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Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 1/82)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

IRAQI SUPPLIES TRANSITING JORDAN--Iraqi officials estimate the amount of goods coming into Iraq through the Jordanian port of 'Aqabah this year to be around five million tons. These officials assured the Jordanian private transport sector that the establishment of the Iraqi-Jordanian Land Transport Company was not intended to take on this large a role in transport. They made it clear that the company would transport about two million tons per year, leaving the Jordanian private transport sector three million tons, if it can handle this amount. Mr. 'Abd-al-Sitar al-Rawi, Iraqi deputy minister of transportation and chairman of the higher coordination commission for transport in Iraq, stated that the company was established to take the place of foreign transport companies that own fleets of transport vehicles including 2500 freight carriers. Branches of the company will be opened in Kuwait as well as in Baghdad. [Excerpt] [Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 247, 6-12 Nov 81 p 65]

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EGYPT

CHANGES IN POWER STRUCTURE POSSIBLE IN POST-SADAT EGYPT

Paris Al-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 2 3, 9-15 Oct 81 pp 19-20

[Article: "Whose Legacy? Two Camps, Nine Names; Military Likely to Tip Balance"]

[Text] What will follow Sadat?

The question does not anticipate the reply of the Egyptian people, holders of power, who misled all observers by their silence, their self-control and their slow, steady movement. Their rhythm is like the streams of the River Nile in the heart of the valley. It stops at dams and it sometimes falters when it collides with rocks, but it keeps on growing drop by drop until the inundation suddenly begins, surprising everyone by its power as it floods the dams and rocks in its path.

Like a dream to some, a nightmare to others, the world watched Sadat's last moment on television as the bullets of Egyptian soldiers struck him down, just as it had watched on television in 1977 as he disembarked from the plane which carried him to occupied Jerusalem and shook hands with Begin, watched in 1978 as he strolled with Carter and Begin on the grounds of Camp David, allies linked by a common agreement, and watched him in 1979 at the White House as he signed the peace treaty between his regime and Israel. Television cameras accompanied all of his steps, from the time he turned his back to the Arabs, Palestine and the Egyptian people until the final moment of his life as he fell in his field marshal's uniform at the hands of the Egyptian army, the comrade of the bloody battle of the 6 October crossing, in the middle of the military review held on the eighth anniversary of the crossing.

After the shock of the assassination, it seems from observing the surface movement of events that the "Sadat regime" is trying to cling to power and continue along the path "without Sadat." The reply is, "We are here," when one asks the question: "What will follow Sadat?"

The government is coming together under the leadership of Husni Mubarak, vice-president of the republic, who escaped the bullets. He was clearly seen on the television screen as he emerged safely, groping his way out of the pile of chairs at the back of the presidential reviewing stand. At the beginning of the review he had been seated next to the president at the front of the stand.

The government, which about a month ago had arrested more than 5,000 opponents of Sadat's policy, represents all parties and political, ideological and social trends in the country. It decided to apply the text of the constitution and appoint Dr

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Sufi Abu Talib, head of the People's Assembly, to take over the duties of the presidency until a constitutional election could be held in no more than 60 days. It also announced the nomination of Husni Mubarak to fill the office of the presidency. That was accompanied by a declaration of a state of emergency and the occupation of all major installations and streets in Cairo and the other large cities by central security forces and special forces to counter popular demonstrations, not to speak of the forces of the Republic Guard. All members of the armed forces were confined to their barracks.

Who Is Heir?

It appears from following events that there are certain individuals who consider themselves "Sadat's rightful heir." By rank, they are as follows:

First: Muhammad Husni Mubarak, vice-president of the republic and former commander of the air force. He is not supported by any political party. Egyptians, Arabs and foreigners who know him seem to feel that his intellectual and political abilities are extremely limited. He was no more than Sadat's shadow, or as he said of himself: "I graduated from the Sadat political university." His activities in effect alternated between the work of the president's secretariat and carrying his messages to heads of state. He was present at so many meetings that the Egyptian people derisively dubbed him "the meeting man."

About a year ago it was noted that his standing with the president had begun to decline, as the rising star of a young man with a remarkable degree of intelligence and political experience began to crowd him aside. This was Mansur Hasan, for whom the Ministry for Presidential Affairs was created in order to place it beside the Ministry for Culture and Information. Thus he took over most of the jurisdiction of Husni Mubarak, who withdrew relatively to the shadows. However, it did not take long for Mubarak to return recently after expressing extraordinary enthusiasm in support of the widespread arrest campaign launched by President Sadat against his opponents a month before he was assassinated, while Mansur Hasan was fearful of its effects on the regime.

Second: Mrs Jihan Sadat, wife of the president, whose official title became "First Lady of Egypt." In fact, she shared power with her husband. She has her office which issues resolutions and executive orders to the ministers. It is rumored that she appointed at least a third of the current ministers. It is well-known that she is closely linked with major businessmen who benefit from the economic "open-door" policy. She controls more than 100 members of the People's Assembly who owe her allegiance, including thirty women who were elected in special districts created in accordance with an amendment to the election law which was drafted and passed through her work. She also heads the local People's Assembly for al-Minufiyah Governorate and teaches in the Department of Arab Literature in the College of Arts at Cairo University. She has her private circles which are made up of intellectuals, college professors and journalists. Two months ago it was rumored that the female members of the People's Assembly, under the leadership of Dr Suhayr al-Qalamawi (who supervised Jihan's master's thesis), had prepared draft legislation to appoint "the First Lady" as vice-president of the republic. No one in Egypt disagrees on the First Lady's love of power and ambition, because she is "Egypt's Isabella" like Argentina's Isabella, who took over after the death of her husband, President Peron.

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Third: The well-known building contractor 'Uthman Ahmad 'Uthman, who is related by marriage to the president; his son Mahmud is married to Sadat's youngest daughter. He gave a wedding gift of a million pounds; he enjoyed the intimate confidence of the president, and he administered his activities and personal finances. He held the post of minister of housing and then the post of deputy prime minister for what are called popular development projects. He was removed after violent public reaction against his notorious book "My Experience," in which he disparaged the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir and his family. However, he declared that he was exonerated of the accusations leveled at his book, and although he resigned from his official post, in agreement with President Sadat he continued to carry out his former responsibilities under the title of "Official in the Democratic National Party in charge of Popular Development." In addition to the Arab Contractors Company, which has become a "state within a state," he controls more than 150 companies and banks which form the base of the parasitic class and its links to international capitalism. Despite his success in the field of business and commercial dealings he lacks political experience, and he is widely detested by the people because he embodies a living example of "corruption" in contemporary Egyptian society.

Fourth: Sayyid Mar'i, who represents the wealthy rural class. He enjoys wide political expertise which he gained through his experience in public service from the time of King Faruq until the present. He held a number of cabinet and parliamentary posts in the era of 'Abd-al-Nasir and Sadat, including minister of agriculture and speaker of the People's Assembly. He now heads the Board of Advisers to the President of the Republic, a post created by President Sadat about a year before his death. It brings together about 150 experts to offer advice. Despite all of this formal apparatus created by Sadat, in the framework of the struggle for power he can play a relatively important role with this gathering of experts. Besides, Mar'i is President Sadat's second son-in-law [as published].

Fifth: Lt Gen Muhammad Abu Ghazalah, minister of defense, who was near President Sadat on the reviewing stand at the time of the attack. He participated in the October War and then, after the cementing of relations with the United States, was chosen to fill the post of military attache to Washington. He remained at that post for almost 5 years, until he was appointed chief of general staff of the armed forces and minister of defense as successor to the late Lt Gen Ahmad Badawi, who lost his life with a number of his senior aides in a helicopter crash at Wahat Suyuh, near the Libyan-Egyptian border, in a mysterious fashion which still raises a number of question marks. Lt Gen Abu Ghazalah is considered the engineer of the relations of the American-Egyptian military alliance. It was rumored that Washington was displeased when President Sadat entrusted him with open posts on the surface, as it wanted him to remain in the shadows as long as possible.

Sixth: Maj Gen Muhammad Nabawi Isma'il, who occupies the post of deputy prime minister and minister of the interior. He is a "policeman" in every sense of the word. He revealed his fascist tendencies in his dealings with the masses, on the one hand, and his nature as a compliant tool for oppression in the hands of the ruler, whoever that may be. He set about to form a new police apparatus on the West German model, numbering more than 350,000. It is closer to an army in view of the heavy armored weapons it possesses.

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Seventh: Dr Sufi Abu Talib, current head of the People's Assembly, who has taken over as temporary president according to the provisions of the constitution until a constitutional presidential election is held. He was professor of law and rector of the University of Cairo, and he played the role of "legal tailor," fashioning all of President Sadat's desires into law. The most famous of these was the vice law. He is a lightweight personality, but he has a Machiavellian character.

Eighth: Dr Mustafa Khalil, former prime minister and vice-president in charge of foreign affairs for the National Democratic Party. He was well-known for his liberalism, but he lost it after his fate was linked with Camp David and all of the repressive measures taken by President Sadat against his opponents. Today he occupies the position of chairman of the board of the Arab International Bank, which is considered one of the chief bases of the economic open-door policy and the main channel of communication with international capitalism. In Egyptian and Arab society he is considered a politician on the American roster.

Ninth: Mansur Hasan, who last month lost his main posts as minister for presidential affairs and minister of culture and information, as a result of his reservations about the recent campaign of arrests. However, he still retains his membership in the political office of the ruling party. He enjoys an open political mentality, and he has formed political circles linked to him in the state and information apparatus and among university professors. Also, by his contacts with the intelligence apparatus as minister for presidential affairs, he has accumulated dangerous secrets about the regime and its senior people. Egyptian society lists him, as well as Dr Mustafa Khalil, on the American roster.

Are They in Agreement?

These are the nine main characters left on the stage by President Sadat after his death. Those outside this circle remain largely on the sidelines.

The question is: If granted the conditions, can these people agree among themselves on dividing the legacy and the responsibilities?

It appears that they are trying to give this outward appearance, in spite of the sharp differences among them.

It seems that they "alone" are unable personally and objectively to hold power for long, even if they agreed.

From the personal standpoint, their share of power in Sadat's era did not go beyond performing the work of the secretariat or carrying out the orders of the "father of the family." Most of them have only a minimum of political experience and popular base.

From the objective standpoint, their commitment to Sadat's domestic, Arab and foreign policy, which they always directly confirmed and which won them their posts during Sadat's lifetime, has become an obstacle and a burden encumbering them after he is gone, so that in order to win popular support the new era is forced to present a picture completely different from Sadat and his policies.

Most observers expect to see two main camps sparring within the circle of these nine people.

The first camp consists of Jihan Sadat, Sayyid Mar'i, Mustafa Khalil, Mansur Hasan and Lt Gen Abu Ghazalah.

The second camp includes Husni Mubarak, Sufi Abu Talib and al-Nabawi Isma'il.

Contractor 'Uthman Ahmad 'Uthman remains outside, rejected by both camps. It is likely that both camps will offer him as a sacrifice and solidify the popular rage against him, since he is being blamed for corruption and bad advice to President Sadat. That is to say, he did not all of a sudden decide to flee abroad, where his wealth in excess of 10 billion dollars is piling up.

The first camp aims at installing Sayyid Mar'i as president and Mustafa Khalil as prime minister. Mansur Hasan and Lt Gen Abu Ghazalah would remain as prominent stars in Sadat's regime without Sadat. Jihan Sadat would retain the title and importance of First Lady, unchanged.

The second camp wants to entrust the presidency to Husni Mubarak and install Sufi Abu Talib as prime minister. Al-Nabawi Isma'il would continue as deputy prime minister and minister of the interior. This camp is attempting to win Lt Gen Abu Ghazalah over to its side.

Military Card

Both camps depend on the "strength of the army" to impose their desired form. Therefore, the armed forces are the trump card to tip the balance in favor of either one. That is in addition to the material and political support of the United States and also of Israel, which can reduce the intensity of its demands for concessions and gather its army in the occupied zone in Sinai so that the desired camp can win.

However, it is difficult for either camp to control the movement of the army in general, with the exception of the bureaucratic military leaders; a commando group of the army moved to end Sadat's life. This is not to mention the special organization which President Sadat assigned Husni Mubarak to form within the armed forces more than 5 years ago. This led to an intense struggle between Mubarak and Lt Gen Muhammad 'Abd-al-Ghani al-Jamasi which ended with the latter's retirement. This caused fragmentation and weakness after which Sadat took the reins personally. Assisting in that were Lt Gen Abu Ghazalah and senior American experts in the armed forces, on one hand, and on the other the existence of a number of secret organizations within the army, which published a number of anti-Sadat and anti-Camp David pamphlets. These are organizations divided among themselves by all of the political trends and currents of society. They have not yet achieved any degree of unity, although they had begun to coordinate among themselves about 6 months ago, and coordination increased sharply after the widespread arrest campaign launched by Sadat last September against his opponents. It is not yet known with which group those who assassinated President Sadat are associated. Are they affiliated with a single group which will announce itself shortly and try to seize control, or are they representatives of all of the secret organizations in the army? Time must pass before these organizations agree among themselves or through a national coalition front on the form and content of the new authority in Sadat's absence.

Observers think it likely that the basic American line will concentrate its efforts now on removing Jihan Sadat from the picture because she is stirring up all

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of the political forces, especially the religious ones, against her, and also most of the men of the first camp. It will try to concentrate on enabling the second camp to seize power, if only for a relatively long transition period. This will grant the United States the opportunity to rearrange the region in the absence of Sadat, who personally was one of the mainstays of American strategic policy in Egypt and the region, meanwhile searching for personalities with political weight to support the new regime. For example there is Zakariya Muhyi-al-Din, former member of the Revolutionary Command Council, who opposed Sadat but did not translate this opposition into action, as did his other colleagues.

However, this "scenario" on the surface of events is not the only one possible. More than one other "scenario" exists.

Alternate "Scenario"

The alternate "scenario" is that of the Egyptian nationalist movement in all of its directions coming together within the framework of a national coalition front. President Sadat arrested a large number of its symbolic figures, leaders and cadres. It appears that in the heart of society there are still leaders and cadres of the national coalition front who are distinguished by their political expertise, organizational abilities and experience in government administration. They include such people as 'Abd-al-Latif Baghdadi and Kamal-al-Din Husayn, two members of the Command Council of the July Revolution; 'Aziz Sidqi and Sidqi Sulayman, former prime ministers; Dr Murad Ghalib, former foreign minister; Mumtaz Nassar, chief justice and representative of the liberal forces; Ibrahim Shukri, head of the Socialist Labor Party, and his comrades; Khalid Muhyi-al-Din, head of the National Progressive Unionist Coalition Party, and his colleagues; the leaders of the Wafd Party; representatives of the religious movement, the most prominent of whom are Muhammad 'Atiyah Khamis, head of the Muhammad's Youth Society; Dr Ahmad Sayf-al-Islam Hasan al-Banna, son of Hasan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood group; and Shaykh Abu Isma'il, member of the People's Assembly. The national coalition has presented a comprehensive policy alternative to Sadat's policy, embodied in the establishment of a national federation regime representing all of the forces of the coalition. It would call for a constituent assembly to draw up a constitution for a democratic, parliamentary republican regime working to return to Egypt to the Arab ranks; freeze the Camp David agreements and the peace with Israel, and submit the whole matter for discussion with the Arabs to build a new united strategic position; end the economic open-door policy; and enter a path of complete economic-social development within the framework of cooperation and integration with the Arab economy.

It is not unlikely, and observers think it most likely, that the national coalition which succeeded in arriving at common programs among its diverse forces (including the fundamentalist forces of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic groupings, and the Egyptian Coptic Church) might attract the secret nationalist organizations in the armed forces to its programs. This explains President Sadat's initiative in concentrating his arrest campaign on this coalition. Observers note in this regard that Maj Gen Salah Abu Sa'dah, former commander of the Republican Guard, was among those who signed the coalition's statements.

However, in its quest for power the national coalition will meet resistance from the rest of Sadat's regime, the Americans and Israel. The outcome of the struggle

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in favor of either side depends on the abilities of the popular movement and which way the armed forces throw their weight.

The third possible "scenario" is what could be called the mongrel regime. This would rely on the United States and some of the Arab powers to form a new political coalition bringing together elements from the remaining regime and elements from the national coalition, receiving a minimum of popular support and the support of the armed forces, assuming power in a transitional stage and following a moderate reform policy in harmony with some Arab powers, with the provision that this coalition form would be reconsidered later.

In any case, the "phenomenon of violence" has begun to crystallize for the first time as a major factor in the political movement in Egyptian society. Sadat was the one who introduced this factor with his strong repressive measures against his opponents in the political and military field, and in the end he became its victim, recorded as the first assassinated president of the republic in Egypt's history.

It seems that there is a likelihood that the movement of violence and counter-violence within Egyptian society will increase before control is attained. This must continue, because Egypt is cleansing itself of Sadat's Camp David policies with all of their domestic, Arab and international dimensions.

Ten Stations--Deviations

One can summarize the course of Sadat's deviation in the major stations. They are:

On 15 May 1971, he delivered the coup de grace to the Nasirist forces in the regime, headed by 'Ali Sabri and his group, in what was called the "15 May Revolution," with the intention of reducing the importance of the "23 July Revolution" led by Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir.

Between 15 May and 6 October, Sadat laid the foundation for his new position as Washington's first ally in the region. His dispute with Moscow escalated, and he expelled more than 20,000 Soviet experts. He began to plan to convert the Nasirist successes to "mistakes," making use of the religious movement.

After the battle of the crossing, direct negotiations began with the Israeli enemy (the 101-kilometer tent) in 1973, which ended with the severing of the first and second commitments in preparation for Egypt's withdrawal from the struggle.

After these talks the Lebanese war broke out with all of its ramifications and complications, as one of the direct results of Sadat's Arab policy and Egypt's turning its back to the Arabs.

In 1977 he put down the upheaval of 18 and 19 January, calling it an "unlawful uprising." It had broken out as a spontaneous expression over deteriorating economic and social conditions.

On 19 November of the same year, 2 days before 'Id al-Adha, he took off for Israel on a civilian airplane, inaugurating the most dangerous stage in the history of the Arab-Israeli struggle, the "Camp David" phase.

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On 17 September 1978 he signed the unfortunate "Camp David" agreements in view of the whole world and under the auspices of the American "Arabs."

In the subsequent stage he tried to cover up widespread Palestinian and Arab resentment by beginning a "scenario" of "home rule" talks which are still going around in a circle of hollow bargaining.

At the beginning of September 1981 he ordered the largest arrest campaign in the history of modern Egypt, including more than 5,000 Egyptians whose views differed from his. All of this was done in the name of "democracy" and in the guise of plebiscites.

He had intended to hold joint meetings between Egyptian People's Assembly and the Israeli Knesset as of next December-January, to give the stamp of popular impetus, but he fell, as a lesson to consider.

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IRAQ

BRIEFS

OIL CONTRACTS SOUGHT--The primary oil consuming countries and oil companies have shown great interest in Iraqi oil in preparation for the period which will follow the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Now governments are trying to secure long-range contracts for the acquisition of Iraqi oil, while companies are showing a special interest in oil exploration projects in this Arab country. Many companies have moved their regional headquarters from other Gulf countries to Baghdad. Iraq was the second largest oil exporting country in 1979 (3.45 million barrels/day) after Saudi Arabia. Although its proven reserves amount to 30 billion barrels, which places Iraq sixth in the world in energy reserves, the probability is still very high that other oil fields will be discovered. [Text] [Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic No 250, 27 Nov-3 Dec 81 p 68]

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QATAR

BRIEFS

BUDGET DECREASE--There has been a 6.6 percent decrease in the new Qatari budget which covers a year and a half. The cutback is aimed at decreasing expenditures while improving the quality of production. The budget figure is 8,362 million Qatari riyals. The budget includes appropriations for financing the needs of national industry. Among the most important growth and service projects are the completion of radio and television improvements and the construction of schools and hospitals. [Text] [Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic No 250, 27 Nov-3 Dec 81 p 66]

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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING EXTENSION OF CONSTITUTION, REELECTION EXAMINED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 250, 27 Nov-3 Dec 81 pp 33, 34

[Article by Ahmad Hafiz: "The Emirates in the Season of Surprises. What Government After Renewal, Extension?"]

[Text] The domestic political arena in the United Arab Emirates is witnessing, these days, intense political activity within the framework of "reorganizing in-house affairs", from forming a new government to reorganizing the National Council (the parliament). The questions of the hour are many, including: Who will be the next prime minister? Who will be the new National Council chairman? Why did the Supreme Council of Rulers agree at the last moment to extend the provisional constitution, instead of deciding on a new constitution?

The meetings of the United Arab Emirates' Supreme Council of Rulers which were held during the first week of November resulted in a surprise which nobody expected, neither locally nor throughout the Arabian Gulf. The surprise, naturally, was not in renewing the presidency (for the third time) of Shaykh Zayid ibn Sultan al Nuhayan. Rather, the surprise was in the length of the new term which is 5 years instead of 2. During the term a new permanent constitution will be completed to replace the provisional constitution which was decided upon on 2 December 1971 and which was to expire after 5 years and be replaced by a new permanent constitution. However, after 5 years passed the members of the Supreme Council, which is composed of the rulers of the seven emirates, agreed to extend the provisional constitution for another 5 years, whereas all of the citizens of the emirates hoped and expected that the provisional constitution would not be extended for a new term.

So, with the end of the second 5-year term approaching at the end of this year, contacts, and discussions began among the rulers of the emirates and Shaykh Zayid, the president, on the question of the provisional constitution and the extension of Shaykh Zayid's presidency to a third term. These discussions began during the early summer of this year. Two fundamental views surfaced concerning the federalization process. They can be summarized in the following way:

One view, or opinion, advocates not extending the provisional constitution for another term, insisting on the necessity of implementing a new permanent constitution which takes into consideration the various changes which have occurred in all segments of the country since the establishment of the state in 1971 and which the provisional constitution does not address. The emirates of Abu Dhabi and al-Shariqah advocate this point of view.

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The second view does not see the necessity of changing the provisional constitution. Rather, it advocates maintaining the status quo by extending the presidency of Shaykh Zayid to a third term since his extensive political qualification and sophistication have been established in handling affairs of state and successfully solving disputes between the emirates. This view is led by the emirate of Dubai.

It is worth indicating here that the call for a permanent constitution means an increase in measures aimed at achieving complete unity among the emirates, since this unity is still lacking in various aspects. Each emirate still enjoys independence in many matters including defense, finance, petroleum, etc.

The issue of a permanent constitution has inspired debate and argument which, at times, has taken the form of popular marches calling for complete unity among the seven emirates.

This, then, was the situation as the expiration of the provisional constitution approached (for the second time) as well as the expiration of the second term of Shaykh Zayid's presidency. Both were to expire on 2 December.

Since the highest political authority in the country is the Supreme Council of Rulers headed by Shaykh Zayid, the rulers of the emirates began a series of discussions and consultations about 2 months ago which culminated with a meeting during the first week of November. Before the meeting, news spread throughout the entire country that the rulers of the emirates had arrived at a compromise between extending the provisional constitution and the presidency of Shaykh Zayid for another 5 years, and letting the provisional constitution expire and forming a new constitution.

The compromise which everyone expected was to extend the constitution for only 2 years and, likewise, Zayid's presidency. During this term the new permanent constitution for the country would be decided upon and the steps toward federation which have been taken during the last 10 years would be evaluated. News of this compromise spread an atmosphere of relief through various quarters here, relief which delayed or blocked the differences which had been spreading and which gave shape to a judicious call to discuss the aspects of the problem in a calm and deliberate fashion. Furthermore, insiders in the United Arab Emirates saw this compromise as a preferable and reasonable solution, consistent with the nature of affairs in this country where the officials avoid serious decisions.

Despite these expectation, the results produced by the Supreme Council meeting were to the contrary. A high official who had been following the Council's meetings and discussions from close proximity stated to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI that the members of the Council entered the decisive meeting completely satisfied that it would not take longer than a few minutes only to put their signatures on the compromise, the contents of which were actually prepared. However, the meeting lasted a long time and the members emerged with the following solution which took everyone by surprise: Extension of the provisional constitution for a second term (5 years) and renewal of Shaykh Zayid's presidency for the same term.

There is no argument about the fact that the reelection of Shaykh Zayid was naturally expected. The man had established his great capabilities and qualifications in handling the country's affairs and besides, there was no alternative in light of

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present local, Arab and international circumstances. Rather, it was the extension of the provisional constitution for another term that surprised local political observers here.

In accordance with the text of the provisional constitution, the decision of the Supreme Council of Rulers would undoubtedly be given over to the National Consultative Council (parliament) for deliberation and the requisite people's stamp of approval which must appear on the resolutions of the emirates' rulers. And so it was. The National Council met in an extraordinary session to debate and discuss the resolutions of the Council of Rulers. It was one of the strangest sessions ever witnessed by the National Council whose members are accustomed to debating legislative matters, issues and problems presented to them in detailed form. Many times the council's hall has known serious clashes in opinion, differences in points of view and tenacity on the part of each member in presenting his opinion so forcefully at times as to approach violence. After Chairman Turayim 'Umran Turayim (of al-Shariqah) announced that the session was open to discussion, representative Sultan al-Habtur (of Dubai) requested that the council chairman begin a voice vote on the draft resolution of the Supreme Council of Rulers. It was strange that no one objected, except a very small minority, to the Dubai representative's proposal to begin the vote and not open the door to discussion as is normally the case.

After the representative's proposal was discussed for a few minutes, 34 members out of 40 (6 were absent) cast their votes. The results of the vote were as follows: 31 members agreed on the draft resolution of the Supreme Council of Rulers to extend the validity of the provisional constitution for another 5 years and, likewise, the term of Shaykh Zayid's presidency. Three members dissented including the chairman of the council himself, Turayim 'Umran Turayim. The other two members were Rashid ibn Dimas, also from al-Shariqah, and Salih al-Shalah from Ra's al-Khaymah.

With this result came the agreement to postpone formation of a permanent constitution for the country simultaneously from the government and the people.

So the previous stage, with its positive and negative aspects, will continue as it has since the establishment of the United Arab Emirates. This has been the first experiment in Arab unity to succeed in maintaining its identity, as it has for the past 10 years.

The President of the New Government...Who Will It Be?

The National Council will remain as one of the constitutional institutions in the country. The council, according to the (provisional) constitution, conducts the appointment of new members every 4 years. The current 4-year term end in December of this year and, therefore, discussions are currently underway concerning the formation of a new council. The method to be followed in choosing members is that the ruler of each emirate selects the representatives of his emirate to the council based on the size and number of residents of the emirate. As for the council chairman, the members elect him from among themselves once every 2 years. Political circles in the emirates are now busy with two matters since the matters of the highest leadership in the country have been settled: formation of a new National Council; formation of a new government. Up to this point there are three candidates for the presidency. They are: Shaykh Sultan ibn Muhammad

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al-Qasimi, the ruler of al-Shariqah; Shaykh Khalifah ibn Zayid, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and son of the president, Shaykh Zayid; Shaykh Maktum ibn Rashid, the crown prince of Dubai.

The formation of a new cabinet comes for two reasons: because of the new phase the country is entering after renewal of the president's term and extension of the validity of the provisional constitution; because of the ill health of the present prime minister.

Political predictions and rumors fill the air of the emirates concerning the new candidate to head the government and each potential candidate has his supporters and protagonists.

However, in light of the surprises which have occurred up until now, entering into conjecture and analysis on this matter would prove as groundless as the shifting sands of the desert, especially since the post of president of the emirates is one of such importance that whoever possesses it enjoys extensive executive powers, to the point of being able to change the political course set by his predecessor. This is not the case (a position of executive authority at the disposal of the president) in most Arab countries.

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