is defined in our programme, that other forms

of ownership must coexist with public ownership, namely the cooperative sector, the mixed sector and the private sector.’⁶

This quotation also shows how Abdul Fattah Ismail translated local Yemeni conditions into the language of orthodox socialism and ignored the realities of Yemeni social structure. Compared to conditions in Latin America for example, it is difficult to imagine which foreign capitalist forces had allied themselves with feudalism in Yemen. Reading through the rhetoric, the achievements of the revolution at that time were already significant in shifting relations of production in agriculture from private ownership and sharecropping to cooperatives. It is however possible to identify one significant development since earlier congresses: the private sector is recognised as playing a positive role in the phase of the national democratic stage of the revolution. The report also defines the role of planning in the economy:

‘The decisive factor in the economic and social development of any people is not just planning, but the principles on which such planning is based ... But relying on scientific socialism and a planned scientific programme for the building of an independent national economy enabled us to establish our first Three Year Plan, to organise our economic development and improve the standard of living of our people.’⁷

This Congress also outlined the main policies of the First Five Year Plan:

‘The Five Year Plan aims at raising the state’s share in the economy and at increasing the role of the public sector so that in future it will take the lead in economic life. The Plan also aims at expanding state participation in productive ventures in the mixed sector where it works with private capital. It also looks forward to continued expansion of cooperative ownership in the agricultural sector. State ownership will be extended and completed in state farms and then develop qualitatively ...’⁸

This planning period had an actual investment of YD 194.8 million, a substantial upward revision from the original investment target of YD 75 million, including 11% for industry, 36% for agriculture and fisheries, 29% for communications and 17% for the social sector. This expenditure represented about 71.2% of revised allocation, indicating a relatively good absorptive capacity in the economy.

In the clearly stated objectives of increasing the role of the state sector, which the régime saw as an indication of the progressive nature of the economy, achievement was high in overall percentage figures, though how meaningful this is when looked at in details of sectors is unclear. While the public sector accounted for 25% of GNP in 1973,

⁶ *The Political Report presented by Abdul Fattah Ismail to the Unification Congress*, October 1975, London 1977 p. 36.

⁷ *op cit* p. 38.

⁸ *op cit* p. 47.

in 1978 it produced 52%, and during the same period the share of the private sector dropped by 2% to 6.3%, the cooperative sector also decreasing its share. The transfer from private to collective production continued between 1970 and 1975, so that in 1976 the state sector controlled 28% of industrial production. In agriculture in 1976 private crop production appeared to be practically nonexistent, at least in official statistics, which recorded 71 % output for the cooperative sector and 29% for the state sector. This contrasted sharply with the situation for livestock which remained almost entirely (93%) in private hands with the state sector controlling the rest. Similarly in fisheries, the private sector had practically vanished with production more widely distributed as there was a foreign sector and joint ventures, but cooperatives controlled 26% of production and the state sector 16%. Transportation and construction are two fields in which the private sector remained important, with 58% of transport in private hands and 42% in the government sector, and construction 19% private and 60% public. Private transport was composed mainly of small operators owning their trucks and the private construction sector of small family firms.

The mid-1970s also saw the emergence of unexpected problems, one of these being a shortage of labour, largely due to an absence of employment planning in early years. With massive unemployment at independence early planning initiated labour intensive projects, the Chinese-built textile factory in Mansura being the largest example. However the oil-income based boom in the rest of the Peninsula in the early 1970s encouraged many Yemenis to emigrate, while many others were young enough to be in education, and by the mid-1970s a labour shortage emerged. In agriculture and fisheries low incomes encouraged emigration and also discouraged productivity: government set low agricultural prices to keep the cost of living down, but this was at the expense of the rural producers. By the late 1970s expansion revealed a shortage of competent managers and planners as new ones had not yet been trained and gained sufficient experience while many of the old ones had emigrated, retired or were unwilling to work to their maximum potential.

2. Economic policy of the First Congress of the YSP

These problems contributed to the political crisis which exploded in June 1978 and by October 1978 when the first Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party was held, it had to deal with these economic issues and proposals to solve them.

By the time the Congress took place some very clear weaknesses had been identified in the economy and the political events of June 1978 provided a convenient scapegoat which could be blamed for all the recent failures. It is however worth noting that some of these failures could really be attributed to the spontaneist policies which had prevailed in the early 1970s and many errors are listed in the Political Report. Problems in economic management were blamed on 'some administrators [who] did not use official channels for maintaining contact with the masses. This disrupted the

work of some administrative bodies. Laws, regulations and instructions were replaced with subjectivist and voluntarist methods.⁹

This is a clear reference to the leadership of Salmine who did indeed bypass the formal institutions which the régime had been trying to establish in all sectors. Due to his suspicion of institutions and fear of bureaucratisation, Salmine had created parallel institutions for the productive sectors reporting directly to himself which weakened the hold of the UPONF and the government channels on the economy. This rivalry between parallel institutions clearly made for confusion in the minds of peasants who in the pre-independence days had no dealings with formal institutions of any kind and now found themselves dealing with competing ones.

Unsatisfactory distribution of technically skilled staff was also blamed for economic problems and a new emphasis was put on placing them in positions of responsibility: 'We must see to it that competent personnel is recruited and promoted to high level posts at our enterprises, and that there is continuous improvement in their proficiency and expertise, that they display a more responsible attitude to all current and future tasks.'¹⁰ This approach contrasts sharply with the earlier requirement that political reliability took priority over technical ability, a main feature of Salmine's period.¹¹

It was also recognised that there had been poor management of the cooperatives in fisheries and agriculture and the report pointed out that 'Our Party is fully aware of the difficulties experienced by the cooperative movement due to certain practical errors when steps were taken that did not suit the objective conditions and ignored the principles of the cooperative movement.'¹²

A number of decisions emerged from this Congress which indicated that economic policy was moving away from the extremes of collectivisation seen in the early 1970s. Given the received wisdom that associates socialism with collectivisation it is not surprising that the leadership which came to power in 1969 wanted socialism and therefore wanted to collectivise the Yemeni economy and eliminate the oppressive capitalist and 'feudalist' classes. Unfortunately there were — apart from the port and the refinery — no assets of real value and what was available for nationalisation included economic units hardly worthy of the name, such as cinemas, small trading companies, hotels and restaurants etc. Hence the collectivisation measures affected assets and economic units which could almost be said to be part of the subsistence economy and which could only be included in the petty bourgeoisie by the most sweeping definition. Similarly while the sharecroppers welcomed the land reform, they were less enthusiastic about working in cooperatives, particularly since they were told that the ultimate aim was collective agriculture: they saw that the land which they previously sharecropped was

⁹ *Proceedings of the First Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party*, Aden October 1978, Moscow 1979 pp. 61–62

¹⁰ *op cit* p. 62.

¹¹ See chapter 3.

¹² *Proceedings... op. cit* p. 34.

now 'given' to them but not on a permanent basis. The prospect of losing it, and once again working for 'someone else' as they saw it, was not something they welcomed.

The réintroduction of private marketing for small-scale agricultural production was designed to deal with this problem, improving peasant and fishermen's incomes, and easing distribution bottlenecks without challenging the fundamental choices of the régime. The new marketing policy was described as: 'Steps to organise trade and marketing of local products by creating cooperative marketing and organising individual activity in the marketing and distribution of consumer goods in addition to the state's marketing establishments.'¹³ Previously the cooperative members, as we will see below, had to market all their produce through official channels at low prices. This change allowed the direct sale of a percentage of their production at higher but still regulated prices. This could be done in cooperation with small shopkeepers who now found it easier to obtain supplies of both locally-produced and imported goods.

The absence of a clear relationship between production, wages and marketing contributed to low productivity and to the difficulties which existed in the wagelabour sector. Increased productivity was a major objective in the productive sectors: and the liberalisation of marketing was a step in that direction. For the better use of productive assets in industry the introduction of material as well as moral incentives was advocated. Since the early days of the revolution moral rewards such as certificates for good workers, etc. had been widely used. But the low level of productivity in the state and cooperative sectors led the Party and government to resort to material rewards and the earlier appeals to revolutionary consciousness gave way to the more concrete incentives of productivity bonuses and payment by results in industry. Management was improved by giving authority to technical and managerial staff, obliging them to take responsibility for the results achieved by their enterprises: 'Let it be our slogan to follow scientific principles of management, to respect the law, to do away with subjectivism and red tape, to align practice with theory, to secure the most rational use of manpower and material resources and to further heighten labour efficiency.'¹⁴

Mixed and private manufacturing were encouraged to participate fully in the economy. Private investment in the mixed sector such as the cigarettes and matches factories developed in the 1970s when private investors felt less threatened if working in conjunction with the public sector as they rightly believed that in these enterprises their assets were unlikely to be nationalised. The fully private sector (mostly in ready-made clothing) developed more slowly as the lack of confidence which developed immediately after independence was only slowly dispelled. Despite the Investment Law of 1969 and the Party's appeals as early as the Fifth Congress to private capital to participate in the economy, such local capitalists as remained were unwilling to put money into fixed assets. Throughout the 1970s despite formal appeal, the régime in fact hindered

¹³ *Resolutions of the YSP 1978 Congress*, Aden, duplicated p. 15.

¹⁴ *Proceedings... op cit* p. 63.

its development by creating bureaucratic difficulties and it is only in the 1980s that privately-held national capital is effectively encouraged.

The new measures adopted since 1978 have often been described in the West as indicating a return to capitalism: this is ridiculous as none of the reforms which have been undertaken since the late 1970s have re-created any form of exploitation by one class of another. Their main effect has been to provide higher incomes for most families in the productive sector and to give greater security to peasants. This was mainly a psychological change, they had the land but now have title to it making them feel more secure.

Alongside these readjustments in economic policy encouraging private initiative and reducing the direct role of the state on the shopfloor and in the fields, the Congress re-emphasised the socialist direction of the economy.

First 'The Party holds that to achieve these goals it is important to apply creatively the principle of democratic centralism in managing the national economy, to improve the methods of planning and programming, to develop the country's planning system, to extend democracy in offices and economic enterprises, to involve the working people in the elaboration, fulfilment and monitoring of plans, and also in managing economic enterprises and projects.'¹⁵

Secondly, the importance of political and ideological work by party members to achieve a greater awareness among the population was also given high priority: 'To elaborate an economic policy is not enough. It is highly important to back it with the Party's political and educational work to further its conscious implementation. This is the essence of our day-to-day struggle for progress in all areas of economic life.'¹⁶

The revisions decided in 1978 were not immediately applied, and the years 1979 and 1980 turned out to be years of transition between the First Five Year Plan and the Second.¹⁷ The time was also used to work out adjustments in policy, and by the time the Second Plan started, the leadership of the country had passed to Ali Nasser Mohammed who had long and detailed experience of economic management.

3. The Second Five Year Plan and the Extraordinary General Congress of the YSP.

The situation in 1980

Development expenditure was the top priority for the government and absorbed 55% of total spending in 1977. The trend changed in the following years. This was due firstly to the country's precarious international and political situation resulting

¹⁵ *Proceedings... op cit* pp. 40–41.

¹⁶ *op dtp.* 59.

¹⁷ The Second Five Year Plan was originally meant to run from 1979 to 1983, but was later readjusted to run concurrently with development plans of countries of the Arab Common Market as well as

from June 1978, the consequent deterioration of relations with the Y AR leading to the February 1979 border war, and increased tension with other Arab states. This required a higher level of military expenditure which, according to the World Bank had earlier been only 19% of the total, rose in 1978 to 25%, peaked in 1979 at 28% and by 1980 was back to 25%. The second main feature arose from the difficulties of the economy which we discussed in the previous sections. Rather than continue the high rate of investment the régime decided to consolidate the First Five Year Plan (FFYP) and to postpone and revise the Second Five Year Plan which would now begin in 1981. No new projects were undertaken in 1979 and 1980 and these years were a period of completion. Development expenditure which had reached 55% of total expenditure in 1977, fell to 49% in 1978, 41% in 1979 and 44% in 1980. The decline in economic development expenditure was not paralleled in health and social services, which continued to rise: social services from 4% in 1977 to 6% in 1980 and education from 8% in 1977 to 10% in 1980. In absolute terms all development expenditure rose regularly throughout the period.

The distribution of development expenditure remained stable with half going to productive sectors and 32% to infrastructure; this clearly reflected the weakness of the existing infrastructure, even in the late 1970s after YD 62 million had been spent in the First Five Year Plan. Social services took 17% of investment in the FFYP and 23% in 1980. It is worth noting however, that much of the expenditure for industry included water and electricity supply which should strictly be considered part of infrastructure. The high investment in agriculture and fisheries had not produced the expected results, and the problems which caused this and the consequences will be discussed in the following chapters.

In the 1973–79 period GDP at constant factor cost grew by about 60% or 6% annually. Thanks to the remittances of workers abroad GNP is estimated to have grown much faster, by about 9% per annum. By 1980 GNP reached 150% of GDP, the latter being divided as follows: government services 23%, transport 15%, industry 14%, construction 13%, agriculture and fisheries 13%. Despite the massive investment in agriculture and fisheries, their annual average growth rate between 1974 and 1979 was zero, which can in part be attributed to climatic factors. In other sectors growth rates were high, annual average in that period in government services was 7%, in transport 12%, in industry 9% and in construction 23%. The actual increase in real incomes per capita was considerable, due mainly to the remittances from emigrant workers although spending of foreign aid loans and grants had some impact. The falling contribution of the local productive sector was one of the major issues which the First Congress of the YSP tried to tackle and which influenced the direction of the Second Five Year Plan (SFYP). The Extraordinary Congress of the YSP in October 1980 was an occasion for reviewing the economic situation and confirming the reforms

socialist states, from 1981 to 1985. The 2 intervening years were used to complete projects left from the First Plan.

which had been outlined in the First Congress in 1978. Under the new leadership of Ali Nasser major economic discussions had taken place in April 1980 at the 8th session of the Central Committee. This produced a number of resolutions which confirmed the 1978 Party Congress decisions and allowed their implementation since the beginning of the SFYP.

By 1980 changes in the structure of the economy can be seen in the relative ownership of the different sectors, which was presented more realistically. In earlier years the share held by the private sector, particularly in agriculture, has been ignored and thus the mistaken impression was given that it no longer existed.

*1980 Percentage Production by Ownership*¹⁸

Private	Public	Cooperative	
Agriculture	52	16	32
Fisheries	16	72	12
Industry	27	73	0
Construction	57	43	0
Transport	43	56	1
Trade	63	30	7
Overall	45	49	6

At the Extraordinary Congress of the YSP in October 1980, there was no challenge to the direction of the economy, the only issue was one of implementation. Appeals to the public to participate actively in the construction of the economy were the main feature. The President summarised the main problems for the SFYP as follows:

1. The effective development and growth of the national economy depends on the growth of the leading role of our Party in economic and social life.
2. The achievement of high norms of growth depends on developing the work attitude, increasing workers' activity, motivating them materially and morally and showing consideration for their living standard.
3. The achievement of further economic and social transformations depends on the growth of the role of the state and cooperative sectors.
4. The important condition for the success of the development process lies in the development of planned economic management, strengthening of the principles of democratic centralism, economic accountability and continual control and accountability for implementation of planned tasks.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ministry of Planning*, Aden, PDRY.

¹⁹ *Aden News Agency* 14 October 1980.

The Second Five Year Plan, how is it doing?

Substantially larger than the preceding plans, the Second Five Year Plan envisaged a total development expenditure of YD 508 million over the years 1981–85 at constant 1980 prices, whereas between 1974 and 1980 only YD 316 million (current prices) was spent on development.

Its aims are basically the same as those of earlier plans:

i) to satisfy the basic needs of the population for food, shelter, consumer goods, employment, health care and other social services;

ii) to develop the production capacity of the economy, in particular industry, agriculture and fisheries;

iii) to strengthen the physical infrastructure;

iv) to explore and utilize the mineral resources of the country;

v) to raise the educational standard of the population and the technical skills of the labour force;

vi) to improve the balance of payments situation by increasing export of domestic products, by import substitution and by mobilizing greater amounts of remittances;

vii) to increase labour productivity and encourage women to participate in economic and social activities; and

viii) to promote balanced regional and sectoral growth and an equitable distribution of income.²⁰

The distribution of expenditure shows the changes in priority resulting from the main social, economic, and political questions, and reflects the results of earlier investment. Investment in agriculture drops from 23% of total investment to 12%, while that in fisheries drops from 11.3% to 5.4%. To some extent this reflects the lack of success of earlier investment which, as we have seen, produced zero growth rate in the previous period. However most early investment in agriculture and fisheries was in the development of basic productive infrastructure, ranging from dams and irrigation networks to a fleet of ships and cold store units, which can be expected to show benefits only over a longer period.

The share of manufacturing industry remains relatively stable decreasing from 7.6% to 6%, and that of oil and minerals research also remains at 5.5% (earlier 5%) while that of construction drops from 3.5% to 1.1%. Electricity's share of investment rises dramatically from 4% to 13.5% in an effort to improve supply and expand the network, while in Aden trying to reduce the serious electricity shortages which occurred in the late 1970s. Transport and communications retain a substantial share, though investment drops from 24% to 18% while trade's share is scheduled to rise from 1.1 % to 4.1%. Public Health facilities are to be improved by investment in water and sewerage whose share of investment rises from 0.7% to 6.5%, though much of this is to be devoted to facilities in the two major towns, Aden and Mukalla, while less investment

²⁰ *Ministry of Planning.*

is earmarked for other urban areas, and the rural sector gets little in the current plan. Other health services get 2.6% compared to 2.1% between 1974 and 1980 while the share of education drops from 6.1 to 5.5%. Housing, previously almost totally ignored (5.2% between 1974 and 1980), gets a dramatically increased share of investment with 17.7%, though all of this is to be spent in urban areas, on low-cost apartment housing. New rural housing remains entirely financed by private remittances.

With the low real growth rates achieved in the 1970s it is unlikely that the objectives of the Second Five Year Plan will be met in all sectors. This is particularly the case for the productive sectors. The disastrous floods of 1982 were another setback to growth which was planned to be 9.1% in agriculture 8.7% in fisheries and 13.9% in industry.

Data is available for only the first two years of the Plan at the time of writing. It reflects little deviation from original intentions: agriculture obtained 14% of investment in both years, compared to the planned 11.8%, but this can be explained by the vast amounts of agricultural infrastructure to be rebuilt after the floods. Investment in fisheries followed Plan intentions. Investment in electric power was higher in 1981 as the power cuts in Aden of 1979 and 1980 led to the rapid construction of new power stations, and rehabilitation of older ones. Manufacturing investment was underspent at 3%, mainly because work on the cement factory, the major item in the Plan, had not yet been started. Increased expenditure on minerals research (7% in 1981 and 9% in 1982) resulted in promising discoveries in this field. Water and sewerage investment was below Plan (3% in 1981 and 4% in 1982) as the main projects were still in preparation. Investment in housing was also lower than planned (at 13% and 14% in 1981 and 1982 respectively).

Given the difficulties encountered, the overall implementation rate of 76% of target for 1981 and 1982 is good, and the distribution well balanced. The delays experienced were due to various factors ranging from shortage of finance, to difficulties in finding labour or allocating contracts.

It is worth sounding a note of caution concerning figures. The country has yet to develop a fully reliable statistical system. Local collection of data is left to officials who, by their very position, may find it difficult to obtain reliable figures from producers. For example so long as cooperative officials continue to act as income tax collectors, they are unlikely to obtain accurate reports on production from peasants or fishermen. Similarly when the private sector was out of favour in the early 1970s it practically disappeared from official statistics, though it obviously continued to produce, as shown by its sudden reappearance. The absence of statisticians and other collectors of data at all levels creates further problems of information. These and other difficulties mean that, in spite of their persistent efforts the Central Statistical Organisation of the Ministry of Planning and the statistical departments of the other ministries are still unable to produce accurate and up-to-date figures and often rely on more or less educated guesses.

Finance

Domestic exports have risen from USS 7.9 million in 1969 to USS 34.7 million in 1982 while imports rose from USS 86.5 million to USS 796.8 million in the same period, giving a trade deficit of USS 762.1 million in 1982. The overall balance of payments has been rescued over the years by remittances: total remittances and other transfers have ensured that the current account balance was positive in 1969 (USS 1.3 million) and by 1982 the deficit was only USS 175 million.

The budget has been in deficit since independence, due to the shortage of revenue and despite considerable efforts made to keep expenditure down. In the early years public sector wages and salaries were reduced, and since then have remained low, with small differentials. The latest overall increases date from 1979 when the lowest salaries were increased by 60% and the highest by 20%. Despite all these sacrifices current government account deficit rose from YD 2.5 million in 1970–71 to YD 100 million in 1982.

The unsatisfactory financial situation reflects the economic difficulties of the PDRY, a country which is trying to develop with practically no resources except its small population. The balance of payments is only reduced to an acceptable level of deficit thanks to the remittances of the Yemeni workers abroad, who can be said to be financing the living standards not only of their families but also of the nation, since it is their foreign exchange which makes possible the import of all goods, both luxury and productive. Low productivity in agriculture, fisheries and industry suggest there is little prospect of improvement in the country's overall finances in the future. The only hopeful features are in minerals research and the prospects of commercial oil exploitation.

As the government's current account is in deficit and accumulation is practically non-existent, the financing of development expenditure must be done mainly from external sources, as there is no internally generated surplus to support it. Throughout the planning period since 1970 external financing has played a major role in development. Immediately after independence with the abrupt severing of British aid, the flow of aid dropped in 1969–70 to YD 2.6 million. However the government succeeded in improving this situation and in the early years aid came mainly from the socialist countries. By 1972, of USS 26.4 million total disbursed aid, USS 1.45 million came from international and Arab sources, while the largest single amount (USS 8.41 million) came from the People's Republic of China and the rest came from other socialist countries. This pattern continued until the mid-1970s, when the share contributed by international organisations and various Arab funds increased substantially, while among bilateral aid donors, the USSR took the first place. By the end of 1978, outstanding disbursed aid was USS 310 million, including USS 68.8 million from multilateral donors among whom were a number of Arab funds. While in the earlier years the only Arab contributor was the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, by 1978 it had been joined by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Abu Dhabi Fund, and even the Saudi Fund and the Islamic Bank. Bilateral loans were led by the USSR contributing

US\$ 75.5 million, China retaining the second place with US\$ 69.7 million. By late 1982, there had been no substantial change in sources with the amount of disbursed multilateral aid rising to US\$ 212 million, and disbursed bilateral aid amounting to US\$ 573 million, with the USSR accounting for almost half of this (US\$ 270 million). By end 1983, total disbursed aid amounted to over 1 billion dollars, in the form of concessionary rate loans, and only little in grants.

It is clear from these figures that most development projects are financed with foreign aid. During the First Five Year Plan external sources accounted for 75% of development investment and in the Second Plan it is expected that 70% of investment will be financed by foreign loans.

The rise in debt service from US\$ 15 million in 1980 to US\$ 27 million in 1981 and US\$ 40 million in 1982 is already putting a serious strain on the country's financial capacity and the government is known to have already negotiated rescheduling agreements with its major supporters, presumably the USSR and People's Republic of China. Although most loans have been obtained on highly concessionary terms, debt servicing payments are becoming a serious burden. Unless substantial oil exploitation takes place in coming years or another rich natural resource is discovered, the country's debt repayment prospects are bleak. With a forecast of static or even decreasing remittances, and an expanding workforce the development of local productive sectors is essential if the rate of development is to be maintained and an improvement in living standards sustained.

Trade

While in 1973 exports covered 11.5% of imports (US\$ 13.9 million exports and US\$ 119.8 million imports), by 1982 the situation had deteriorated yet further with exports covering only 4.35% of imports (US\$ 34.7 million exports and US\$ 796.8 million imports). The major exports are fish and cotton and the main industrial countries to which these exports go are Japan and Italy; in the Arab world the majority of exports go to Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Arab Republic.

In this situation trade policy decisions necessarily refer essentially to imports. The Political Report to the First Congress of the YSP states the policy in foreign trade: 'Our aim is to secure the necessary resources for development in addition to the available local resources by concluding agreements with friendly and fraternal countries and with pan-Arab and international organisations. We are trying to put an end to our economic dependence on the capitalist market.'²¹

Despite an official policy to increase trade with the socialist countries and the Arab world, most imports come from the industrialised capitalist countries largely due to the bureaucratic difficulties which arise in trading with the socialist countries, many

²¹ *Proceedings op cit* p. 50.

of which cannot offer convenient trading terms. Capitalist countries have retained first place as suppliers of the PDRY, the United Kingdom being displaced by Japan as first supplier in the mid-1970s. The two major socialist trading partners are the People's Republic of China which has in most years had higher exports to the PDRY than the Soviet Union. The main Arab suppliers are the Yemen Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia.

The main imports throughout the period have been food and petroleum; the country imports all its fuel needs and all sugar, tea, and rice; wheat is produced locally in insufficient quantities and remains a major import. Machinery and transport equipment are also very substantial items, and have increased in recent years; while up to 1975 the number of passenger vehicles imported was very low this increased substantially from 1976 onwards, and particularly in the 1980s.

Foreign trade is directed by the Public Corporation for Foreign Trade, which issues the import licences necessary to all imports. The Corporation purchases abroad and on arrival redistributes the goods to the Home Trade Company or to private distributors, but the bulk of trade remains in the public sector, eventually reaching its retail stores.

Internal trade is also controlled by the public sector. The Home Trade Company has retail outlets for different types of goods and it is responsible for the marketing of strategic goods such as home-produced wheat and the distribution of imported foods such as rice, tea, sugar and other commodities. Its retail outlets form a part of everyday experience as people go there regularly to obtain their monthly allowances of subsidised foods. The Company also distributes to private retailers who sell basic necessities at official prices. In order to shield the Yemeni consumer from the effects of world inflation, the government instituted the Price Stabilisation Fund in 1974, which has been used to ensure low prices for basic foods, such as rice, flour, sugar, wheat, milk powder, ghee and cooking oil, tea etc. Subsidies have enabled the government to maintain a low wage and low price economy.

While in the early 1970s it was government policy to collectivise most trade and discourage private retailing, the experience gained has shown that small private retailing does not challenge the regime's policies, and that effective control over prices and conditions can be achieved through control of the wholesale market. Bottlenecks and inadequacies of distribution in retailing have contributed to this change. The Political Report concludes its analysis and suggests future policy: 'This would permit the state sector to concentrate its efforts on essential matters, to open, modern, well-equipped stores as a model to be followed in retail trade.'²²

In implementation of this policy, Home Trade in the early 1980s is involved in the building and running of a number of large supermarkets in Aden, which supply everything from clothes to food and electrical consumer goods. It is planned that gradually such supermarkets will be built in other towns. In a parallel move local private traders have benefited from an easing of restrictions on their operations.

²² *Proceedings op cit* p. 53.

Similarly in the field of perishables, the smaller retail outlets of the Public Corporation for the Marketing of Fruit and Vegetables, (PCMFV) which now operate throughout the Aden, Lahej, Abyan and Hadramaut governorates, retailing fresh fruit and vegetables, may soon be left to the private sector with the Corporation retaining only larger stores and operating mainly as a wholesale monopoly purchaser and wholesale distributor for domestic and imported produce.

The increasing imbalance in the trade figures is due not only to the increased prices of goods on the world market but also to a shift in import policy. While in the early 1970s, major efforts were made to reduce imports and everything smacking of luxury goods was banned and almost impossible to import, since the late 1970s this policy has been gradually eased. The import of private cars in particular multiplied in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was partly due to a policy aimed at satisfying the desires of the population made possible by the increase of remittances. Recently remittances have ceased to grow; with the greater economic and financial difficulties, the problem of reducing luxury imports has once again come up. In 1984, a general ban on the import of cars was decreed for the year, causing frustration among would-be car buyers.

As self-sufficiency is unrealistic in the Yemeni context, import policy becomes a major political issue with which the régime must constantly grapple. Although imports of productive goods and food have priority, the definition of luxury goods and the policy concerning them is now a subject of public debate. The choice lies between a puritanism of striving to do without or satisfying the population, and particularly that section which has the income to purchase electrical goods, cars and other luxuries. In many countries such people could be defined as members of the bourgeoisie, but in the PDRY they include the emigrant workers who are paying for the majority of the country's imports. To penalise them by preventing them from importing goods they want for their households and families is difficult to justify, particularly as the officials who would be implementing such rules are likely to be those who drive private cars bought locally on hire purchase, cars imported thanks to the foreign exchange earned by these same migrants.

Infrastructure

Roads In 1967 the country had 470 km of paved roads, mostly in and around Aden, and 4,000 km unpaved. By 1983 there were 1,650 km of paved roads forming an elementary network of communications in the country. The People's Republic of China has played a major role in road construction. It first sent teams of workers to build the Aden-Mukalla highway, the backbone of the country's road system. In the 1980s the extension of this road from Shihr to Sayhut in Mahra governorate was completed under agreement with the PRC. Other major roads link Mukalla to Wadi Hadramaut and Aden to Ta'iz in the YAR. The other main road being built will eventually link the Bayhan region of Shabwa governorate to the main Aden-Mukalla highway. These

asphalted roads suffered serious damage in the disastrous floods of 1982 and many bridges had already been destroyed by the 1981 floods, requiring an expensive restoration programme.

The presence of these roads has made possible regular bus links between the major towns and this has supplemented the air links which existed since before independence. The construction of roads has also eased the distribution of imported staples and other necessities to the hinterland, and simultaneously made it possible for agricultural produce to be distributed. Truck traffic represents about 50% of all road traffic outside the towns, and about 40% of this (in tons/km) is carried by public sector trucks, the rest being private, operating under the supervision of the Public Corporation for Land Transport.

Internal Air Travel Total domestic traffic has increased from under 50,000 passengers/year in 1975 to over 100,000 in 1982; this has been made possible both by the acquisition of new aircraft and by improvements in the airports. Riyan (Mukalla) airport has been recently rebuilt with modern facilities and a runway able to take jets, and the daily Aden-Mukalla link is now by Boeing 707. There is a weekly Aden-Riyan-Kuwait flight since 1983 which means that Hadrami emigrants no longer have to travel through Aden to reach their destinations. Other internal services fly to Mukayras, Bayhan, Ataq, Seiyun and al Ghayda. They are often overbooked and the frequency of services could well be increased but this would require further investment in small aircraft such as the Dash-7 which have been acquired since 1980 to replace the old DC-3s and operate on these internal routes.

Most international traffic from Aden is for the migrant workers travelling to the Peninsula as well as inter-Yemeni traffic. International traffic involved 260,000 passengers in 1982, an increase from 220,000 since 1975, indicating that most of the increase in recent years has been in domestic traffic. The national airline Alyemda flies to Kuwait, Damascus, Jeddah, Sana'a, Sharja, Bombay, Mogadishu, Djibouti, Addis Ababa and Nairobi. Some of these destinations are served only once weekly.

International telecommunications have improved substantially since the completion of the satellite ground station in 1982. The internal telephone system by contrast is still that installed by the British in Aden and is badly in need of modernisation and expansion. Telephone links between Aden and the rest of the country in 1984 were still primitive and unreliable, preventing the telephone from becoming routine. Telegrams remained the most effective form of rapid communication between Aden and the local offices of different government departments.

Sea Travel Aden port, a famous landmark of the 1950s and 1960s practically collapsed as a result of the June 1967 closure of the Suez Canal; the number of ships calling fell from 6,200 in 1966 (net registered tons 31.4 million) to a low of 1,320 in 1973 (net tons 5.5 million). From a major income earner, the port became a loss-maker almost overnight. In anticipation of the reopening of the Suez Canal the authorities made a serious effort to help the port regain its former place in international trading and the port was rehabilitated and modernised with the aid of multilateral loans by

1975 when the Canal reopened. The results were somewhat disappointing, mainly due to the changes in long-distance merchant shipping which had taken place in the intervening years. Vessels have become too large for Suez and those which can pass through the Red Sea do not need to refuel *en route* as often as before. Passenger traffic has totally transferred to air travel. For regional traffic rival and efficient ports had been set up in the intervening years at various points along the Red Sea, with Hodeida and Mokha able to absorb most traffic for the YAR and Djibouti having an efficient port on the other side of the Red Sea.

Since 1975 however traffic has increased, due mainly to increased trade with the PDRY for both consumer and production goods. In 1982 imported dry cargo amounted to 779 thousand tons, the first year to exceed the pre-independence high of 1965. But oil throughput remained at a relatively low level, with total liquid cargo traffic only rising to 8.7 million tons in 1982, while 12 million tons had been processed for re-export in 1965. The port's main role at present is to satisfy the needs of the country. A new fishing port is under construction in Aden.

In Mukalla a second multipurpose port is being completed after a long interruption in the late 1970s when the West German contractors went bankrupt. The port will enable goods for Hadramaut to be delivered directly and save considerable amounts on road transport. A smaller but socially and economically important project was completed in Nishtun in Mahra governorate in 1984; this new fishing and general purpose port complex should contribute substantially to the development of that region and improve its communications with the rest of the country, alleviating its earlier isolation.

Energy The vast majority of energy use in the country is based on petroleum and this makes the search for local oil supplies all the more important for the government which in 1982 imported almost 900,000 tons of oil to supply local needs, almost a third of which was used for the generation of electricity. Despite the stated ambitions, comprehensive electrification is not expected in the foreseeable future. Though the Plan foresees 44% of the population having access to electricity supply, by the end of 1982 only about 29% had access to the state supply. The urban-rural imbalance in this is illustrated in that 83% of the urban population was supplied but only 22% of the rural population. Some of the rural population is supplied by small privately-owned generators which operate during evening hours and do not therefore allow them to operate refrigerators or other devices which must function 24 hours a day. Electrification projects have not effectively altered the imbalance as they have concentrated on improving and increasing supplies to areas which already have electricity, essentially the capital and other major towns. The only area which has recently been supplied with an entirely new publicly-owned network is the largely urbanised region of Wadi Hadramaut, which now has a major power station to which most of the Wadi is gradually being connected. The project to electrify five small towns on the Hadramaut coast will also improve the situation. Another major rural plan concerns the electrification of Wadi Bayhan but this is not expected to materialise till the end of the decade.

The régime has, surprisingly, not yet given serious attention to alternative forms of energy. There are few resources in plentiful supply, but there is certainly no shortage of sunlight, yet hardly any research has been done into the possibilities of solar power for either electricity or cooking, which is another major energy issue. Butagaz is the fuel used by people who live within accessible distance of a depot; but in the remoter areas women spend enormous amounts of time and effort in the search for firewood, a particularly unrewarding and arduous task which also contributes to the further deforestation and desertification of the country, while small solar cooking units at low cost are now available on the world market. A National Committee for Energy was founded in 1980 and its duties include devising more economical ways of obtaining energy and improving conservation measures. Despite its recommendations there have as yet been no substantial indications of progress: for example all the new public housing under construction continues to be built without much consideration for insulation, thus resulting in future high demand for electricity and air-conditioning.

Water Water scarcity is one of the main problems the country has to face and the distribution of this scarce resource among the sectors requires major political and economic policy decisions; the agricultural aspects of water supply are examined in the next chapter and here only the problem of domestic water supply is discussed.

The supply of water for domestic purposes to all is one of the government's ambitions. In 1980 only 5% of the rural population and 30% of the urban population had piped water. In rural areas water must be fetched either from the well or from a village watertank; in some places where the water source is remote, piping has been laid to a tank in the village, with taps. Women walk there with plastic or metal containers, fill them, and carry them home on their heads. Laundry is done at the water source, usually on wide shallow trays filled with soapy water and the clothes scrubbed. In the houses water is used with economy for personal hygiene, cooking, drinking and cleaning of the house.

About half the rural population of 1.3 million live in extremely scattered minute settlements and no plans exist to provide these people with piped water, so they will continue to fetch and carry water daily for the foreseeable future. One may wonder whether plans to improve the situation would exist if men, rather than women, did the fetching and carrying. The current Plan aims to supply piped water to 120 rural centres, with an average population of 5,000 per project, but the Plan concentrates on the urban areas with the major projects for the period benefiting Aden, Mukalla and Seiyun, the three largest urban areas in the country. Investment allocation for water increased from the originally intended 2% to 6.5% due to the magnitude of the water crisis which developed at the time of Plan preparation. Once again the choice of allocation reflects the increased and more powerful pressure brought by those in the urban areas, and particularly Aden. The water crisis in the late 1970s was felt by the decision-makers as they found no water coming out of their taps; the fact that most of the rural population didn't even have taps did not feature prominently in their minds. Even if they had visited their families in the rural areas, water would have been brought

to them and they would not have seen women walking miles to collect stagnant water from unclean shallow wells. In some rural areas, emigrants have organised themselves as a group to supply their areas and have collectively funded drilling, piping and water tanks, thus anticipating the public services supply.

In the administration of water in the PDRY the Public Corporation for Water is responsible for water supply while the Local People's Councils are responsible for sewerage and disposal. The government intends in future to merge water and sewerage authorities. At the moment plans for improved drainage and sewerage facilities are being implemented for Aden and Mukalla where massive projects have been devised and financed with foreign loans. In the medium term, studies for sewerage projects are being made for Zinjibar and Ja'ar in Abyan governorate, for Seiyun in Wadi Hadramaut and for all towns with a population of up to 10,000 people by 1990 (there are less than 10 of these throughout the country). In smaller places local expertise is to be used in planning and implementing possible sewerage and drainage projects on a smaller scale suitable to local conditions.

The Labour Force

‘Work is the right of every citizen and it is the duty of every able citizen in accordance with his ability, qualification and the social interest.’²³

To meet this commitment the government has had to deal with dramatic shifts in the situation: at independence with the closure of the Suez Canal, the stagnation of the port and the departure of the British, it was suddenly confronted with mass unemployment in Aden itself, while the hinterland, as in previous decades, survived off the remittances from emigrants and subsistence agriculture.

To try to balance the books, the NLF reduced wages and salaries, first in 1968 by up to 60% and again in 1972 by a third. These salary reductions and their spread resulted in one of the lowest differentials in wage scales anywhere, as low as 3.5:1 between the highest and the lowest. The régime also set up labour-intensive projects: the main job-creating scheme was the building with Chinese assistance of a major textile plant in Mansura, designed to employ up to 1,500 workers. However, by the time it opened in 1975 the earlier problem of unemployment was giving way to a labour shortage. As early as 1973 the government banned new emigration to halt the drain of labour, particularly of skilled and professional workers. After the mid-1970s labour policies had to be redirected to deal with the new problems of labour shortage and low productivity which beset the economy up to the early 1980s. Measures to improve productivity included rises in salaries in 1975 by 5% and in 1979 when new grades were created, increasing official differentials to 6:1; increases were also higher at the upper levels. The impetus was an attempt to improve relative salaries in the productive sector by offering

²³ *PDRY Constitution* 1978, art. 37.

various bonuses and extra payments. It was hoped that higher wages would help a redeployment of labour towards the sectors where there were shortages, ie industry, agriculture and construction. The move was only partially successful for a combination of reasons: first office work is both physically less demanding and commands higher status and secondly in productive labour higher incomes could be earned in the private sector.

A major planning problem has been the inadequate projections concerning the relationship between wages and productivity. This can be seen throughout the economy at all levels. Competition for workers between the public and private sectors has continued to vitiate the government's labour policy. Public sector wages and prices are low, and basic food necessities, services and housing accessible. The private sector, fuelled mainly by emigrants' remittances has to compete with the wages obtainable abroad: for example a mason who would earn YD 2.5 a day in the public sector in 1981 could earn between YD 10 and 15 in the private. An unskilled labourer in the private sector could claim YD 6 a day while in the public he would get only YD 1.5. This led to serious shortages in the public sector, particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the great increase in remittances allowed many emigrants to build houses at home and the demand for private building workers rose dramatically. In the current decade with remittances on a *plateau*, and many migrants returning home the situation should become easier.

Aside from the desertion of the public sector by those who can afford it, there is massive moonlighting by workers who have public sector jobs in the morning, during which time they hardly work at all, resting in preparation for intensive private sector jobs in the afternoon. This practice has become so widespread in construction that since the early 1980s the government has given contracts to private firms who are expected to complete work faster and cheaper than if the public sector had been responsible, although in some cases the work is done by the same workers. Comparable problems are to be found in agriculture.

Official salary scales for professionals are also relatively low compared to those in all the neighbouring countries. For example a doctor who on qualification earns in the PDRY a basic rate of YD 120 per month which includes an allowance for renouncing private practice (private practice is not allowed), could be earning ten times that in any other Peninsula country. The régime compensates by allowing such people various privileges, but it still requires serious commitment on the part of the practitioners to stay and work in the country. This is further evidence of how the economy of the PDRY is intertwined with that of its richer neighbours.

The country has a number of trade unions which are grouped in the General Union of Yemeni Workers which includes all public sector workers. The 1978 Fundamental Labour Law governing labour relations states that:

'Employees have the right to organise and to join organisations of their own free will, and to form unions without prior permission, under constitutions

to be decided by the employees themselves, and without being subject to registration with the state Authorities.’²⁴

Facilities are made available for the unions to function in workplaces and they are usually expected to enforce and support government decisions, as well as to solve individual problems. It would be a mistake to assume that they are completely subservient to the régime and take no action to protect their members. On a day to day basis they are very powerful and their determined assertion of workers’ right to be protected from dismissal is one of the factors contributing to low productivity, making exhortations quite ineffective.

While officially the Union ‘has the right to call a general strike in accordance with its rules and regulations’²⁵ major strikes have not occurred but there have been a number of unpublicised local strikes with demands ranging from improved working conditions to higher salaries and bonuses. There are no statistics of working hours lost in strikes and many other disputes have been sealed to the advantage of the workers before a strike was called.

The total active labour force was 467,000 in 1982, a rise of 57,000 over 1978 and is expected to rise to 605,000 by 1990 and to over 900,000 in 2000. As emigration is not likely to increase, development planning must include major employment creation schemes to avoid a recurrence of serious unemployment by the end of the Century.

Those employed in wage labour represent almost a quarter of the total population, and there are still almost as many people of working age who are not in formal employment. Employment figures and estimates probably ignore many peasant women who are active in agriculture and herding. Migrants are also excluded from the figures, as are other men of working age who are neither employed nor seeking employment but who live off remittances either because they find public sector salaries too low or because they do not want to get work considered to be beneath their status.

Of the 453,000 people in employment in 1981, the largest number or 43% were in agriculture; services including trade and public administration occupied 30%, and only 10% were in industry and 2% in fisheries. The problems which relate to labour and employment will also emerge when we discuss the different sectors of the economy.

Conclusion

There are as yet few research institutions in the country and the University could extend its activities to supply the country’s needs. To date there has been little technical research and few socio-economic studies of the country’s problems. A number of the problems this had caused spring to mind: at the simpler level some distribution problems are directly related to an absence of market research or study of the needs of

²⁴ *PDRY The Fundamental Labour Law*, London 1978 p. 60, art. 93.

²⁵ *ibid.*

a certain area, leading to distribution of goods at the national level based on arbitrary decisions taken in an Aden office. More serious is the question of transfer of technology and appropriate technology throughout the economy: the lack of research institutions means that there are many cases when the information necessary is not available to make a choice between one form of technology and another nor are qualified researchers available. This can be due to lack of micro-economic research, as for example deciding whether a camel or a tractor is a more appropriate unit for agricultural work, or at a much more advanced level in discussing the use and cost of solar energy for power generation or as domestic fuel in rural areas. Often prejudice favours the choice of 'modern' imported technology when local expertise might well be more appropriate and successful, and far greater attention could be given to the ideas and methods which come from local practitioners of different trades who may have more practical ideas for innovation, the use of tractors and combine harvesters may be an example. Socio-economic research is badly needed to establish the social impact of investment projects and social services on peasants and fishermen among others, and to plan for their needs in the future.

Much needs to be done in the management of the economy to set up clear criteria of accountability in the management and administration of projects. Although there have been many criticisms both by Yemenis and international missions of the quality of the management in Democratic Yemen, it must be said that there has been little waste in the channelling of aid, be it loans or grants, and that project expenditure has been restricted to the stated needs and aims of the project and not wasted, a rare situation in the Third World.

Economic development also raises the question of Yemeni unity. While the PDRY has barely 2 million citizens the YAR has between 6 and 8 according to different censuses. Planning an economy of 8 to 10 million people presents advantages over planning for only 2 million and there have been in recent years some attempts at bringing the economies closer with the formation of joint companies and joint research and development of mineral resources. Trade agreements and moves towards the abolition of customs dues between the two parts of the country have also been made in recent years. More importantly coordination in planning could avoid duplication of productive units when one part can supply the needs of the whole country. In the long run even joint import policies could be devised. All such moves would be beneficial to Yemen as a whole but require greater social and political rapprochement and particularly more compatible economic policies.

Even further afield cooperation could be developed on a regional basis for such matters as research and technical cooperation, developing a pool of expertise which would save the member states from having to consult outsiders for technical advice and information. The Arab Common Market could be a framework for such a development.

Chapter Eight: Agriculture

From its earliest days, the régime has given much attention to agriculture, bringing about fundamental changes in its social organisation and in its distribution and supply sub-sectors. The measures taken have not been altogether successful despite very heavy investment. I will look at the political measures taken to transform rural life and their effects as well as the natural preconditions for agriculture.

A glance at a map of the country gives a stark and vivid impression of the PDRY's agricultural potential. Only 231,000 ha is potentially cultivable land, representing under 0.7% of the country's total surface. Water shortage means that only about 60,000 ha are cultivated annually, representing less than 0.3% of the country's surface, giving the PDRY only 3 ha of cultivated land per 100 inhabitants, while Bangladesh, for example, has 9 ha per 100 inhabitants and Syria 73. Only a third of this land is permanently irrigated, the rest depends on spate irrigation, which varies from year to year and is expected to irrigate anything between 40 and 80,000 ha in a particularly good year.

As well as this minute amount available for cultivation, the country has a large area (26.8% of the land) of very sparse pasture land, dispersed between vast expanses of barren land. These pastures support about 25,000 bedu families herding about 70,000 camels and 800,000 sheep and goats.

Since independence climatic conditions have been particularly difficult with a succession of droughts and floods, and no year which could be described as 'normal'. There were periods of drought in the early 1970s and again after 1977 while in 1975 and 1981 there were serious floods, though the worst floods on record took place in 1982; 1983 was also a year of floods. Planning agricultural development under such conditions presents particular difficulties added to the familiar ones of dispersed population, shortage of water and limited infrastructure.

Such a small amount of agricultural land per rural family (about 0.4 ha for a rural family of 7 is the national average, of which only one third on average is permanently irrigated) goes to explain the long tradition of emigration: clearly this land cannot support the total population. All it needs is a year of drought or flood and many peasants find themselves destitute, with no harvest at all. About 40% of the labour force, or 200,000 people in 1982, worked in agriculture, trying to support a settled rural population of about one million. But as a result of heavy emigration of young men, the labour force is increasingly composed of older men and women of all ages, and labour shortages have developed in the rural areas as elsewhere, though the main

problem has been wage inflation brought about by competition with labouring wages obtainable in the rest of the Peninsula.

As we have seen traditional agriculture could not be expected to support the population, and historically had been unable to do so. With improved living conditions and the lowering of the death rate, population increase makes it even more unlikely that the land can bear this burden. The shortage of water precludes a high level of expansion of cultivated areas. While it has been established that ground water resources will allow some small expansion in Wadi Hadramaut, in other areas, particularly Tuban and Abyan, increased extraction of ground water in coming years will be used for domestic and industrial supply to the capital, and agriculture will not benefit substantially. The more pessimistic predictions suggest that agriculture may even decrease in these regions to improve the capital's supply as the resources are depleted.

The rural population which formed 66% of the population in 1973 dropped to 57% in 1980, largely through emigration. Rural poverty has clearly acted as a push factor, in 1973 the annual average wage in agriculture was YD 66.8 compared to a YD 200 average of all other sectors. The agricultural wage increased only by 3.3% by 1976 which compares unfavourably with other sectors. The most privileged, construction, started with a much higher base and increased by over 20% in the same period. Although sketchy, these figures do illustrate the push-pull factor out of agricultural employment and into the towns where life is easier, with facilities such as running water and electricity, and where work is available for wages much higher than in rural areas, while in the oil-exporting states wages are incomparably higher for the ordinary labourer. This vast differential between the rural areas and Aden was brought about by the totally different level of development in the colonial period, as I have discussed above.

Agriculture before independence

During the colonial period¹ agriculture and fisheries were the basic resource supplemented by emigrants' remittances. The cultivated area was then smaller than today and permanent irrigation relied on handpumps, the first few diesel pumps only being introduced, very selectively, in the late 1950s.

Some land was owned by 'large' landowners, mainly the sultans and amirs of the various statelets and some other rich families, the system being nowadays described as 'feudal' by the régime. It is highly questionable whether the land tenure system and relations of production can accurately be described in this way. The term 'large landowners' can also be misleading: as we have seen the country's total agricultural land is minute, so no landowner could be that 'large'. However on these lands most of the agricultural work was done under *sharecropping and other tenancy agreements*,

¹ There is a discussion of traditional agriculture on spate irrigated land in Wadi Hadramaut in A. S. Bujra *The Politics of Stratification* Oxford 1971, chapter 3; and of land tenure and water rights in Lahej in A. A. Maktari *Water rights and irrigation practices in Lahej*, Cambridge 1971.

with peasants receiving a small share of the crops they produced, sometimes less than a third, while the rest went to the landowner who used the revenues for the maintenance of his power base and extracted any surplus from his peasants, however meagre this may have been. Visiting the country” today it is important to note the origins of the wealth that is visible. In Wadi Hadramaut the numerous substantial palaces were financed from emigration and this is true even for the larger houses; it would be a mistake to assume that the Kathiri sultans extracted the wealth for their consumption locally, as the resources were unable to support this and in any case the sultans were poorer than some emigrant families. In other parts of the country, on the other hand, it can be assumed that the smaller establishments, such as those in Awlaqi or Audhali were financed by a combination of extracting surplus from the exploitation of the peasantry, and the taxation of goods and people going through the territories. It is clear that these sheikhs and amirs lived at a higher standard than their peasants, but it is equally clear that their wealth was comparative within an environment of poverty, rather than absolute.

As well as sharecroppers and landowners there were many small peasants who cultivated their own land, terraced plots in the highlands and fields in the larger wadis. Either way land was cultivated with primitive tools and with, at best, animal traction. Irrigation works were built with wooden ploughs and other hand implements, while draught animals were also used to draw water from shallow wells until the introduction of some diesel pumps in certain areas in the 1950s. Just as there were different types of land tenure, so was water controlled in different ways. Floodwater was distributed along canals under the control of paid and unpaid supervisors. Well water, by contrast, belonged to the owner of the land on which it was dug and he could sell some of it for irrigation to those who cultivated the neighbouring fields, though water for drinking was free. Water was a major problem for most peasants. In spate irrigated areas the wealthier landlords usually owned the land closest to the wadi which was also the best irrigated with the added benefit of fertile silt deposited by the flood, while the poorer peasants had the more remote land with no silt deposit and which was only reached by floodwaters in years of good rains. Well-irrigation was often beyond the means of poor peasants. From the early days of the British occupation of Aden, the neighbouring fertile areas of Abyan and Tuban were given over to the cultivation of fresh vegetables and animal fodder for the supply of Aden’s needs. In the 19th Century animal fodder was a major item as all supplies and draught work in the town was done by camels. Even water was supplied from these areas and carried by camels to the town.

Later in the 20th Century when liners called at Aden, a supply of fresh foods became almost as important, and many vegetables were grown to supply them as well as to feed British residents. As a result European varieties such as cauliflowers and cabbages were grown in the region and these were gradually introduced into the Yemeni diet.

In the 1950s the colonial power started devoting some attention to the development of the countryside and set up two show projects, both strategically located close enough to Aden to make them convenient destinations for visits by notables, as well as being

satisfactory picnic sites for weekend trips: these were the cotton schemes in Abyan and Lahej whose substance was easily superseded by their impact on public relations.

Independence and the Agrarian Reform

It is in this context that independence was achieved, bringing a new agricultural and rural policy:

‘We will make great efforts on the basis of the programme of the Political Organisation, the National Front, and the new Agrarian Reform Law to put an end to exploitation and fragmentation of land, and to set up cooperatives and state farms, encouraging collective work, equality of women in rights and obligations, strengthening the productive forces and the means of production, improving the quality of cultivable land, expanding its area, and employing every possible means to attain self-sufficiency from crops, and linking agriculture more closely to industrialisation plans.’²

As we have seen, the first Land Reform Law was issued in 1968 and was one of the foci of disagreement between the left of the NLF and Qahtan. It had been drafted by the right wing and limited individual ownership of land to 25 feddan for irrigated or 50 feddan for non-irrigated land, called for the redistribution of land to deserving NLF cadres and proposed the private exploitation of smallholdings. Announced after the Fourth Congress in 1968, this Law was never implemented due to the opposition of the left.

After the 22 June 1969 Corrective Move a more radical Agrarian Reform Law was issued in 1970. It first confiscated without compensation all lands and properties of the former rulers, their ministers and other clients as well as lands which they had given as gifts. The ceiling on land ownership was also lowered: ‘no person or household may own more than 20 feddan [8.5 ha] of irrigated land or 40 feddan [17 ha] of unirrigated land. No family may own more than 40 feddan of irrigated land or 80 feddan of non-irrigated land ...’³ Land above these amounts was to be taken over and redistributed by the state and paid for over 25 years by instalments in the form of nominal government bonds.

It was in the form of exploitation that innovation went furthest, as private agriculture was discouraged in favour of some form of collectivisation:

‘... agricultural cooperative societies shall be established on the confiscated and appropriated lands to be known as “cooperative farms”, membership of which shall be obligatory for all persons benefiting from state land and

² PDRY, *The Agrarian Reform Law*, London 1978, p. 8.

³ *op cit* an. 4 p. 11.

agrarian reform. Membership may also include persons other than those benefiting from state lands and agrarian reform among small owners. The state shall make efforts to establish collective and model farms to encourage other peasants and cooperative societies to undertake collective work.⁴

Redistributed lands were not to be sold, and the Law also put an end to exploitative mortgages.

While land is crucial to agriculture, water is the determining factor in the PDRY where agriculture could expand enormously if more water were available. The Law's provisions concerning water brought about its effective nationalisation: 'Water sources and main water sources and irrigation installations shall be deemed the property of the state.'⁵ The state's control over water resources has proved one of the Law's most positive features in the long run. The state, in the form of the Irrigation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, controls and directs the drilling of boreholes. The country's limited resources are thus used in a planned way, to avoid the widespread wildcat drilling found in the Y AR for example, where any returning migrant with a few thousand riyals to spare hires a drilling rig and drills a well regardless of reserves, as does his neighbour a few meters away, leading to a rapid lowering of the watertable with consequent deterioration of agriculture.

The Law itself was radical, both eliminating all large landholdings and encouraging collective exploitation of the land by former tenants, sharecroppers and small peasants. Its method of implementation was equally revolutionary. The NLF faced many problems in planning the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law. These stemmed from two main causes: first the lack of statistical data or socio-economic surveys of rural life and conditions which meant that, for example, the level set for maximum landholdings in the law had been decided arbitrarily, not on the basis of knowledge of land availability. Secondly there were no competent administrators in the rural areas to implement the Law and to reallocate the land. Because of this lack of cadres, to emphasize the political importance of the move, and to free the peasants from their submissive attitude to both landlords and central government authority, the NLF decided to sponsor uprisings, known as *intifadhat* to implement agrarian reform and particularly the expropriation of landlords. The very first one took place on 23 October 1970 in the Abyan governorate, at al Husn. A militant involved in it described it as follows two years later:

'I had joined the Front before independence ... We worked with those who had emerged as peasant leaders and we formed committees to survey landownership and distinguish the real feudalists from the smallholders. We held extensive meetings on how to solve the land problem for a year and a half. The landlords complained to the government about us subversive

⁴ *op cit* ans. 30 and 31 p. 18.

⁵ *op cit* art. 35 p. 19.

elements. They didn't know that the Front was involved. So the Government appointed someone to meet with both parties, as a cover. The main function was to set up a meeting of both sides: to get the landlords and the peasants together in one room and see how courageous the peasants were in speaking out.

The peasants came right out and claimed the land of those landlords, even the ones right there in the room. The landlords said they were all for agrarian reform, but according to the Law. The peasants replied that the land was theirs: they worked it. They said they would just take it. The meeting turned into a large demonstration. The peasants went out and surrounded the homes of the landlords. There was some fighting, but no real bloodshed. The landlords tried to instigate and revive old tribal feuds, but it was too late for any of that. They still didn't comprehend the involvement of the National Front in the uprising, supporting and encouraging it.⁶

This successful *intifadha* encouraged the NLF to continue implementation because it relied on the peasants who were to benefit from the Law, and helped to demonstrate the value of popular initiative, giving peasants and later fishermen and others a sense of power and confidence in their ability to control their own lives. In 1971 and 1972 many *intifadhat* took place throughout the country, mostly in the agricultural sector where they gradually spread from one region to the other with the encouragement and sponsorship of the NLF and under the supervision and control of its militants who also acted to prevent excessive violence. In 1972 Salmine explained the value of these uprisings as follows:

'Land is not given, it is taken. The National Front encourages the peasant and other popular revolts because only revolutionary violence is able to bring about a final separation between the large landowners and the workers, to dig an unpassable abyss between the exploiters and the exploited. Moreover the method has had major consequences: the peasants, fishermen and workers have formed militias to defend, by armed struggle if necessary, both their social achievements and the popular power which has made them possible.'⁷

Following the successful *intifadha* in al Husn and others in the Third, or Abyan, governorate, they took place in 1971 in Bayhan and 1971 and 1972 in Hadramaut. The uprisings were particularly important in the areas where submission to traditional leadership had been strong, as was the case in Hadramaut, and there the uprisings were prepared over a long period:

⁶ J. Stork, Socialist Revolution in Arabia in *MERIP Reports* no. 15, March 1973 p. 14, Washington DC.

⁷ President Salem Ruba'i Ali, quoted in E. Rouleau, L'Etoile Rouge sur le Yemen du Sud, *le Monde*,

‘The Agrarian Reform has not been implemented in Hadramaut. The beneficiaries themselves don’t want it “as they are paralysed by total terror of the feudalists and a false understanding of religion” ... That day Batam was happy. He had just received 500 firearms from the President, Salem Robaya, sponsor of “revolutionary violence” in the countryside. They were to be given to the peasant militias being formed. All that remained to be done was to organise the uprising. Thus the “clandestine” meeting of the agricultural workers of Fuwa, to which we have been invited took place. “Our task” the workers tell us “is to impose the agrarian reform law to the large feudalists” ...’⁸

The uprisings were seen not only as a way to redistribute the land according to the reform, but also as a means of consciousness raising for sections of the population who had not previously been politicised, involving them in the revolutionary process. Agrarian Reform presented difficulties not only because of the opposition of the bureaucracy and the few remaining landlords but also because of the suspicion of the peasants. As by 1972 the Law had not yet been implemented in Hadramaut, one of the country’s major agricultural region, the Fifth Congress of the NLF adopted specific resolutions to deal with the problems which persisted in the rural areas.

The Congress ‘stressed the need to implement the Agrarian Reform Ordinance in areas where it is not yet implemented, in particular the Fifth Governorate and empowers the Central Committee and Political Bureau to follow this up and hasten implementation of the ordinance through mass initiatives and uprisings by the peasants to be organised and led by the National Front Political Organisation’⁹

The same Congress noted the absence of a mass organisation for peasants and urged its rapid formation. This did not take place till 1976, illustrating again the difficulties of social or political reform in the rural regions. The proposed Peasants’ Union was seen as ‘enabling the cooperative peasants to play their major role in the rural areas amidst the broadest masses of peasants and toiling people to promote political awareness within their ranks and to urge them to increase production in order to make the three year development plan a success’¹⁰

Within the reorganisation of agricultural production, this Congress put a clear emphasis on the development of new forms of organisation, and pointed out its advantages:

‘The Congress approves the development of state farms and cooperatives and the spread of democracy in them in a way enabling the workers, farmers and peasants, taking advantage of the land, to share in having control of the operation of their work

Paris, 28–9 May 1972.

⁸ Rouleau *ibid.*

⁹ *Fifth Congress of the NFPO of the PDRY*, Aden 1972, duplicated. Resolution 5.

¹⁰ *op cit* resolution 6.

and their development in the interest of the development of the economy in the rural areas.’¹¹

It is clear from this that Agrarian Reform was hampered by two main obstacles: first the resistance of the few remaining members of the landowning classes and the traditional *sada*, which was to be expected. Secondly, and maybe more surprisingly, the traditional passivity of the peasantry was difficult to eradicate, requiring the NLF to sponsor and encourage land seizures.

There are many possible explanations for the peasants’ initial ‘wait and see’ attitude to the reform. Although most landlords were in exile or dead, a few remained, and peasants may have felt uncertain about longstanding debts to their landlords. Similarly seeds and other inputs had previously been provided by landowners: not knowing where they would come from in future may have induced caution.

The law effectively redistributed land and, although it recognized its ownership by the peasants, initially no certificates of title were handed out as it was hoped that cooperatives would become the basic landowning unit. Land went on being cultivated in usufruct and similarly water was shared and used by all peasants on a basis of even distribution for permanently irrigated lands. Neither land nor water could be used to exploit the peasantry by sale or sharecropping.

Up to the late 1970s the government concentrated its attention on the cooperatives and state farms and largely ignored the private sector which, however, remained and continued to develop mainly in the remote regions and in particular in the terraces on the mountains along the border with the YAR, in Lahej and Abyan governorates, with qat as its most profitable crop. This agriculture, though it contributed substantially to the nation’s total production remained largely ignored officially and unmentioned in the statistics, while the cooperatives and state farms were under constant supervision and scrutiny and received the lion’s share of investment.

The cooperatives

There had been a few cooperatives before independence sponsored by local rulers often with British assistance to encourage the development of cash crops. For example in Ghayl Bawazir on the Hadramaut coastal plain, the main tobaccogrowing area in the country, located about 40 km east of Mukalla, a cooperative was started before independence. When I visited it in 1980 I was told that before independence it had been formed by the large landowners, 10 of whom owned 60% of the farming land, but had included the smaller peasants, 400 of whom owned the remaining 40%. The landowners bought machines and charged the smaller peasants rates up to the value

¹¹ *op cit* resolution 7.

of their entire crop for their use, and in this way the large landowners benefited from the cooperative at the expense of the small growers. In 1966 the peasants first rose against this system and refused to deliver any tobacco to the landowners.

After independence they formed a new cooperative with 600 small peasants forming the first true cooperative in that region. In 1980 this cooperative had over 800 members and cultivated basic subsistence crops, including cereals and vegetables as well as the area's prized tobacco, which is sold throughout Yemen and even further afield.

The cooperatives were originally seen by the NLF as a way to improve agricultural production and to transform traditional power relations in the rural areas. In 1974 the purpose of cooperatives was officially described as follows:

‘The first principle was that cooperatives were to be based on common ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of increased agricultural productivity, the provision of goods and services at the lowest cost, better human relations, and the inculcation of cooperative members with a spirit of initiative. The creation of cooperatives was necessary ... to enable the state to provide interest-free loans and assistance, and hence to produce crops to meet the requirements of the agricultural development plan.’¹²

Two main types of cooperatives have developed in the 1970s: services cooperatives which are the most numerous and production cooperatives. In the former, peasants cultivate their land individually or on a family basis and a group of families known as work groups share the water from a common well. Such a group may vary in size according to the flow from the well and the amount of cultivable land it can irrigate. In these cooperatives the individual members market their produce through the cooperative and separate accounts are kept of each members' contributions.

Production cooperatives ‘are based on the merging of landholdings, on common ownership of the instruments of production, and on cooperative work. In this case small plots of land and animals are set aside for individual exploitation.’¹³ Peasants join work groups and cultivate the land collectively, selling their produce to the cooperative and sharing out the proceeds. Production sharing cooperatives are considered to be a more advanced form of cooperation, as they are closer to socialised production and do away with the differences of landholdings. In the 1970s the stated aim was to turn all cooperatives into production ones by the mid 1980s but this plan was put in abeyance as a result of the problems encountered. There are now less than half a dozen of them.

In both types of cooperatives the peasants, be they individual heads of families or production groups, have the same relationship to the cooperative administration. When it was set up in the early 1970s, the organisation of agricultural cooperatives gave the cooperative staff the following responsibilities to its members:

¹² *PDRY Ministry of Information, Economic achievements of Democratic Yemen* 1974, English edition, London 1977, p. 13.

¹³ *op cit* p. 15.

- Marketing of farm produce, either to the Home Trade Company for cereals or to the Public Corporation for the Marketing of Fruit and Vegetables (PCMFV) for perishables. Cooperatives often failed in this latter duty, claiming that they did not have transport facilities for the collection and sale of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Maintenance and distribution of water pumps for shallow wells and for boreholes; this work is done either in the cooperative's own workshop or at a nearby Machinery Rental Station (MRS) if there is one. (The variety of pumps used and their age often mean that spare parts are unavailable and the lack of foreign exchange delays their replacement.)
- Distribution of seeds, fertilizers and other inputs; the cooperative should purchase seeds from the national seed distribution organisation in the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) or the Seed Multiplication Project. Fertilizers and other inputs are supposed to be supplied either by Ministry branch offices or through the agricultural extension programme, which is slowly developing in the 1980s.
- Agricultural machinery. A few cooperatives have owned small tractors for some years and these can be used by the members. In the 1970s the Machine Rental Stations were created to supply machinery services to cooperative members; they are located in the main agricultural centres and hire machinery for land preparation to the peasants through the cooperatives. They have had many problems however and their role was redefined in the late 1970s, when regulations made it easier for peasants to purchase small wheeled tractors privately. This has improved mechanisation in land preparation, as the MRS were unable to meet the demand for machinery and were being blamed for seriously hindering production.

— Social security is an important responsibility of the cooperative which takes a levy of 3% of production for its social fund to be used to assist members who are sick or otherwise in need. In the early years this money was not accounted for separately and it was difficult to see how much was used for these purposes.

With the initial impetus of the Agrarian Reform, the number of agricultural cooperatives rose as follows:

Development of Agricultural Cooperatives

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of coops</i>	<i>Number of members</i>
1970	13	19,000
1973	41	29,000
1976	44	36,000
1980	54	40,000
1983	61	44,000

(Source: MAAR)

This rise in the number of cooperatives shows the importance they have achieved in Yemeni agriculture. By 1980 they were responsible for over 30% of agricultural production value and more than half the population involved in agriculture worked within the cooperative system. This represents an undoubted success in the transformation of agriculture, but it has not taken place without problems.

To ensure that the cooperatives provided the services for which they were responsible rules were centrally determined and from the earliest days each cooperative had a salaried staff including a director and staff responsible for accounting, planning, supplies, marketing etc. Their salaries were based on those of the civil service and were higher than the earnings of most peasants, and specifically their own members, creating a gap between cooperative staff and members. The staff felt less immediate concern for the members' welfare than they would if their earnings depended on their efficiency; and the peasant members had no control over these salaries which were, after all, paid with their labour in the fields.

The amounts levied by the cooperative from the peasants' production in the 1970s were substantial. The cooperative acted as taxman, collecting the 10% production tax set by the state; it also levied 5% of production towards its own running costs, a 3% contribution towards the social security fund, and in some areas another 3–5% towards repairs and maintenance of wells.

To these levies from the peasants the cooperative added others. It retained 10% of the sale price from the 10% of the crop it had levied on behalf of the Treasury (this means it kept 1% of the gross value of the crop and passed on 9% to the Treasury). Moreover it marketed for its own benefit the amount it levied from the producers for services (namely the 5% cooperative costs and social security contributions and well maintenance contributions). On top of all this it retained 5% commission on the produce marketed on behalf of the members (ie on the 80% of the crop which was left for the peasants).

Altogether, as far as the peasant could see, the cooperative office workers were doing far better than he⁽⁷⁾ was, and for far less effort. They also appeared to fail in their duties: seeds, fertilizers, insecticides were not available on time and in the required quantities, farm machinery was unavailable when needed and wells were not repaired and maintained satisfactorily; marketing of perishables was inadequate. The fact that the cooperative office marketed all produce (or was supposed to) and accounted to its members only once a year, aroused confusion and suspicion. Once a year the peasant was given vast numbers of pieces of paper, with a wealth of figures and a small amount of cash, little reward for the produce he had handed over to the cooperative for marketing. The deductions included all those discussed above as well as possible invoices

⁽⁷⁾ 'He' is used advisedly; officially there are no women heads of household and therefore no women cooperative members as the male orientation of the bureaucracy does not recognise women in such a position. Of course in reality, in PDRY as elsewhere many households and farms are run by women.

for fuel or loans etc. This rapidly led peasants to regard cooperatives as a source of exactions from them rather than as their agent and servant.

Over the years the peasants became dissatisfied as the structures of the cooperatives proved inefficient and the gap between their standard of living and that of office workers and emigrants increased to their disadvantage; as we have seen in the mid-1970s rural incomes were about a third of those in urban sectors.

The fact that the cooperative administration was required to act as tax collector for the government further aggravated its relations with its members. The role of the cooperative administration as tax collector has probably been one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of the system: it induced members to conceal their real production and to sell produce through irregular channels to avoid taxation. This led to a statistical decline in production, which probably does not entirely reflect reality. For example wheat yields which were 1.80 tons/feddan in 1975 fell to 0.63 tons/feddan in 1980 but this change probably indicates unofficial marketing by peasants rather than such a disastrous decline in production.

Vegetables on the other hand increased their overall yield in the cooperative sector from 2.28 tons/feddan in 1975 to 3.77 in 1980; this may be due partly to the fact that their marketing was better and prices were relatively higher, though still very low.

Productivity has been a real problem and real growth in agricultural production in the 1970s was extremely low despite the very considerable investment in this sector: 23% of development investment in the Three Year Plan, and 22% in the FFYP. Although only 11.8% was originally planned for the current SFYP 14% was spent in the first two years of the Plan. Between 1973 and 1979 agricultural output increased by only 1.8% and agriculture's share of GDP dropped from 14.6% in 1973 to only 8% in 1980. Without giving further examples it is clear that agriculture failed to develop as hoped by the régime, despite massive investment.

The problems of agriculture and new policies for the 1980s

These were particularly visible in the cooperatives as the state farms had different ones which affected fewer people and there was little concern about the private sector in the 1970s. The main symptoms of these problems were low yields and declining production. These were attributed to four main causes.

a The organisational structure of the cooperatives: where the main problems were i) the cooperative's role as tax collector; ii) the inefficiency of the cooperative in providing the services it was responsible for and iii) the fact that cooperative staff received salaries independently of the quality of their work. By the early 1980s, reform was underway in the organisation and administration of cooperatives, aimed at giving more power to the cooperative members. Small production groups are giving way to larger ones as

boreholes replace shallow wells. The drilling of boreholes requires new field and canal layouts and the redefinition of plots among a much larger group of peasants. In this way the basic production group becomes much larger, more families share the water of a single well to irrigate far more land, they can then form a group to obtain agricultural credit from the bank for the purchase of small tractors and to buy inputs and services from the main cooperative as required, but with greater autonomy for the group and hence less opportunity for bureaucratic holdups. Another change is the decision to give cooperative peasants certificates of title to their land. Since the implementation of agrarian reform, the land had been redistributed to those who cultivated it in amounts usually well below the limits set by the land reform, as agricultural land is in such short supply. However deeds were not given to peasants who thus felt that their tenure was insecure. Starting in the mid-1970s title deeds were given to peasants for newly reclaimed land, and in 1981 it was decided to give them to all peasants. Inheritance is permitted only as long as family members work the property. The land must be taken care of and if the peasant abandons it, the government has the right to re-possess it, though this would have to be done through action in the courts. These new measures are expected to contribute towards an improvement in agricultural performance by encouraging peasants to invest in their land.

b The taxation system in agriculture is based on production, being a 10% levy on production for most crops, and 15% for cash crops like cotton and tobacco while qat is taxed at 20%. Animal fodder is not taxed. This form of taxation has a number of unattractive features for the peasants. A tax on output discourages productivity; it discriminates against those who market their production through official channels as they are then taxed and encourages use of the black market. The result is expansion in cultivation of animal fodder which is untaxed and highly profitable. Finally, as we have seen, the role of cooperatives as tax collectors strikes at the relationship between the peasant and the cooperative staff. In the early 1980s considerable efforts were made to deal with the problem of taxation though no obvious solution had been found at the time of writing. A land tax was not seen as a satisfactory solution, as it would require complex evaluation of soil quality, ease of communications, irrigation etc. A second possibility was a tax based on area and production, but this involved other problems. A third, attractive, possibility was the exemption of ordinary agriculture from taxation and the raising of qat tax to 30%. In 1980 tax on qat at 20% had provided 72% of all agricultural tax, increasing it to 30% and abolishing the others would produce the same revenue for the Treasury. The problems involved in such a solution are mainly ideological and relate to the regime's official discouragement of qat growing and chewing. Tax on qat was indeed raised in early 1984 and purchase prices rose far more than the added tax, proving once again that consumers are willing to pay any price for their qat. A further attraction of this solution is that all qat growing is in private hands and qat farmers are far richer than any others due to the high price of their crop.

While consumers may grumble at increased prices this is a minor drawback.

A fourth solution which may be tested in the next phase of the Wadi Hadramaut agricultural project after 1985, would be to replace production tax by a charge for irrigation improvements, based on area, but the Ministry has doubts of the viability of such a solution.

c Low farmgate prices set by the government in 1973 to keep the cost of living down, have increased the gap between rural and urban incomes as the countryside was effectively subsidising the towns. At the time this was seen as a solution to the country's financial problems where low home-grown food prices would complement subsidies on imported foods. But for the peasants equivalent subsidies were not available on non-agricultural goods to compensate for these low incomes. The first price increases made in 1977 were very modest. In the next few years farmgate prices were restructured to provide more flexibility for increased prices in midseason to encourage harvesting of crops like tomatoes which had previously been left to rot, and to bring the prices up to levels which would encourage the peasants to plant and harvest. The price of off-season tomatoes rose from 70 fils/kg in 1973 to 150 fils/kg in 1982. Although farmgate prices have increased remarkably consumer prices have increased far less, as the marketing organisation has acted as a buffer by reducing its commissions and increasing its own efficiency. A problem throughout the period has been the arbitrary setting of prices both at the farmgate and for consumers. In neither case have prices been determined by costs, leading to distortions in the market.

d Marketing Peasants do not have the means or the capital to take their crops to the marketing organisations, and the cooperatives whose responsibility it has been to collect the produce have often failed to do it because they too lacked the infrastructure. Communications within the country are still inadequate in many regions making transport of crops to the markets expensive. The two marketing organisations are the Public Corporation for the Marketing of Fruit and Vegetables (PCXMFV) founded in 1973 and the Home Trade Company, the latter being responsible for cereals and sesame, while the former is responsible for all other crops. When first set up these institutions were supposed to market all production, both that planned centrally and allocated to individual farmers and any surplus over the Plan. They were also responsible for both wholesale and retail marketing through their own outlets in most parts of the country. PCMFV used to operate profitably but as a result of the increases in prices paid to producers which, through government intervention were not entirely passed on to the consumer, in recent years they have been unable to recover costs on some fresh produce and have therefore been inefficient in collecting them. As a result of the shortages of supplies in the late 1970s the Corporation has made efforts to improve the efficiency of its distribution network and in the early 1980s was busy building cold storage units in a number of strategic locations, and improving its wholesaling ability. The Corporation's retailing operations, unprofitable since the earliest days, were started largely as part of the early 1970s opposition to small shopkeepers. It opened retail shops in the main towns and larger villages of the country except in Shabwa and Mahra governorates where marketing has remained private throughout. However by the late 1970s some

of these retail shops, particularly the smaller ones, had caused the Corporation great difficulties without satisfying the consumers. In the 1980s the PCMFV is considering abandoning its retail operations altogether to concentrate on its wholesale operations from collection to sale to retailers, including storage, cold stores and transport. Prices continue to be fixed by the government, and there is therefore little risk of profiteering by small traders.

Marketing structures have been fundamentally transformed since 1978 when the government permitted cooperatives both in agriculture and fisheries to market 40% of their produce directly and individual cooperative members to market privately produce which is grown in excess of the Plan norms. Cooperative and private marketing take place at prices above those of the public sector, but still within limits set by the government. This has enabled cooperative members to increase their incomes; and the direct link at the retail level between the small producer and potential consumers through small shopkeepers has improved distribution, particularly in smaller towns and villages where the national network is non-existent.

e Inputs A further problem which in the past has plagued both cooperative and private agriculture has been the supply of agricultural inputs ranging from seeds to fertilizers and insecticides. During the 1970s peasants found difficulty in obtaining fertilizers in the required quantities at the right time and moreover found the price extremely high. As a result between 1975 and 1980 the amount of nutrients used was particularly low: 15 kg/ha compared to what the World Bank considered desirable (100–250 units/ha on irrigated and 25–75 units/ha on spate irrigated land). In 1982 a new system was instituted through the creation of the Public Corporation for Agricultural Services (PCAS) which is responsible for the distribution of all agricultural inputs and is setting up branches in all the major agricultural regions for more effective distribution of inputs.

The use of animal waste for fertilizer is very low as dung is mostly used as a fuel. There were suggestions for a project to process urban waste into compost, but little has been heard of this in recent years, although the idea seems both feasible and reasonable.

f Mechanisation As we have seen Machinery Rental Stations were created in the early 1970s to supply at reasonable cost tractors and crawlers for land preparation in agriculture. By 1982 there were 11 stations throughout the country, with a few substations. Thanks to heavy government subsidies the charges made by the MRS were below cost and hiring their tractors became an attractive proposition for cooperatives and private farmers. Indeed, until the private purchase of tractors was eased in the late 1970s it was almost the only way of obtaining mechanical assistance. Because the stations had to operate on low charges, they have been unable to break even. A second major problem has been the difficulty in obtaining spare parts and getting qualified mechanics to repair the machinery, a problem aggravated by the machinery being of different origin, types and age, for which spare parts are at best difficult and costly to obtain and often impossible. Many of their machines have been almost permanently

out of action and the MRS have been unable to make the repairs required at the right time, many peasants have found that their fields could not be ploughed when needed, leading to loss of production. The MRS have, when possible, used their tools and skills in the manufacture of spare parts and other metal goods and the repair of private vehicles.

In the 1980s the MRS are concentrating mainly on heavy earthmoving machinery and also adjusting prices to bring them closer to costs, making it possible for them to operate autonomously and have funds to replace and repair machinery. Smaller wheeled tractors will increasingly be purchased directly by cooperative working groups. Relaxation in the private sales of tractors has had a rapid and visible effect throughout the country. Travelling in the late 1970s one rarely saw tractors in the fields, but in 1981 they were numerous and to be seen in the spate irrigated regions which had previously shown little signs of private investment. In March 1982 the total number of privately owned wheeled tractors was 693, over half the total for the country while cooperatives and state farms owned 107 and the MRS 447. This tendency towards private purchase of tractors continued: on a visit to the potato-growing area in Mukayras highlands in March 1984, I found that almost every farmer owned a tractor with various attachments for carrying construction materials or firewood, as well as for ploughing and cultivation although tractors were said to cost YD 10,000 each, while the annual salary of an engineer was about YD 1,000. Higher incomes from both agriculture and emigration as well as the easing of import regulations explain this boom in tractor sales.

Before moving on to the other agricultural sectors I should summarise the effect of the various reforms on the cooperatives and their prospects for the rest of the 1980s. As a result of the measures taken, cooperative members can expect to be more directly involved in the affairs of the cooperative with larger working groups sharing responsibility for a borehole and possibly jointly purchasing a tractor; they should be able to act independently financially and purchase inputs directly from the PCAS; to market their produce through the cooperative with greater efficiency and have access to credit through the cooperative; they should be able to hire large crawlers directly from the MRS; and the taxation and cooperative levy systems may be reformed. The distribution of title deeds by the government for family landholdings, may act as a major personal incentive as it will institutionalise the redistributive achievements of the reforms to the benefit of peasants.

The State farms

State farms were set up on lands confiscated from the earlier amirs and sultans, as well as on newly reclaimed land not previously cultivated. Their number has varied considerably since independence. In 1974 there were 26 with over 13 thousand feddan and close to 1,500 workers. By 1977 there were 35 state farms with a labour force of 4,000. In 1982 there were 47 state farms with 29,000 feddan. However they account

for only about 11% of agricultural production in the early 1980s. These farms are highly mechanised and all their cultivated land is irrigated by borehole, according to the law on state farms. Employees are paid a basic monthly salary. In the 1970s these salaries were as low as YD 25 or 30 per month, and productivity on these farms was extremely low despite the technical assistance and support of Soviet experts on most of them.

In the 1980s a restructuring of the state farms is taking place; some have been merged and others which showed no prospect of profitability have been turned into agricultural cooperatives. In 1983 a study on state farms was completed which is likely to form the basis for future reforms. It proposes the reduction in their number to 17 through a process of mergers, and also by giving some up and proposes various management improvements. In future state farms are meant to be models of the use of modern technology in agriculture, high productivity and good management and further investment will include the cementing of irrigation canals, the redesigning of fields to make them more suitable for mechanised agriculture, better training for workers and managers, and more incentives in the salary scales. Unlike the cooperatives, the state farms are self-sufficient in equipment, most of it acquired from the Soviet Union which sends experts to assist their development.

State farm cropping patterns do not differ markedly from those of cooperatives though they concentrate on wheat and other cereals whose cultivation is easy to mechanise. Despite mechanisation, these farms need much seasonal labour for harvesting vegetable crops, tomatoes in particular, and this raises costs and revives the problems of labour shortages. Vegetable crops are grown in state farms near markets and where there are agro-industries such as the tomato canning plant. There are also livestock state farms which grow mainly fodder for their animals: these are located within reasonable access of the capital which is the main market. The philosophy behind state farms in Democratic Yemen is largely in support of mechanised farming due to the existing labour shortage as this kind of farming allows the use of land which would otherwise remain fallow and the necessity for greater agricultural production need not be stressed.

The private sector

For political reasons this sector was neglected in the 1970s when it was allowed to survive but got no official attention or assistance. Its contribution was ignored in official statistics, except implicitly, making up the difference between total production and cooperative and state farm production. Most private farms are in remoter areas, and particularly in the more populated high terraced lands along the border with the YAR. In some areas of mainly private agriculture, such as Mukayras and Bayhan, there are services cooperatives. There are also very small units, such as gardens in Wadi Hadramaut, which are too small to have been redistributed, and small oases in

the wilderness. Altogether it is estimated that 15 to 25,000 ha are privately cultivated annually on average, most of this under spate irrigation from the monsoon rains twice a year in the highlands, though in recent years, private farmers with cash available from remittances may have used it to dig shallow wells, but not boreholes as these may only be drilled under supervision from the MAAR, to avoid overexploitation of the watertable.

About one-third of cultivated land in an average year is cropped in the private sector. This land is worked by an estimated 100,000 peasants and their families many of whom use traditional agricultural techniques, though this sector also owns half the wheeled tractors in the country. In the early 1980s, the first years for which actual separate figures are available, the private sector is credited with over 50% of agricultural production in value, though it is unclear whether this includes qat or not; Qat is grown on a licence basis entirely in the private sector but it only uses about 1,000 ha of land though it is by far the most profitable cash crop grown, and as noted above in 1980 it paid 72% of all agricultural taxation at the rate of 20% *ad valorem*.

Private agriculture continues to be a significant factor in agriculture and to produce all kinds of crops. In the highlands qat is supplemented by coffee and various fruit trees. The basic crops are sorghum, wheat and potatoes, with small areas given over to vegetables. Given its productivity and its recent high level of investment in mechanisation, further study of this sector would be useful and it is interesting to note that the new organisation of cooperatives, for example, may allow expansion of the limited cooperation with the private sector. In Bayhan for example, where most farming land is private but there is also a cooperative, in 1980 it was clear that the cooperative assisted the private sector by providing seeds and fertilizers and the MRS also assisted with the rental and repair of equipment and wells, even though most farmers at that time had not found it worthwhile to join the cooperative. However it is likely that increased benefits from the cooperative would encourage joining and collaboration, which already existed informally. For example a group of six farmers whom I met had joined together to purchase a new tractor. The private purchase of tractors had been made easier in that year and many were bought. The most popular model is the versatile Massey-Ferguson 250, which has a number of different attachments.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION BY SECTORS

(YD '000 constant 1980 prices)

	1980	%	1981	%	1982	%	1983*	%
State farms	5,215	18.6	4,333.2	11.12	3,280.86	11.21	4,300	12.11
Cooperatives	8,693	31	15,091.6	38.75	8,816.26	30.14	12,100	34.1
Private	14,126	50.38	19,513.3	50.11	17,153.19	58.64	19,000	53.4
Total	28,034		38,938.1		29,259.31		35,400	

(source: Ministry of Planning, 1984)

According to this table, in recent years agricultural production has been dominated by the private sector in value: this is due to the high value of qat. Of the remaining 50% cooperatives accounted for a third on average. If qat were excluded the table would be very different. The variation from year to year is due in this period to climatic upheavals, as the underlying trend is upwards, 1982 being a freak year of serious floods.

Livestock

The public sector's role is restricted to a number of state farms which specialise in the production of cattle or poultry. The cattle farms in 1981 were responsible for 400 head of cattle, including those for both meat and milk production. Sheep and goats on state farms numbered one thousand animals, a remarkably low figure considering how widespread these animals are. In poultry the state sector plays an increasingly important role, and after a difficult start in the 1970s when poultry farms were decimated by disease, production in the 1980s has picked up and has allowed a real reduction in imports. In 1982 the state sector maintained about 40% of the national herd of cattle and 15% of the poultry population. In the decade 1970 to 1980 poultry meat production in the public sector rose from 4.8 tons in 1970 to 134.8 tons in 1980, and peaked in 1976 at 218.9 tons before decreasing due to disease and then picking up again. Production of eggs rose from 0.8 million in 1970 to 16 million in 1980, having similarly peaked in 1976 at 18.9 million before disease struck. The sector is expanding with new units being opened in Hadramaut at Fuwa near Mukalla and others being expanded in the mid-1980s.

State farm cattle have met with less success. The breeds used are not indigenous and their need for special feeds and care make these farms difficult to run, while cattle are less demanding. The productivity of imported cattle has been low and these farms are, in the mid 1980s, in the process of reorganisation. In 1981 the state farm sector produced 160 tons of meat and 1,560 tons of milk.

Most livestock is individually-owned in the settled areas. In 1981 this was estimated to include 30,000 camels, 600,000 sheep and 600,000 goats as well as 750,000 poultry and 95,000 cattle. This livestock forms the basic supply of meat and milk products for the population outside the major urban centres, and ownership of livestock is also a status symbol which is maintained beyond economic justification. Urban people hire herdsman to look after their sheep and goats which are also fed purchased fodder. As we have seen fodder is sold on the private market and untaxed and is a highly profitable crop.

The cost of maintaining animals in this way is beyond any tangible return. Cattle are normally kept on an individual basis and fed at home by hand in a very time-consuming process. There is little in the way of veterinary services, and slaughter

takes place on major feasts and other family celebrations or when there is a need for cash in the family. The selling price of locally produced meat is very high, and quite disproportionate to the produce purchased, but there is a strong local preference for domestic as opposed to imported meat. Even in towns where cheap government imported meat is available, people continue to buy the local meat at far higher prices. Experts have tended to ignore the social status role of livestock which must be taken into consideration in any planning of the sector. What little milk is produced is used by the family or possibly exchanged with neighbours, and remains unmarketed.

The third sector of livestock production is that of nomadic and semi-nomadic herding on the grazing lands of the country, and extends into the settled areas for gleanings and when drought drives them off the highlands. About 25,000 Bedu families herd about 70,000 camels, 100,000 sheep and 700,000 goats. In 1980 they produced partly for sale in the markets 1,100 tons of camel meat, 198 tons of mutton and 1,078 tons of goat meat, 2,500 litres of camel milk, 150 of sheep milk and 2,000 of goat milk, which may have made a slight contribution to the diet of their families, being the only such products available where the nomads live. This livestock sector is getting some help from the Bedu Development Project which had by the early 1980s drilled 52 wells in areas where the water table was substantial and rehabilitated or built over 30 storage tanks for rain water.

Trade and processing of animal products, like its production, is mainly in the private sector. Privately-owned animals are slaughtered privately and sold at high prices. The public sector trade is confined almost entirely to the distribution of imported meat and the marketing of the produce of the state farms. The Public Corporation for Meat Marketing largely restricts its role to wholesaling; private retailers buy imported meat from the Corporation. Apart from home consumption of milk from the family herd, milk products are manufactured at the dairy in Aden which distributes milk (fresh and UHT), cheese and yoghurt, most of which are processed from imported milk powder.

Agricultural and self sufficiency

As we have seen, the country has always been unable to feed its population, but since independence the régime has invested over 20% of its development expenditure on improving agriculture with the aim of reducing the country's dependence on imported foods. In spite of the disappointments of the 1970s, in the 1980s improved production in most crops is expected from the irrigation and other major investment of the last decade as well as increased efficiency in the cooperative sector and of state farms. Other factors expected to improve production are reforms in the taxation system and better distribution of produce and of agricultural inputs. Finally the private sector is expected to benefit from many of these improvements and continue to hold its share in production.

There are products which cannot be grown in the country and which have become staples, and these will continue to have to be imported: they include rice, sugar, and tea. But by 1982 the country produced up to 40% of its food grains, including 100% of its sorghum, and wheat production is expected to increase though not beyond 25% of requirements. By the early 1980s the greatest progress had been made in the production of vegetables, where the country was close to self-sufficiency, and with a surplus for some fruits like bananas and water melons, while oranges and apples remained top on the list of fruit imports. In the medium term the government hopes to achieve complete self-sufficiency in vegetables and to achieve 60% home production for cereals. The cost of food imports in 1982 was YD 90 million, a third of GDP, and the increasingly high cost of food imports weighs heavily on the country's balance of payments. In 1982 the value of home grown agricultural output was about a third of that of food imports, giving an indication of how far there is to go.

There is no doubt that agriculture did not produce the returns expected in the 1970s despite considerable investment. Most of this investment has however been in long-term projects such as irrigation, whose benefits will be spread over many years and which are likely to be recouped with the improvement in crop yields. Distribution is expected to improve as a result of the administrative reforms undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while better communications throughout the country will also improve distribution and help to lower production costs, solving many of the marketing bottlenecks which existed in the 1970s. New pricing policies more closely related to costs of labour and inputs should also improve rural incomes and reduce the gap between rural and urban incomes. Increased cooperative and direct producer to consumer marketing should contribute towards increasing the incomes of peasants. There is no prospect of the country becoming a major agricultural producer but it may be able to satisfy most of its needs, at least in fruit and vegetables and even be able to expand its exports in these sectors, particularly towards the northern part of the homeland which currently imports enormous quantities of all fresh fruits and vegetables from the four comers of the world.

In the past projects have concentrated on the economic aspects of agriculture and have planned for growth in production on the narrowest economic factors. This has not always proved successful and in future more account should be taken of wider social and political considerations, particularly the needs and desires of peasant families, planning for social and cultural needs, as well as directly economic ones.

Chapter Nine: Fisheries and Industry

These two productive sectors of the economy were responsible for 3% and 16% of output and 2% and 10.5% of employment respectively in 1981 and, combined, were responsible for a far larger output but a much smaller share of employment than agriculture. Both these sectors were extremely weak at the time of independence but many hopes revolved around their potential contribution to the development of the country. Industry in particular was seen as a symbol of modernisation and socialism.

Fisheries

It was generally believed at the time of independence that the waters surrounding the PDRY were particularly rich in fish. In 1976 a World Bank report estimated sustainable annual yields at over 360,000 tons or 2½ times the 1975 catch.

Thanks to the idea that the coast's fish resources were unlimited, massive efforts were made to increase yields from 1967 onwards, peaking in 1977 when there was a record catch of 162,000 tons. In the following years, the catch fell dramatically. This was attributed at first to adverse weather and reproductive conditions, as well as to low productivity on the part of some sectors of the Yemeni fishing fleet, but later overfishing by foreign companies was also blamed for the depletion. A study made in 1976 suggested that a prospective annual catch of about 125,000 tons was a more realistic figure for future planning. Early expansion and investment in fisheries reveals the regime's policies and their choice of priorities for development. With the heavy import costs for the country's basic food staples and the lack of exportable commodities, the expansion of fisheries was early on seen as a potential solution. Fish production would improve the national diet with cheap protein and also be a source of foreign exchange through exports. Consequently a two-pronged policy was initiated by the Public Corporation for Fish Wealth established in 1970, which later in 1977, became the Ministry of Fish Wealth, breaking its previous formal link with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The policy can be seen in the Three Year Development Plan 1971–72 to 73–74. This envisaged the increased role of the public sector in fisheries through the acquisition of 20 fishing boats and the building of 3 refrigerated ships locally. Fish processing and canning were also projected, as well as investment in preservation facilities for

both internal consumption and export, including refrigerated transport and storage in the hinterland, and on the coast for collection and export. No direct investment was planned for cooperatives, which were expected to raise investment capital through bank loans. Actual investment during the Three Year Plan amounted to YD 2.3 million or 7.2% of the total. In the First Five Year Plan fisheries obtained a higher share of investment due to the high return still expected. In this period fisheries got 13.7% or YD 26.8 million, and an examination of its distribution may help to explain some of the problems which the sector later encountered.

In the 1970s the national fleet acquired 19 modern trawlers, 9 purse seiners and 4 tugs and ships; the modernisation of the port of Khalf (Mukalla) was started; two fish meal and two fish canning plants were built. These large-scale investments took all the available funds, and the cooperative fishermen, who were responsible for the bulk of production and whose living and working conditions were particularly harsh, received a negligible amount of assistance. In the 1970s no more than two receiving stations and about 60 motorised boats were provided, leading to a dramatic decline in this sector, but this was not a cause for concern as long as the large modern fleet appeared to be successful. Production rose and income from exports came to form almost half of all commodity exports. It was only in the late 1970s, when production from the industrial fleet fell that the policy was examined critically and to some extent modified. Later I will discuss the development of the different fisheries sub-sectors, but the following production figures summarise the situation.

OVERALL FISH PRODUCTION

('000 tons)

<i>year</i>	<i>production</i>
1967	83.6
1968	91.1
1969	119.3
1970	115.0
1971	113.7
1972	123.5
1973	133.4
1974	143.2
1975	143.5
1976	157.9
1977	162.0
1978	48.0
1979	51.6
1980	89.7
1981	78.0
1982	66.0

Source: Fish Wealth in Democratic Yemen, Ali Abdul Amir, Aden, 1983, p. 59

This table is given here purely for indicative purposes as there are significant errors. It overestimates the total catch of sardines between 1974 and 1977 while between 1978 and 1982 real production was higher than stated, as the figures presented here for the later period totally ignore the sardine catch as well as dried fish production. Since 1979 when private marketing took off, records of production have become less comprehensive, casting further doubt on these figures. Reservations on the accuracy of these figures also apply to most others. This is one reason why I have not filled this work with statistics.

1. Development of the fisheries cooperatives

At independence fisheries were under the control of a few owners along the coast who owned the boats used by about 13,000 fishermen, most of whom lived in hut-settlements along the coast, deprived of any facilities. The owners appropriated the catch and divided the proceeds according to investment shares and status of those on the boat, thus ensuring their own higher income without having to go out to sea, and giving a larger share to the captain and a smaller one to ordinary fishermen. Fishermen at the bottom of the scale remained extremely poor. In a movement similar to that which took place in agriculture, the NLF encouraged uprisings, or *intifadhat*, among the fishermen, to take control of the boats and other facilities from the owners and reorganise themselves in cooperatives. This took place in the early 1970s and resulted in the formation of 13 cooperatives, each with branches in the main fishing villages in its area. As other fisheries enterprises were started by the government, the number of fishermen involved in cooperatives gradually declined from about 13,000 at independence, to 8,500 in 1974. By 1977 there were about 7,000 members and in 1983 only about 3,000. Cooperative production was 33,000 tons in 1976, 35,000 in 1980, and 20,000 in 1982.

Unlike agricultural cooperatives, fisheries cooperatives have been almost totally neglected by state investment. This has clearly affected membership although catches have risen. The decline in the number of fishermen is due to a number of factors: first many younger fishermen transferred to the national fleet or the fleet of the Coastal Fisheries Department where conditions of work were easier and incomes more reliable. There were also natural causes, the death and retirement of older fishermen and the tendency of younger men to prefer other less arduous jobs, particularly when they have been educated. Emigration from fishing villages was a logical step for those who could take it given the absence of social services to be found there by comparison with what was available in the towns. The pricing policy of fish in the 1970s combined with the increased costs of fuel were other factors driving fishermen out of their traditional occupation. These push factors were accompanied by the pull factor of the high wages to be gained in other sectors of the economy and particularly abroad, making emigration attractive to towns and to other countries in the Peninsula.

Official indifference to cooperatives also played a part. Out of an investment of close to YD 40 million in the 1970s the cooperatives gained no more than about 60 boats with engines and two receiving stations in the Hadramaut governorate, a further discouragement to the children of fishermen from following in their fathers' footsteps. By the late 1970s it was realised by the government that despite its total neglect, the cooperatives accounted for over a third of total production and about half of production for the internal market.

Cooperative fishermen live along the country's coastline in small settlements. These are mostly one room huts built with drift wood, palm fronds for shade and sometimes solid walls. The settlements are often some distance from a source of fresh water which must be carried by hand, and most of them have no facilities such as supplies of fuel for boat engines, tools, refrigeration, health centre, schools or shops. From these bases the fishermen set out to fish. Their boats are old and much repaired, powered by sail or more often motors and oars with old and much repaired nets to catch the fish which forms the basis of their diet. When there is enough they will try to conserve and sell it.

Their main complaint, and I heard this all along the coast, is the depletion of the fish resources, which was universally attributed to the 'big ships', ie the foreign, joint and Yemeni industrial fishing fleets, all of which are accused of fishing in coastal waters which according to the law are reserved for the smaller scale operators. The 'remedies' available to the cooperatives could only be described as farcical. The cooperatives must write a letter of complaint to the Ministry stating the facts of the case (this itself is difficult as most people are illiterate and postboxes are found only in towns) and when this letter reaches the Ministry, which could take weeks, the case is investigated and the Ministry issues warnings to the ship captains. The poor fishermen who sometimes have their nets cut and lose their livelihood, have no effective redress against the actions of the modern fishing fleet, so their hostility to the rival modern sector is fuelled.

In 1984 a Cabinet Resolution was issued on the supervision of fishing boats, giving the government more powers of control including having inspectors permanently stationed on industrial fishing vessels, both Yemeni and foreign. Penalties can be imposed on captains without lengthy procedures.

Distribution is a major problem for small-scale fishermen, and it could be said that investment in this field in the 1970s was to some extent misdirected. Coastal receiving stations with freezing or refrigeration facilities were too far apart and too big. More smaller units would have been better than a few large ones.

Two substantial stations were built in Qusayr and Shihr, and another in Bir Ali only started functioning in the 1980s though it was built in the mid-70s. For those fishermen who live and work along the coastal stretch of the Aden-Mukalla-Shihr road and near a market, the problem can be overcome, and fish landed in the morning, is often driven on open pickup trucks, sometimes with ice, to the nearby markets, in Zinjibar, Shuqra, Ghayl Bawazir and other smaller towns within reach. However, for those fishing villages without motor transport or access to roads, the problem of

collection has been insurmountable, and their fish has to be dried and salted according to traditional methods and sold to settled and nomadic people; this has been the case mainly in Mahra governate and the eastern part of ' Hadramaut governorate.

The thirteen existing cooperatives each cover a long stretch of coast and include a number of fishing villages; each has a number of administrators and managers and some of these have been trained at the Cooperatives Institute to improve their skills, as bad management has been blamed by the government as one of the causes of low production. The cooperatives levy about 25% net sales value to pay for their services and taxes.

Much needs to be done to improve the status and living conditions of fishermen and their families, such as the provision of health facilities and schools, clean water and sanitation, staples and vegetable foods as well as the tools and materials needed for fishing. Shore facilities with refrigeration, processing and storage facilities for the fish, and transport to markets are also essential. By contrast with the neglect of the 1970s, the Second Five Year Plan includes some investment of benefit to the cooperatives, but this is inadequate. Only 2.2% of fisheries sector investment is aimed at artisanal fishing for village improvements and cooperative development, including a small amount for extension courses, to bring improved techniques to fishermen, the purchase of about 160 fibreglass boats and other minor inputs. The largest item of benefit to cooperative fishermen is in Mahra governorate. The Nishtun port alongside its other roles, acts as base for the local cooperative, providing a selling point with cold storage and transport facilities by sea to other markets. It has repair and fuelling facilities and in its capacity as a commercial port

helps the area to receive consumer goods, staples, tools and machinery for fishing. It also has workshops, shops, social services, and electricity; it acts as a communications centre reducing the isolation of one of the most inaccessible parts of the country.

The problems faced by the producers in fisheries cooperatives are similar to those in agricultural cooperatives, though the latter have benefited from considerable investment while the former are only beginning to benefit from official concern. The disappointing return from the other fisheries sectors will, perhaps, encourage greater attention to the small cooperative and private fishermen whose contribution to the national catch is high, while their living and working conditions are probably the worst in the country.

A major initiative to improve cooperative fishing took place in May 1984 when a consultative meeting on the conditions of fishery cooperatives and their development was held in Mukalla. It took a number of decisions which will ease the working and living situation of the cooperative fishermen. It allowed fishermen to market more than 40% of their catch directly, while in Hadramaut governate they are now allowed to market 100% of the catch in this way. In the longer term it was decided to reduce the burden of tax and to raise incentives.

There are also plans to improve fishing techniques through the use of net trawlers on traditional *sambuks*, to develop extension services and to introduce suitably designed fibreglass boats which are cheaper to build and operate. Finally, to allow fishermen to make investments in new equipment, the Ministry has established a fund to make loans or grants to fishermen. Social projects have already been undertaken jointly by groups of fishermen and the Ministry, such as the electrification of Imran. One project aimed at the improvement of cooperative fisheries has been funded with a loan from IDA, IFAD, and the EEC Special Fund to improve fish handling and distribution through the construction of ice plants and basic processing of fresh fish. This will also include training and extension programmes.

2. The Industrial Fleet, and Fish Processing

With visions of a large modern fleet tapping the unlimited resources of the Arabian Sea, and earning hard currency to finance multi-faceted development, the régime in the early 1970s embarked on a substantial purchase programme of large trawlers bought second-hand from Japan, the Soviet Union, and China. By 1983 this fleet was composed of 18 vessels belonging to the Yemen National Fishing Corporation, 4 to the Coastal Fisheries Corporation and 6 to the Yemeni Fish Meal Corporation. Between them they represent the Yemeni industrial fishing sector, for both home consumption and exports. Joint ventures and foreign fleets operating in Yemeni waters on a royalty basis provide some foreign exchange earnings from exports and possibly some training for the Yemeni crew members. More seriously they contribute to the depletion of the waters, due to overfishing.

The national fleet is divided between three main companies. The National Fishing Corporation was founded in 1971 and specialises in cuttlefish and deep sea lobsters for export and demersal (deep water) fish for home consumption. In 1980 the company employed 450 men as crew and another 100 as reserve crew, as well as 200 onshore personnel, and at that time was responsible for about 10% of total catch. In 1980 it also instituted a new system of salaries, providing incentives for extra production. Basic salaries ranged from YD 45 for ordinary seamen to YD 180 for captains, with an incentive bonus per ton of catch.

The Coastal Fisheries Corporation operates a number of 15-ton fibreglass boats, *sambuks* and other small traditional boats as well as its 4 larger ships. It fishes the coastal waters mainly for pelagic (surface) varieties and rock lobsters. In many ways it is in direct competition with the cooperatives and many of its staff are former cooperative members or their sons; unlike the cooperatives it pays salaries starting at a flat rate of YD 45 for a captain and YD 35 for a fisherman. Its produce is sold to the Marketing Corporation, fish for domestic marketing and lobster for export. As a corporation it has been profitable, but only thanks to its rock lobster operations which have over the years subsidised its fishing operations. It operates along the coast within reach of Mukalla and Bir Ali in Hadramaut Governorate and west of and around Aden

supplying the Adeni market, and also in Mahra governorate where only lobsters are caught.

The Yemeni Fish Meal Company was formed in 1974, when fishmeal production was rising and expected to form a substantial sector of fisheries production. As well as ships the company owns a number of processing plants, one in Aden with a capacity of 35 tons/day, closed in the late 1970s, and two plants in Mukalla, including a floating fish meal plant purchased second hand from Mozambique in the mid-1970s at a time when the programme was still expanding. In the early 1980s, all fishmeal production was stopped as the fleet was unable to supply enough raw materials for any of the units to operate economically, and the programme is undergoing réévaluation and restructuring. The rest of the fishing in Yemeni waters had been done by the foreign Japanese and Soviet ventures operating on a concessionary basis. Both countries have been involved in the development of Democratic Yemen's fishing potential through training programmes and processing; one of the two canning plants was built with Japanese assistance, the other with Soviet. Both have also been responsible for overfishing and in 1980 the Japanese company stopped operating. It had been fishing mainly demersal varieties, mostly cuttlefish. Intensive fishing contributed to the depletion of resources and since 1980 measures have been taken to preserve the fish and manage the stocks by shortening the fishing season, limiting the number of boats allowed to operate and enlarging the mesh size of the nets.

Fish processing is important mainly for the preservation of fish for distribution in the parts of the country which do not have easy access to fresh fish. As well as traditional processes, drying and salting, in which no substantial research or investment has been made, canning is the main form of processing to be found in the PDRY. In the 1980s, there are two fish canning plants: the first and oldest is at Shuqra, 100 km east of Aden, built by the Japanese. It was opened in 1976 and has a capacity of 5 tons/day but its production remains well below that, for although the factory is on the coast there are no landing facilities and fish must be brought by road; in addition the local water supply is saline which has caused some machinery to deteriorate. In 1980 a new water supply was being connected and other changes were being introduced to improve production: a new salary structure with productivity bonuses and efforts to improve working conditions for the workers, most of them local women, including many who have achieved a minimum educational standard. In 1980 their salaries ranged, between YD 30 and YD 40 per month. This factory produces different types of tinned fish, including mackerel in tomato sauce, tuna in oil and sardines in oil and in tomato.

The second canning factory is part of the new port and industrial complex in Khalf-Mukalla and was built with technical assistance from the Soviet Union. It opened in 1980, with a capacity of 20,000 tins/day, and has a large cold store capacity of 300 tons, as it operates with fish frozen on board ship. In 1980 it employed 120 people, 40 of whom were women, and paid wages similar to Shuqra. In its first years of operation low production was blamed on poor management.

3. Distribution and marketing

Traditionally fresh fish was consumed only along the coastline of the country where it was the staple. It was also dried and salted and sold to nearby settled people as well as to nomads in exchange for vegetable and animal products, but the further one lived from the coast the more it became a rarity. Since independence considerable efforts have been made to improve distribution, particularly of fresh and frozen fish at low fixed prices, in order to make this highly nutritious food available to all. Cold storage units were built inland in such places as Mukayras, Dhali', Bayhan and Wadi Hadramaut, but their supply is erratic as there are few refrigerated trucks and these places are far from the coast with long travelling time, and many roads are very rough, often little more than tracks in the desert. Further, the traditional dietary habits of the inland areas discourage consumption and a change of diet can only be expected to take place slowly.

Private marketing, which in the 1970s was discouraged, is now accepted, but few facilities are made available for it. It takes place usually at the point of landing the fish or on a door-to-door basis for the higher value varieties in Aden, or for any fish in more remote places, and its prices are effectively uncontrolled. There are no statistics available but it is clear that private sales account for only a small proportion of the total catch in the areas where official and cooperative marketing take place. In remote areas such as Mahra, where it is the only form of marketing nomads and other buy dried and salted fish privately, but many also now get fresh fish on the cooperative market.

Cooperative marketing is a recent innovation. Prior to 1980 all fish was supposed to be marketed through government channels, but with the reforms in income structures for the cooperatives, in 1980 they were allowed to market 40% of their produce directly at prices 50% higher than those of the public sector. Given the shortage of storage and cooling facilities, cooperative marketing and public sector marketing tend to take place on alternate days, with the cooperative sending its produce to one market on a certain day and the FMC to another on the same day. Although cooperative prices are higher than those of the corporation, the fish is often fresher and the cooperatives have not found any difficulties in selling their produce. The added income may be used to increase investment in transport and processing facilities.

Public sector marketing used to be managed by three different institutions: the Internal Marketing Department, the National Cold Storage Department and the Export Division. In 1980 they were merged into the Fish Marketing Corporation (FMC) an autonomous company under the direction of the Ministry of Fish Wealth, which combines responsibility for collection, storage, and distribution on the retail market. Bringing these different operations together was meant to improve the level of coordination and bring about a better use of the facilities.

The Corporation buys its fish from the national fleet, the Soviet-Yemeni Joint Fishing Company and also received royalty fish from the Japanese companies when they

operated, as well as 60% of the catch of cooperatives. From its base in Aden, which includes a 1,000 ton cold store, it distributes fish in Abyan and Lahej governorates, while its main stores in Mukalla are supplied directly by the producers in that governorate. It does not operate in Shabwa except to supply the Bayhan cold store or Mahra where cooperative and private marketing are the only forms of distribution. The corporation is also responsible for the supply of the fish canning plants, and for exports. Its cold storage facilities include small 15-ton cold stores inland. Transport is done partly by the 13 refrigerated trucks owned by the Corporation, as well as 18 locally insulated trucks; the shortage of refrigerated transport remains a major problem.

In summary the main achievements of the first years have been in investments which will have lasting value in ports, large boats, cold stores and receiving stations on the coast and in inland cold stores for consumers. An infrastructure for research has also been laid with the creation of the Marine Sciences Research Institute and for training, with the Institute of Fisheries, but also with the training of technicians abroad, many of whom have returned, indicating successful management of the training programme.

The production problems which have arisen for the large fleets are due both to overfishing and to the narrowness of the continental shelf which limits the trawler grounds; what in the 1970s had been projected as a vast resource has turned out to be much smaller than expected. The depletion of demersal fish has both reduced the number of foreign fishing fleets in the country's 200-mile zone and given the government an incentive to develop the cooperatives.

Artisanal fisheries in the 1970s, suffered considerable neglect when production figures were given priority over the survival of the traditional sector. In the 1980s financial incentives have improved the situation, particularly since the 1984 changes and it is estimated that a cooperative fisherman can now get an income of YD 150 monthly during the productive season. Yemeni consumers prefer pelagic fish and the larger demersal varieties, giving advantage to the cooperative fisheries in marketing as most of their production is of this type.

High value lobsters have been mainly exported and there is no intention [—] of changing this policy as they have been a main source of foreign exchange for over a decade. At the moment they are sent to the major industrialised countries but there are prospects for exports of other fish to neighbouring markets, increasing the currently very low fish consumption in the region.

Industry

1. Party policy

From the earliest days of the country's independence, industrialisation was seen as a major goal of development. At the Fourth Congress of the NLF in March 1968,

the leadership called for ‘the building of an industrial, productive and independent national economy’¹

At the 1975 Unification Congress, industry was again given prominence:

‘It is natural that the current phase should be that of both light and heavy industrialisation on the basis of a well researched plan devised to satisfy the daily requirements of our people and at the same time linked to the creation of a firm industrial base, according to the principle of the highest standards.

Industrialisation is the key to the development of our country. A number of industries, particularly those using locally available raw materials, can be set up, including food processing, livestock and fish, petroleum and petroleum derivatives, petrochemicals and fertilisers, textiles, cement, building materials, shipbuilding and citrus fruit.’²

It is interesting to note that, among the industries listed in this 1975 programme, some were too optimistic and have not materialised, such as those relating to petrochemicals, but most others, except for citrus fruits, have become reality in some form by the 1980s.

The development of industry took on a political role due to the link in orthodox socialist theory between the development of a politically militant industrial working class and socialism. The leadership wanted a working class to be the foundation of the Party and the mainstay of scientific socialism. Against a background of a predominantly pre-capitalist agricultural economy in the hinterland supplemented by the services economy of Aden, this was bound to be uphill work. By the late 1970s political statements about industry concentrated on the specific problems of development and showed less concern for the role of the working class as the vanguard of socialism as there was little prospect of the majority of the population working in this sector.

2. Industry before Independence

A small number of food processing and import substitution industries had been started during the British period which belonged to Adeni and foreign private capital. They included soft drinks, dairy products, salt, aluminium ware, tiles, cement blocks, sesame extraction and flour milling, and the enterprises ranged from a relatively modern soft drinks plant operated under foreign licence to small individual workshops such as those used for sesame oil extraction. These enterprises were aimed at servicing the needs of Aden and its role for passenger and cargo ships. There were no factories in the country outside Aden. *A politically significant* working class did form among the workers of the port and the refinery *who were* mostly of Protectorate and North Yemeni origin and played a major role ‘in opposition politics in the 1950s and 1960s, laying the foundations for the new regime which took over after independence. —

¹ NLF 4th Congress — *Documents* p. 9.

² *UPONF Programme*, London 1977 p. 23.

In the hinterland, many needs were met by local artisans who had developed an advanced handicraft sector ranging from woven and embroidered clothes to delicate silver jewellery, and also made all the necessary implements for agriculture, fisheries, and other trades.³

3. Preconditions for industry

The handicaps which hinder the development of the economy are particularly acute for industrialisation, where scale is a factor of the utmost importance.

a) Resource base Unlike most Third World countries whose economic life is based on the export of unprocessed or semi-processed raw materials, the PDRY has no significant natural resources which can be exported, nor does it have any agricultural surplus which could be processed and exported on a large scale. Shortage of water and expensive energy ensure that the country is unsuitable for major undertakings based on imported materials.

b) Market With a population of only about 2 million including a majority of youth and children, there is no substantial internal market to distribute products manufactured locally on a large scale. The market was estimated at about YD 110 million in 1980 or YD 55 per head per year including the market for sophisticated goods which could not be manufactured locally; the estimated market for goods which could be manufactured locally by import substitution is a mere YD 20 million at 1980 prices. Thus the advanced modern industries producing goods at cheap unit prices are out of reach unless they were developed for export, but other features of the Yemeni industrial situation, such as relatively high wages, make the country uncompetitive for this. For most goods, imports are cheaper than local production could ever be, and it is in this context that emphasis on artisanal products, which are in great demand both locally and abroad, is to be considered.

c) Labour To add to the country's disadvantages its labour situation is affected by the high rate of emigration to the Gulf states, causing internal inflation and high labour costs. Public sector wages, although low compared to those of the Peninsula and to the remittances sent by migrants, are living wages, enabling workers to exist reasonably, and are supplemented by the provision of health and educational facilities. More significantly from the point of view of the country's industrial competitiveness, these wages are higher than those prevailing in the new industrialised countries such as Sri Lanka where more advanced processes mean a much higher productivity. Higher productivity and fewer social benefits are also features of the countries whose wage rates are similar such as South Korea, thus ensuring a much higher relative cost of production in the PDRY for similar products. Even if the skills and machinery were available, regardless of a comparable political superstructure, it would be something

³ Examples of these can be found in the Aden Ethnographic Museum, but also in the Seiyun museum.

which everyone in the PDRY would consider to be a highly undesirable state of affairs, from the workers who would have to work in it to the Party cadres who are committed to social justice.

Productivity is another problem in the country's industrial sector; in the 1970s and early 1980s productivity was very low due to lack of incentives, harsh climatic working conditions and unsatisfactory management. Salary structures were based on a fixed rate which, although a living wage within the Yemeni context, compared unfavourably with the salaries obtainable in the Gulf. In order to improve productivity a new structure was introduced in 1980 which included a basic rate, supplemented by a piecework rate to produce a bonus system; this did have a positive effect initially and improved workers' incomes by 10–30%. The experiment was broadened, but in the long run it will be necessary to improve other conditions to sustain improved productivity. Working conditions are usually difficult in the manufacturing sector with factories without air-conditioning or insufficient care for environmental health hazards. At the moment there is no serious pollution due largely to the limited number of industrial plants and their relatively small scale, as well as the absence of the more polluting types of industry. Lack of waste disposal is a problem in food processing plants where washing facilities are also inadequate. Nor is there adequate accident prevention.

d) Low export potential With a small internal market, export-oriented industries might have been a base for industrialisation, but as we have seen the country has no advantages in this field; having no cheap resources and with relatively expensive labour, options are limited. There have been a number of agreements for mutual trade with the Yemen Arab Republic as customs dues have theoretically been eliminated through the various unity agreements between the two governments. Trade between the two parts of the homeland has developed in some locally manufactured products such as cigarettes, plastic goods, carpets and various processed foods. Efforts have been made to expand the exports of locally manufactured products to neighbouring countries, mainly Somalia and Ethiopia which are the most likely markets given their proximity and their own low level of industrialisation, thus providing openings for the country's limited export potential.

e) Low qualification of labour and management The low level of qualification is a serious problem at all levels. Many qualified workers and management in the 1970s emigrated to the high-wage neighbouring countries, depriving the country of their skills and abilities. Many sent for training failed to return and much investment in the labour force has thus been wasted. Most manufacturing units have to operate without the benefit of qualified resident maintenance personnel and few qualified workers to train the next generation. Lack of management skills ranging from marketing to accountancy also hinders the good operation of the sector. It is likely to be some time before the major training and educational programme of the country in practical skills like engineering and management, brings results on the shopfloor.

f) Transport costs are also high, both for imported raw materials and within the country for distribution. While transport costs from abroad add some protection for

local manufacture beyond that provided through government policies, high internal transportation costs increase the cost of distribution within the country and discourage the creation of industries at any distance from the major import outlets Aden and Mukalla.

4. Manufacturing

Industry has concentrated on the processing of food products, animal hides, cotton, as well as import substitution of basic household goods and clothing with the use of imported semi-finished products. A survey made in 1979 found that there were 9 enterprises with 250 workers or more, employing a total of 5,700 people; they included electricity and water corporations, as well as salt extraction. Another 13 enterprises employed between 100 and 150 workers with a total of 1,600, while 11 units employed between 50 and 100 with a total of 700 workers, and there were a further 500 small enterprises employing over 5 workers, with a total of 3,000 employees. Throughout the country most industrial employment was in small workshops of under 5 workers, doing everything from weaving cloth to extracting sesame oil. Of the 45,000 people employed in industry in 1980, close to 32,000 were in the private sector, 12,000 in the public sector, 1,000 in the mixed sector (part public part private capital) and about 250 in cooperatives. In the same year, 1980, the public sector accounted for 52.5% of output (rising to 59% in 1982), the private sector 31% (dropping to 25.5% in 1982), the mixed sector 15.5% (dropping to 14.5% in 1982) and the cooperative sector a mere 1.5% in 1980 (dropping to 1% in 1982).

Although the Second Five Year Plan expects a significant increase in the role of the public and mixed sectors and a proportional decline in that of the private sector, in absolute terms all are expected to rise, the state sector by 60%, the mixed sector by 20% and the private sector by 8%. These targets are widely regarded as overambitious given the previous record.

Processing of local raw materials accounts for the majority of output: in 1979 55% of total output of the establishments surveyed was in food processing, cigarettes and soft drinks, while chemical and plastic products accounted for 11% and engineering and metal products for 9%. Food processing includes a tomato paste plant in Lahej governorate using mainly local tomatoes, (producing 300 tons in 1982), and two fish-canning plants in Shuqra and Mukalla (328 tons in 1981). The fishmeal plants in Aden and Mukalla were closed in the early 1980s pending decisions on their future. Flour milling is done at a plant in Aden and produced 34,500 tons in 1981. Dairy products are processed in Aden by two plants, one built in the 1960s and a modern one opened in 1980; their throughput was a 4.8 mn litres in 1982, and this includes both home-produced milk and a greater amount of reconstituted dried powdered milk processed and packed in milk cartons, yogourt and cheese. Soft drinks were as successful as elsewhere in the tropics with 58 million bottles produced in 1982, and these are

efficiently distributed throughout the country even to remote places. In 1981 a brewery was opened and produces bottled beer, selling 5.5 m litres in 1982.

Building materials are also important, including tiles (1.3 mn in 1982), paints (1.6 mn litres in 1982) and cement blocks (500,000 units in 1982). Bricks, mainly unbaked mudbricks, are manufactured on site and there are no statistics about them.

Textiles are produced mainly in the large factory built by the Chinese and opened in 1975. Having been planned at a time of unemployment it was designed to be labour-intensive though soon after it opened the problem was reversed. It was also designed to operate on short-staple cotton grown locally, though most of the local cotton production at that time was medium and long-staple for exports so it took some time for production to be reconverted to meet the needs of the factory. The public prefer fabrics which include artificial yams and this has meant added difficulties in marketing the factory's products. New machinery from Czechoslovakia has been acquired for weaving of polyester/cotton mixes, and the factory has reduced its workforce from a peak of 1,500 in the first years to about 700 in the early 1980s. Production reached a high of 5,192,000 metres in 1977 and was 2,700,000 metres in 1982.

There are also factories which make up fabrics into ready-made clothes. Others produce footwear, leather shoes, plastic and rubber sandals, the latter reaching 1,110,000 pairs in 1982, while 157,000 pairs of leather shoes were made that year. Most of these factories are private.

Other goods produced include aluminium cooking utensils (300 tons in 1982) plastic household ware (262 tons in 1982), paper bags, nails, foam rubber mattresses, matches, perfumes and liquid batteries.

As we have seen above the problems of manufacturing industry are considerable, the sector contributes only about 8% of the country's GDP while providing 10% of employment. Although most expansion is expected to take place in the public sector, the private sector has been encouraged by the government in recent years. Government hostility to the private sector was strong and the first Investment Law was issued at a time when most of the local bourgeoisie had emigrated and those who remained were planning their departure. The NFPO's language at that time opposed the bourgeoisie, indeed anything that could even remotely be construed as capitalist. In the 1970s, when the Investment Law was in force, administrative obstacles were put in the way of those who tried to set up private enterprises and it was only in the late 1970s that the atmosphere changed and hostility towards the private sector diminished.

Having perceived the need for further sources of investment funds and for greater production, the régime has sought to diversify away from large-scale operations started with foreign loans and to encourage the expansion of the more successful medium-sized enterprises, many of them in the mixed sector (with 51% state and 49% private ownership). At the same time the remittances of the thousands of Yemeni workers abroad, as well as the substantial wealth accumulated by some Yemenis who had been settled abroad for generations were all sources of investment which the régime felt could be mobilised for the development of the homeland.

The new Investment Law was issued in 1981 and applies to ventures with a minimum capital of YD 5,000. Advantages available under the law include exemption from taxes, customs, tariffs and duties on a) imported equipment and other materials provided these are not produced locally, b) spare parts for 2 years after operations have begun, c) exemption or reduction of taxes and customs for raw materials for 3 years after production has started, d) income tax exemption for 5 years.

The Law also provides privileges including the right to transfer losses to the 2nd year, the right to transfer unused reserves to the 2nd year, transfer abroad of profits equivalent to the value of exports, transfer abroad of up to 75% of their income after payment of income tax by foreign employees; finally capital may be repatriated in any currency after 5 years at the rate of 25% yearly.

A special committee was also set up to administer the Law and may on occasion increase privileges or help to control competing imports as well as assist in the export drive of the new units.⁴ The Law is primarily aimed at attracting the capital of Yemeni emigrants whose representatives participated in its drafting. The government hopes that it will be particularly effective in mixed sector activities. In its first years the Law has not achieved much, but in the current plan period, a number of ventures are progressing, including one mixed-sector soap and detergent factory, a \$1 million investment in electrical fittings, as well as aluminium frames and pharmaceutical products factories.

5. Oil and Minerals

The search for oil and other minerals is the one great hope to find some resource which will allow self-financed development. Oil exploration absorbs the larger share of investment in this field, and ever since the 1950s the Aden oil refinery has been the country's main industrial unit.

a The Refinery Built between 1952 and 1954 by BP to replace its main Iranian refinery when the Mossadeq government in Iran nationalised oil, in its day, the Aden refinery was one of the largest and most modern in the world. It played a major role in creating a working class in Aden. People were brought in both from the countryside and the Hu j j iriyah to build it and the town of Little Aden was built to house its workers. The refinery itself is the largest single employer in the country with 1,700 workers in the early 1980s and it has been a formal and informal training centre for all levels of staff.

BP retained its ownership of the refinery after independence; being the only foreign-owned industry which was not nationalised in 1969. In the first years of independence BP tried to wear out the refinery by operating it at its maximum throughput of 7.5 million tons a year, but as the government started to impose taxes, the throughput declined after 1972 and reached a low of 1.6 million tons/year in 1975–76, a level close

⁴ 1981 *Investment Law*, ch. 3.

to the minimum necessary to keep the equipment operating. In 1977 the refinery was handed over to the government under an agreement whereby the government would compensate the company for movable assets, as by that time the refinery itself had been fully depreciated, and BP would remain for a further two years as advisors. Since 1979, however, they have had little to do with the refinery though the company is occasionally called in as consultants. After the takeover by the government throughput has increased to an average of 3.5 to 4 million tons/year, about half of its nominal capacity of 8.5 million tons, though by now it is unclear whether it could produce more given its current age and rundown condition.

Most of the refinery's work is done on contract for foreign buyers. It also refines about 800,000 tons of oil for the local market; the USSR and Kuwait both refine 0.5 million tons in the PDRY and have done so for a number of years; this has been done mainly to support the refinery and keep it operational. Since 1981 the refinery has also been processing 2.5 million tons/year on contract for Iran whose Abadan refinery has been damaged by the Iran-Iraq war, ironically the refinery is again playing its original role to replace the activities of the Abadan refinery. In the 1980s in a period of turmoil in Iran, a Muslim fundamentalist régime there finds it convenient to process some of its oil in the British-built refinery run by the only socialist régime in the Arab world.

Despite the increase in its throughput resulting from the current Iranian crisis, the refinery still operates at a loss estimated at YD 5 million in 1982 and at that time plans were prepared for its rehabilitation. This, the largest project in the current Development Plan and most probably also in the Third Plan, involves a projected expenditure of US \$190 million in comprehensive modernisation. The modernisation programme foresees a 10,000 b/d vacuum distillation unit and 100,000 tons/year asphalt plant, both to be financed by the refinery itself, and are expected to cover their costs as 90% of the asphalt is to be exported. The construction of new berthing facilities would enable the oil port to receive 100,000 tons tankers, while at present the limit is 50 to 60,000 tons tankers. Rehabilitation or replacement of the power station is the second major element, and at the time of writing no decision had been announced concerning this.

Butagaz has become the most convenient way of cooking replacing charcoal and since 1981 it has been bottled in a modern unit which produces quantities sufficient for current demand in the country and for substantial exports to the

YAR. Linked to the rehabilitation of the refinery a further LPG recovery plant which would have a capacity of 100 to 150,000 tons/year is being considered, along with a bottle filling unit in Mukalla.

With worldwide surplus capacity, it is unlikely that the Aden refinery and its facilities will ever develop more than local significance; though within these limits there are possibilities of a greater role for the refinery in processing the country's recently discovered oil.

b Minerals exploration was under the control of the Petroleum and Minerals Board, an autonomous entity under the control of the Minister of Industry, who was President

of the Board. In February 1985 a Ministry of Energy and Minerals was created, which took over these responsibilities. The former Minister of Industry became its Minister.

Historically the only mineral has been salt which for centuries has been mined in the Shabwa governorate, very close to the site of the capital of the ancient kingdom of Hadramaut, which gave its name to the governorate. This salt mining continues and is a source of revenue for the nomadic tribes who mine and transport this salt by camel to its main markets, east in Wadi Hadramaut and west to the old trading cities of the Yemen Arab Republic. Economically and nationally this salt mining is not significant and most of the salt consumed is produced by the Aden sea salt processing plant, whose production in recent years has been erratic, at about a third of capacity; expansion and improvement plans are under consideration to improve its production.

In the search for minerals, it has been established that ores of copper, iron and titanium exist though there is as yet no indication of commercially viable quantities. Gold and rare minerals have also been found. Less valuable minerals are available in exploitable quantities and studies were undertaken in the early 1980s for the exploitation of silica for the manufacture of glass. Silica has been found near Habbani in Shabwa governorate and the possibility of glass manufacture is under study. Nearer to Aden, at Mudiya, marble has been discovered and its exploitation was being studied by a Bulgarian company in 1983 after it had reached agreement with the Ministry of Industry to set up a joint company to quarry and export it.

Further minerals exploration is taking place; during the SFYP YD 3.2 million was set aside for geological research and mapping operations, some of which are joint with the YAR following an agreement reached in January 1982. This agreement could be one of the more important achievements of the efforts towards unity.

The main industrial project for the 1980s arising from mineral resources is the projected cement factory, based on clay and limestone deposits near Batis, about 100 km north-east of Aden.

Planned with a capacity of 350,000 tons/year this plant is aimed at replacing imports of cement by local production to bring substantial savings of hard currency; its projected capacity is higher than current estimated consumption, and it is likely to encourage the use of cement at the expense of traditional local building materials which are far more suited to climatic and living conditions. Increased use of cement is likely to result in a lower standard of housing in the rural areas where high quality traditional building still takes place. The estimated cost of the plant was \$ 100 million in 1984 and the financing arranged for this plant is an illustration of the régime's willingness to accept development assistance from any potential friends. In mid-1984 agreement was reached to finance the plant by long-term low-interest loans from France and the German Democratic Republic with the Palestine Liberation Organisation providing the balance. Work was expected to start on construction in late 1984 or early 1985.

c Oil exploration has a long history in the PDRY predating independence and rumours of oil discoveries have circulated for as long. In the 1960s the Eastern Aden Protectorate states of Qu'ayti, Kathiri and Qishn & Socotra initially refused to join

the Federation of South Arabia because their rulers confidently believed that oil had been discovered in Thamud north of Wadi Hadramaut by the Pan American Oil Co. and they were looking forward to oil revenues and had no wish to share them with the impoverished states of the Western Aden Protectorate. Just before independence the NLF also believed that Britain and Saudi Arabia were trying to hive off the eastern part of the country not only for political reasons but also to safeguard their supposed oil interests. However no discoveries were confirmed.

Since independence the regime has made a number of oil exploration contracts and considers oil exploration to be particularly important as any hope of economic independence must rely on the discovery of oil or another high-value raw material. In the early 1970s a joint PDRY-Algerian company was set up but it was liquidated in 1976 after it had failed to make any discovery. In late 1975 two exploration contracts were signed, one with the USSR's Technoexport covering an area of 10,000 sq km in the east of the country where two test wells were drilled in collaboration with the PDRY's Petroleum Exploration Department which was founded in 1976. This agreement has been renewed and is still operational at the time of writing. The second agreement was with Siebens of Canada and covered 10,000 sq km off Socotra where the company drilled a test well in 1979 without result.

In 1977 the first exploration agreement was made with the Italian oil company AGIP; this is the first agreement which has led to the discovery of substantial quantities of oil. Other recent agreements include one with the Brazilian company Braspetro signed in late 1981 valid for six years for exploration of 42,000 sq km onshore in Mahra governorate around its capital al Ghayda; the company's commitment includes the drilling of six wildcat wells. Braspetro has given the Spanish company Hispanoil a 20% share of this operation. In 1983 an exploration contract was given to the Kuwaiti-based Independent Petroleum Group to explore an area of 13,000 sq km around Balhaf in Shabwa governorate, the area being divided equally between on and off shore. The production-sharing agreement includes 18 months of seismic survey work followed by three years of exploratory drilling. IPG has been operating in the country since 1982 when an agreement was reached for it to market petroleum products and LPG from the Aden refinery. The company was also involved in studies for the modernisation of the refinery.

An International Development Association US \$9 million loan has been used on a number of seismic surveys throughout the country and it is expected that these surveys will give the government and prospective companies a better idea of the country's potential and attract further interest in exploration.

A significant breakthrough took place in March 1982 when AGIP struck oil at Sharmah, 19 km offshore from Sayhut; the well tested at a rate of 3,000 b/d of 43° API crude at a depth of 6,800 feet. Since then another 10,000 b/d well has been drilled in the same area, and a new agreement was reached between the government and the company which included commitment to further drilling and possible construction of a production platform. Although such a find is minor in world terms, particularly

at a time of surplus production and price cutting, in the PDRY context it is very important, and could lead at least to self-sufficiency, while currently net oil imports account for some 23% of the country's import bill. This first discovery is a positive sign and has encouraged other exploration, though at the time of writing it is unclear to me why commercial exploitation has not started; clearly there is a divergence of interests between the companies who are dealing with a surplus of production on the world scale and the country which needs to earn revenue.

Exploration in the north of Shabwa Governorate showed hopeful signs in 1984. This is carried out by the Soviet Union in an area close to the substantial find in the YAR. Hope continues to run high for, if anything is to significantly change the course of development, it would be oil.

The exploitation of the country's recently discovered oil and the need to discover more is essential. Putting one's hopes on a resource whose size has yet to be defined and at a time when there is a worldwide recession in the oil market may seem strange but the problems of the world oil market are most likely temporary while the need for energy will remain to support continued economic expansion. The social and political problems which could arise from Democratic Yemen becoming an oil exporter may appear fanciful at this stage, but it is worth giving them some small consideration. While a large income from oil exports could finance internal development it could also strengthen certain consumerist trends which can be seen in outline in the country at the moment, and in caricature in the Gulf states: expenditure on luxury consumer goods, investment in large prestige projects, and the destruction of the country's traditional cultural heritage from architecture to handicrafts. It could also have a negative political impact by increasing social differentiation and the gap between urban and rural conditions, with increased rural emigration and rapid dilution of the regime's political objectives. By contrast, a moderate amount of oil, well managed, might be sufficient to finance necessary projects without leading to extravagance. It could also be used to make the investment needed in rural infrastructure and services, thus making rural life pleasant and desirable, as it is now in advanced industrialised countries.

Conclusion

Socialist development in poor small isolated and beleaguered countries is no easy task in a world dominated by regional and international organisations under the influence of powerful multinational capitalist companies largely run by and for the benefit of capitalist countries. The failures of such socialist régimes have been widely broadcast both by the left and the right. A return to capitalism would produce the maximisation of profits for the few but it would do nothing for the mass of poor people in these countries. Socialists, on the other hand, have focused their criticisms on the features of these countries which they consider to be either insufficiently 'socialist', participatory or democratic or which they regard as reflecting overcentralised state control. But they have not offered any constructive solutions, partial or total, to the problems faced by these states. The approach of these critics has detracted from the real achievements which have taken place in some of these countries and led to pessimistic conclusions suggesting that socialism and Third World development are incompatible.

In this book I have tried to describe and discuss the policies as well as the difficulties encountered by a revolutionary and socialist regime trying to transform the country it won from imperialism and to create the bases for future development. I do not claim to be able to judge whether the PDRY is on the road to true socialism or not, and the following remarks must be read in this light.

The aims of the Yemeni Socialist Party are, 'to transform society along revolutionary lines, to complete the tasks of the national-democratic revolution and make transition to the building of socialism'¹ and its guide in this task is 'the theory of scientific socialism, taking due account of the local peculiarities of the development of the national-democratic revolution in Yemen'.²

As many other countries, PDRY is a single party state and the YSP has the monopoly of political discussion. Although other views are often informally expressed their supporters have little political influence and no alternative political organisations are allowed. The Supreme People's Council only rarely challenges Party suggestions or initiates legislation on its own. As we have seen in some detail, the Party is the directing element of the state and practice has shown clearly that crucial decisions are taken at the higher echelons of the YSP, which also seems to be the centre of political debate between different tendencies. The lower levels of the Party are also important particularly on practical issues concerning implementation of policies. The Supreme

¹ Proceedings of the 1st Congress of the YSP. *op cit* p. 149

² *op cit* pp 149–50

People's Council, only rarely challenges Party suggestions or initiates legislation on its own. Membership of the Party can now be seen as a step towards the achievement of personal goals and not just as an indication of selfless commitment to better the conditions of the people as a whole. However, ideological commitment certainly exists within the Party, particularly among the older militants who participated in the armed struggle.

The Party's economic policy remains based on centralised planning and particularly in the 1970s considerable efforts were devoted to bringing the economy within the public and cooperative sector. Western socialists debate whether state control of the means of production can be simplistically equated with socialism; there is now a widespread belief that other criteria are also relevant and include participation by the producers in management. In addition to the public sector, the PDRY has a mixed and private sectors and the tendency in the 1980s is to encourage the development of the latter sectors, without turning the country over to capitalism, dependent or otherwise. The priority given in the past to large-scale public sector projects has often neglected the wishes and interests of the small-scale producers although it has laid an infrastructure which should improve conditions of production in the future.

The régime has achieved a number of things commonly associated with socialism: an agrarian reform which has given the land to the peasants, and reduced differentials in the size of landholdings, and the nationalisation of water resources. The state controls the infrastructure, most of industry, wholesale trade and the financial sector. Social policies have included the establishment of free basic health and education systems and an ending to the private renting of housing. Access to services is determined almost wholly by need, not by class, wealth or inheritance and social differentiation within the country is now very limited.

This is not to say that everything is perfect. Many difficulties and problems remain in all fields. Many people's thinking is affected by the experience of emigration and conditions elsewhere in the Peninsula and further. The rising generation of professional officials and administrators in the public sector have mainly been educated in Eastern Europe where they have been subjected to very different ideological influences from those affecting the migrants and their relatives. This contrast forms the basis for many potential conflicts. These contradictory influences should not be neglected when thinking about the future, particularly politically and ideologically. For example widespread acceptance by Yemenis of the 'advanced industrialised nations' cultural ideals can be held partly responsible for the tendency in the early 1980s to spend vast amounts on questionable improvements in the capital, such as fountains in the roundabouts, fun-fairs and luxury hotels when there are still inadequate water and sanitation facilities in the countryside.

Politically the country has greatly changed. With well over half the population born since independence, few remember the struggle against the British or the reality of colonialism, and most people have known no other rule than that of the Yemeni Socialist Party, on a background of relative scarcity at home and images of plenty

elsewhere in the Peninsula. Whatever its failings, the YSP is working to reshape society along a new path which differs markedly from the neocolonialist one to be found in most former colonies. This book has shown that there is no simple recipe for socialist development in the Third World, and the experience of the PDRY provides a case study of this new revolutionary problematic.

Chronology

1839	British occupation of Aden
1914–18	World War I
1927	The Royal Air Force takes responsibility for the defence of the Protectorates
1928	The Colonial Office takes responsibility for the Protectorates
1934	Anglo-Yemeni Treaty on borders
1937	Aden becomes a Crown Colony
1939–45	World War II
1947	Creation of Legislative Council in Aden
1948	Death of Imam Yahia in Sana'a, succeeded after aborted revolution by Imam Ahmad
1954	BP Refinery opens in Buraika/Little Aden
1956	Creation of ATUC
Suez Crisis	
1959	Creation of the Federation of Amirates of the South
Formation of first cells of MAN in Aden	
1961	Foundation of People's Democratic Union
1962	Revolution of 22 September transforms Imamate into the Yemen Arab Republic
Aden joins Federation which becomes the Federation of South Arabia	
1963	Foundation of the NLF, launch of armed struggle in Radfan on 14 October
1965	Creation of OLOS
June: First Congress of NLF in Taiz issues the National Charter	
1966	January: Creation of FLO SY
June: Second Congress of NLF at Jibla	
November: Third Congress of NLF at Khamr	
1967	June: Arab-Israeli war, closure of Suez Canal
October: Egyptians leave YAR	
November: Independence. Federation becomes People's Republic of South Yemen	
1968	March: Tribal Reconciliation Decree
March: Fourth Congress of NLF at Zinjibar	
20 March events	
14 May events	
Border clashes start	
1969	22 June: Corrective Move

English and Arabic names of political organisations

<p> Aden Association Aden Trades Union Congress Arab Literary Club Arab Reform Club Arab Socialist Party in Qu'ayti The Formation of Free Officers and soldiers The Formation of the tribes Free Yemeni Party FLOSY Hadramaut Arab Socialist Party Jam'iat al Irshad The Mahra Youth Organisation Movement of Arab Nationalists The Nasserite Front The Patriotic Front National Liberation Front Organisation for the liberation of the Occupied South People's Democratic Union People's Democratic Front People's National Congress People's Socialist Party Popular Vanguard Party Representatives of People's Organisations Revolutionary Organisation for the liberation of the Yemeni South The Revolutionary Vanguard The Secret Organisation of Free Men in South Yemen South Arabian League Unified Political Organisation — the National Front United National Front United National Party Union of the Sons of the South The Yafi'i Reform Front The Yemeni Socialist Party </p>	<p> Aden Association Aden Trades Union Congress Arab Literary Club Arab Reform Club Arab Socialist Party in Qu'ayti The Formation of Free Officers and soldiers The Formation of the tribes Free Yemeni Party FLOSY Hadramaut Arab Socialist Party Jam'iat al Irshad The Mahra Youth Organisation Movement of Arab Nationalists The Nasserite Front The Patriotic Front National Liberation Front Organisation for the liberation of the Occupied South People's Democratic Union People's Democratic Front People's National Congress People's Socialist Party Popular Vanguard Party Representatives of People's Organisations Revolutionary Organisation for the liberation of the Yemeni South The Revolutionary Vanguard The Secret Organisation of Free Men in South Yemen South Arabian League Unified Political Organisation — the National Front United National Front United National Party Union of the Sons of the South The Yafi'i Reform Front The Yemeni Socialist Party </p>
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Footnote reference no. 1 was missing from the introduction, but it seems clear where it was meant to go, so it was added back in. Footnote reference no. 9 was missing from Chapter 3, and there were two footnote references no 10, so they were simply reorganized.

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