

# ORIENT

14. Jahrgang Nr. 1

März 1973

Opladen

DEUTSCHES ORIENT-INSTITUT

IM VERBUND DER STIFTUNG DEUTSCHES ÜBERSEE-INSTITUT

NAH- UND MITTELOST-VEREIN

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**Herausgeber:** Deutsches Orient-Institut im Verbund der Stiftung Deutsches Übersee-Institut, 2 Hamburg 13, Mittelweg 150; Nah- und Mittelost-Verein, 2 Hamburg 13, Mittelweg 151. **Verlag:** C. W. Leske, 567 Opladen, Ophovener Straße 3, Postfach 1406, Ruf (0 21 71) 50 31, FS: 08 515 859. **Redaktion:** Dr. Rainer Büren, Dr. Rainer Glagow, Deutsches Orient-Institut, Ruf (04 11) 45 75 81 / 45 55 32. **Druck:** Krögers Buch- und Verlagsdruckerei KG, 2 Hamburg 55. **Anzeigenverwaltung:** Scolaris GmbH, Hamburg. **Bezugsbedingungen:** Einzelheft 8,— DM. Jahresabonnement (4 Hefte) 30,— DM, zuzügl. Zustellgebühr. Ein Abonnement gilt jeweils immer abgeschlossen für ein Jahr. Wird es nicht 3 Monate vor Ablauf der 12 Monate, ein-treffend im Verlag, gekündigt, so verlängert es sich um ein weiteres Jahr. Erfüllungsort und Gerichtsstand: Opladen.

# The struggle for power in Syria and the Ba'th Party (1958-1966)

By Nikolaos van Dam

## Introduction

On March 8, 1963, several groups of nationalist Syrian officers took over power in Syria. Although Nasserist, Arab Nationalist, Socialist Unionist and Ba'thist officers had all taken part in this successful coup, it appeared later as if the Ba'thists had played the most prominent part, because half of the newly formed national front government of Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Bitār consisted of Ba'thists. In reality however the Ba'th party did not play any significant role at all during the Revolution of March 8. It was a group of former Ba'thist officers who played an essential role during the coup, and afterwards used the name of the Ba'th party as an official cover for their own activities. To understand what exactly happened, we have to go back to the beginning of the union of Syria and Egypt.

During the negotiations for a union between Syria and Egypt in 1958, president 'Abd al-Nāsir stated as a precondition that the Syrian political parties should be dissolved, and that the Syrian army was to retire from politics<sup>1</sup>). The Ba'th leaders Michel 'Aflaq, Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Bitār and Akram al-Ḥawrānī accepted these preconditions partly out of idealistic motives, and partly to solve the difficulties among themselves<sup>2</sup>). On February 1, 1958, a Syrian Regional Congress of the Ba'th was held at which the proposal of the party leadership to dissolve the party organization in Syria was unanimously approved<sup>3</sup>). As what usually happened with decisions that affected the future of the party, the party command did not seek the approval of lower party members. Moreover, the members of the Syrian Regional Congress had not been chosen by the party base, but had been previously selected by the party leadership in such a way, that the chance for a voting against the dissolution of the party organization in Syria was practically nil. As was to become clear later on, many party members did not agree at all with dissolving the party in Syria, and this caused a great rift between them and the party leadership of 'Aflaq, Bitār and Ḥawrānī<sup>4</sup>). Contrary to the decisions of the party leadership however, many party members refused to dissolve their cells and remained organized secretly during the union with Egypt.

## The Ba'thist officers

President 'Abd al-Nāsir had demanded that all Syrian officers should refrain from political activities. This meant that many Ba'thist officers were to pay the price of the submittance agreed to by their civilian party leaders to 'Abd al-Nāsir's demands. Considering them less dangerous when far away from Syria, the U.A.R. army command transferred in the summer of 1959, a great number of younger Ba'thist officers to Egypt under the pretext of training and specialization. These Ba'thist officers were embittered by their transfers, and were under the impression that 'Abd al-Nāsir did not trust them. Moreover they were opposed to his dictatorial attitude, which made them feel as though the Syrians were treated as inferiors to the Egyptians. Meanwhile Egyptian officers replaced the transferred Syrian officers in Syria. The Ba'thist officers also strongly resented the fact that the traditional Ba'th leadership of 'Aflaq, Bitār and Ḥawrānī had dissolved the party without any guarantees, and that they had tied Syria to Egypt in such a way that it had worsened the position of the Ba'thist officers<sup>5</sup>). Shortly after their transfer to Egypt in the summer of 1959, a number of younger Ba'thist officers formed a secret military organization that later became known under the name of the "Military Committee". The highest leadership of this Military Committee consisted of five officers, of whom three were 'Alawīs, notably Muhammad 'Umrān, Ṣalāh Jadīd and Ḥāfiz al-Asad, and two were Ismā'īlīs, notably 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jundī and Ahmad al-Mīr. When the Military Committee was expanded later on, also Druze officers like Salīm Ḥātūm and Ḥamad 'Ubayd became members, but they never became as powerful as the first five<sup>6</sup>).

The Military Committee in Cairo adopted a number of resolutions that were to be put into effect later on:

1: The Ba'th party is considered as not existing, including all those branches outside Syria that follow the National Command. The backbone of the Ba'th party is in Syria, which implies that the dissolution of the party in that country means the dissolution of the party as a whole. The continuing existence of the National Command is therefore considered as having no meaning at all.

2: The party is to be rebuilt anew.

3: Opportunities have to be created for new leaders to reach the party top. The principle of "party paternalism" is rejected, which means that the traditional party leaders like 'Aflaq, Bitār and Ḥawrānī, must be separated from the party, because they are responsible for the dissolution of the party.

4: There is to be no cooperation with all those who cooperated with the regime of the Syrian-Egyptian union, except if circumstances make this necessary<sup>7</sup>).

The most important goal the Military Committee was aiming at, was to achieve power in Syria, which was to be ruled under cover of the name of the old Ba'th party, until they built up their own new Ba'th organization. That this was the case was clearly explained by Ahmad al-Mīr during a Syrian Regional Emergency Congress in the summer of 1965 when he reproachfully said to the older Ba'thists of Michel 'Aflaq: "How (can you say) that we don't believe in the party, while we 'chose' the Arab Socialist Ba'th party to fulfill our will, when we erected our organization (the Military Committee) and when we carried out the revolution (of March 8, 1963)?"<sup>8</sup>).

To realize their plans, the members of the Military Committee were prepared to use all possible means. A decisive factor that made them stronger than their opponents during emergency situations was their full utilization of sectarian, regional, and tribal ties<sup>9</sup>).

On September 28, 1961, a number of Syrian officers forced the separation of Syria from the U.A.R. by a military coup. One of the motives was their resentment against the domination of the Egyptians in the Syrian army and in Syria generally<sup>10</sup>). The attitude of the Ba'thists towards the separation was extremely confusing. Some of them like Bitār and Ḥawrānī openly backed it by signing a document in which the separatist coup was supported in principle<sup>11</sup>). Bitār regretted this step later on and revised his attitude<sup>12</sup>). The National Command of the Ba'th issued in Bayrūt two contradictory statements. One supporting the separation and the other condemning it. Only the last statement was officially recognized<sup>13</sup>).

The Ba'thist officers of the Military Committee took no official stand on the separation because they were a secret organization<sup>14</sup>).

In an effort to purge the Syrian army of officers who entertained ties with political parties, the new rulers dismissed, at the end of 1961, 63 officers from the army<sup>15</sup>). Most of them were Ba'thists, among whom the most prominent members of the Military Committee like Ṣalāh Jadīd, Ḥāfiz al-Asad, Muhammad 'Umrān and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jundī<sup>16</sup>). From the moment of their dismissals the Ba'thist officers started making serious plans to topple the "separatist" regime. With this aim in mind they began cooperating with the Nasserist officers of Jāsīm 'Alwān<sup>17</sup>). On March 31, 1962, the officers of Jāsīm 'Alwān, supported by officers from the Military Committee, occupied the radiostation of Aleppo. 'Alwān however had a radiocommunicé broadcast in which he declared that Syria was the northern province of the U.A.R. again. Immediately after hearing this, the Ba'thist officers withdrew their support for 'Alwān, because they did not want to return to the unfavorable situation they had had in the army of the U.A.R. This was one of the reasons why the coup failed<sup>18</sup>). A year later, however, they would be more successful.

### The Fifth National Congress of the Ba'th

In May, 1962, the National Command of the Ba'th summoned the Fifth National Congress in Homs. Officially, the Syrian branch of the party was still dissolved, which made it officially impossible to invite the former Syrian party members. Consequently, Syria was represented at this congress only by Michel 'Aflaq, the Syrian secretary general of the party, and some of his supporters. Other Syrian Ba'thists had not been invited<sup>19)</sup>. During the congress a number of important decisions were made:

1: Ḥawrānī and his followers were expelled from the party because of their separatist attitude.

2: A new, but **federal** union with Egypt was to be pursued, taking into account the mistakes that were made in the past.

3: The party organization in Syria was to be rebuilt under the supervision of a commission that comprised a majority of 'Irāqī party members<sup>20)</sup>.

Most former Syrian Ba'thists took a negative stand toward the Fifth National Congress, because they had not been invited. Moreover, the congress had appointed a new Provisional Syrian Regional Command of four members, a majority of whom were 'Irāqī<sup>21)</sup>. These were unable to fulfill their tasks well because they did not have any ties with the former Syrian party members which made it almost impossible for them to have good contacts with the party base in Syria. Besides, the 'Irāqī members were usually in 'Irāq organizing their own secret activities against the regime of Qāsim<sup>22)</sup>.

### The Qutriyīn

As mentioned above, many Syrian Ba'thists remained secretly organized after the official dissolution of the party in Syria in February, 1958. They considered the dissolution of the party a great ideological mistake because "it deprived the Arab masses from their revolutionary vanguard, i. e. the Ba'th party". Those Ba'thists who remained secretly organized during the union with Egypt were especially strongly represented in the districts of Dayr al-Zūr, Ḥawrān and Latakia<sup>23)</sup>. The 'Alawī and Ismā'īlī members of the Military Committee especially in their homedistrict of Latakia maintained good relations with the Ba'thists who remained secretly organized there during the union, and who, in many cases, were relatives or friends.

The Syrian Ba'thists, whose organizations had been secretly maintained intact during the union with Egypt, considered the Fifth National Congress, to which they had not been invited, as illegal. Ever since the official dissolution of the party in Syria<sup>24)</sup> they also stopped recognizing the old party leadership of 'Aflaq, Bītār and Ḥawrānī. Now that the Fifth National Congress had appointed a new Provisional Syrian Regional Command, those not invited Syrian Ba'thists came out in the open, and announced a few weeks later the formation of their own Regional Command under the leadership of Riyāḍ al-Mālikī<sup>25)</sup>. They intended to build from their Syrian base a whole new Ba'th party with a pan-Arab structure. Since they were first only organized on a regional (i. e. Syrian) basis, the 'Aflaqist Ba'thists described them as Qutriyīn (Regionalists), suggesting that they were acting in contradiction with the nationalist (i. e. pan-Arab) Ba'th ideology, and thus could not be considered as "real" Ba'thists<sup>26)</sup>.

### The Revolution of March 8, 1963

When Ba'thist officers on February 8, 1963, caused the fall of the regime of Qāsim in 'Irāq, the rebuilding of the party in Syria had hardly begun. The total number of active Ba'thists in Syria at that time was only about 400<sup>27)</sup>. For this reason Michel 'Aflaq, during a meeting of the National Command in Bayrūt, several days after the coup in 'Irāq, warned against executing a second Ba'thist coup in Syria too soon. According to his view the party was not yet ready to bear any eventual governing responsibilities<sup>27)</sup>.

On March 8, 1963, however, exactly a month after the Ba'thist coup in 'Irāq, another coup took place in Damascus which toppled the "separatist" regime. Several groups of officers had taken a part in the planning and organization of this coup: Ba'thists of the Military Committee, Nasserists, Arab Nationalists and Socialist Unionists. First it had been decided that the coup was to take place on March 7, but shortly before this date the Nasserist officers informed the others that they preferred to postpone the coup until they would occupy more strategic positions in the army so that the risks of bloodshed during the coup would be practically nil. Afterwards it became known that the Nasserists were

secretly planning their own coup without informing the others. Without the Nasserists knowing it, Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī, commander of the Syrian troops at the Israeli front, marched in the early morning of March 8, on Damascus where he was awaited by some officers of the Military Committee among whom Salīm Ḥātūm, 'Uṭhmān Kan'an, Sulaymān Ḥaddād and Mustafā al-Ḥājǵ 'Alī. The highest leaders of the Military Committee, like 'Umrān, Jadīd and al-Jundī, were at that moment still outside the army. Their role was supervising the planning and execution of the coup. Directly after occupying the radio station building of Damascus, Salīm Ḥātūm called up all dismissed Ba'thist officers who immediately were appointed to strategic positions in the army. Although there had been very few Ba'thist officers in the army just before the coup, they were now strongly represented again, placing them in a position from where they could bargain for an important share in the new government<sup>28)</sup>.

Although many important posts in the army after March 8 were also occupied by many non-Ba'thist officers, they turned out to be weaker in the end than the Ba'thist officers of the Military Committee. An important reason for this was that the members of the Military Committee, in contrast with the other officers, were tightly organized and had a well prepared plan. Moreover, the members of the Military Committee originated especially from the Syrian minorities: in the first place 'Alawīs, secondly, Druzes and thirdly, Ismā'īlīs. By exploiting their sectarian ties they succeeded in eliminating most of their opponents<sup>29)</sup>. Much later, after February, 1966, the 'Alawī officers of the Military Committee also started eliminating their former Druze and Ismā'īlī comrades from the army.

### Two Ba'th parties with one face for the outside world

While the members of the Military Committee played an important role during the coup of March 8, 1963, the civilian Ba'thists of Michel 'Aflaq played no part at all in planning or executing the coup, although some of the civilian Ba'thists had had some contacts with the military Ba'thist organization before the coup took place<sup>30)</sup>. The Military Committee, however, invited the civilian Ba'th party to take part in a national-front government and in the National Council for the Command of the Revolution (NCCR)<sup>31)</sup>. On March 9, Bītār announced his newly formed national-front government, of which half of the members were Ba'thists. There had been a lot of trouble between the Ba'thists and the other nationalist groups about the distribution of the ministerial posts, but the Ba'thists at last succeeded in obtaining half of them. This gave the outside world the impression that the Ba'th party of 'Aflaq had played an important role during the coup of March 8. In reality, however, there existed two different Ba'thist organizations: the civilian Ba'th of Michel 'Aflaq, and the military Ba'thist organization of the Military Committee. The military Ba'thists held the real power<sup>32)</sup>. In March, 1963, also the civilian Ba'thists of 'Aflaq did not know the real identity of the Military Committee. They first ruled Syria under the cover of the civilian Ba'th of 'Aflaq. After having consolidated their positions, the officers of the Military Committee started eliminating the traditional party leadership of 'Aflaq and Bītār and gradually substituted the followers of 'Aflaq with their own supporters, of whom the Qutriyīn were the most important. In February, 1966, this culminated in a military coup in which the group of 'Aflaq was expelled and a whole new generation of younger Ba'thists openly took power.

### The purges of the Nasserists (1963)

While there had been difficulties between the Ba'thists and Nasserists from the first day after the March 8 revolution about the distribution of ministerial posts, additional troubles started when the discussion was opened on the reestablishment of a union with Egypt. The Ba'thists wanted a union between the Ba'thist 'Irāq, the Ba'thist Syria and Egypt, while the Nasserists wanted a union between Syria and Egypt only, and under the same circumstances that had existed previously<sup>33)</sup>. At last it was decided to start negotiations in Cairo on a tripartite union between Syria, 'Irāq and Egypt. The military Ba'thists who had the real power in Syria took no part in the negotiations that were held in Cairo in March and April, 1963. They remained behind in Syria to prepare themselves for a purge of their Nasserist opponents<sup>34)</sup>.

On April 17, 1963, a treaty was signed in Cairo for a federal union between Syria, 'Irāq and Egypt. Shortly afterwards, however, while the ink of the treaty had hardly dried,

Salâh Jadîd, one of the most prominent members of the Military Committee, caused the dismissal of 47 Nasserist officers from the Syrian army. The civilian Ba'thists who had not been informed of this step in advance, were just as surprised as the Nasserists<sup>35)</sup>. The dismissal of the Nasserist officers by Salâh Jadîd, in reality, meant the annulment of the federation treaty which the civilian Ba'thists had just signed. To prevent any further rapprochement between Syria and Egypt, an attempt on the life of Salâh Jadîd was staged which gave him a new opportunity to arrest many Nasserists and to continue the purge of Nasserists from the army<sup>36)</sup>.

In a last desperate effort to turn the tide of events, the Nasserist officers on July 18, 1963, staged a coup under the leadership of Jâsim 'Alwân. The coup, which took place in broad daylight in the streets of Damascus, failed, however, and ended in a great bloodbath. Now that the Nasserist officers had been eliminated, the Ba'thist officers of the Military Committee had a monopoly of power. With their positions consolidated inside the army, they could now turn against their opponents inside the Ba'th party itself.

#### **The First Syrian Regional Congress of the Ba'th (5—17 September, 1963)**

For the first time since the reconstruction of the Ba'th organization in Syria a Regional Congress of the Ba'th was convened in Damascus on September 5, 1963, for which the members had been chosen according to the internal party regulations. To facilitate the reorganization of the Ba'th in Syria the internal party regulations had been temporarily suspended. This had caused an unnatural situation in the Syrian party branch, especially because a commission with a majority of 'Irâqîs had been responsible for its reorganization<sup>37)</sup>. The result was that the leftist group of 'Alî Sâlih al-Sa'dî, the 'Irâqî regional party secretary general, had created in the Syrian party branch an extreme leftist and ideologically orientated group of young Ba'thists under the leadership of Hammûd al-Shûfi.

During the preparatory elections for the Syrian Regional Congress the military Ba'thists succeeded in penetrating into most of the party branches, and it appeared as if they supported the extreme leftist group of Hammûd al-Shûfi<sup>38)</sup>. In reality, however, they wanted to exploit the group of al-Shûfi in order to cause the fall of such traditional party leaders as 'Aflaq and Bitâr<sup>39)</sup>. They partly succeeded because Bitâr was not elected in the new Syrian Regional Command. It was the first time in the party's history that one of the traditional leaders was not elected. Since the separation of Syria from the UAR, Bitâr had lost a lot of confidence among the party members, especially because he had signed the "separation document". Even on a lower party level than the Regional Command, Bitâr had not been able to get a majority of votes<sup>40)</sup>. As a result of his loosing during the party elections Bitâr offered his resignation as prime minister of Syria. Under pressure of Amin al-Hâfiz, however, he reversed his decision and remained prime minister.

The members of the Military Committee demanded to be represented in the new Regional Command. This was readily accepted, as there were more military than civilian Ba'thists in Syria at this stage. Three members of the Military Committee entered the new Regional Command with Hammûd al-Shûfi as secretary general<sup>41)</sup>. By officially entering the Regional Command, the Military Committee obtained the total supervision over the civilian party organization, while the civilian leaders were at the same time not allowed to supervise the military Ba'thist organization. This made both the military and civilian party organizations, in fact, subordinate to the Military Committee, which was only responsible to itself<sup>42)</sup>.

The Military Committee used a strategy by which it could always be certain of a majority in the most important institutions of the Ba'th party and the government. When important matters had to be decided, the members of the Military Committee always first held a closed session in which they discussed things openly. The final decision would then be binding on all members of the Military Committee outside the closed session, however different their opinion might have been during the closed session<sup>43)</sup>. By this method they usually succeeded in imposing their will on the others.

#### **The Sixth National Congress of the Ba'th (5—23 October, 1963)**

From the 5th till the 23rd of October, 1963, the Ba'th held its Sixth National Congress which was convened in Damascus. It was the first time such a congress was held while the party was in power in two Arab countries. The congress meant a historical change for the party. For the first time not the group of Michel 'Aflaq, but the younger Ba'thists had a majority. The congress was divided in two main groups. One of these supported 'Aflaq and Bitâr, and the other supported 'Alî Sâlih al-Sa'dî, Hammûd al-Shûfi and the Military Committee. The second group had a majority of about 75% in the congress<sup>44)</sup>.

The thoughts of Michel 'Aflaq, who until then was recognized as the party's ideologue, underwent heavy attacks from the leftist groups of al-Sa'dî and al-Shûfi. 'Aflaq's thoughts were rejected as romantic, unscientific and "petit bourgeois", and the congress adopted a new ideological resolution with a clear Marxist influence<sup>45)</sup>. This resolution has ever since been considered by most Ba'thists as the basis for the Ba'th ideology.

The most important organizational resolution of the congress was the decision to reopen the party for all former party members provided they would criticize themselves first, they would accept the party's policies as theirs, and would reenter as individuals and not as groups. The congress delegated Amin al-Hâfiz to negotiate with the Hawrânists; Muhammad 'Umrân was to negotiate with the Socialist Unionists; and Salâh Jadîd with the Qutriyîn. Only Salâh Jadîd succeeded in his negotiations with the Qutriyîn<sup>46)</sup>. Jadîd had argued that the Socialist Unionists were in fact Nasserists, and so were enemies of the Ba'th party and that the Hawrânists were in fact separatists and reactionaries. According to the argumentation of Salâh Jadîd only the Qutriyîn were "real" Ba'thists, so they should reenter the party only. Jadîd had many personal relations with the Qutriyîn and, already during the union with Egypt, had come to a mutual understanding with them. A part of the Qutriyîn like Yûsuf Zu'ayyin and Muslih Sâlim reentered the Ba'th party soon after the Sixth National Congress. Later on, during 1964, when Jadîd and his supporters obtained a majority in the Syrian Regional Command, he had many Qutriyîn reenter the party as a group, and not as individuals exercising self criticism as had been decided during the Sixth National Congress<sup>47)</sup>. Since the day of their reentering the party a solid alliance grew between the Qutriyîn and most members of the Military Committee. To the older Ba'thists it looked as if they formed a separate party inside the Ba'th<sup>48)</sup>.

Another factor that accelerated the readmission of the Qutriyîn to the Ba'th party, was the fall of the Ba'thist regime in 'Irâq in November, 1963. As a political refugee in Syria, 'Alî Sâlih al-Sa'dî, the 'Irâqî regional secretary general of the Ba'th, intensified his attacks on the group of 'Aflaq. Thinking it would be in a stronger position as to al-Sa'dî when the Qutriyîn would reenter the party, the National Command slackened the rules for readmission by not opposing the fact that Qutriyîn reentered the party as a group and without selfcriticism. The National Command, at this time, did not yet realize, however, that it was undermining its own position<sup>49)</sup>.

Ever since the Military Committee had eliminated its Nasserist opponents, internal rivalries began to appear between Salâh Jadîd and Muhammad 'Umrân. During the elections for a new National Command in October, 1963, Salâh Jadîd caused the fall of 'Umrân by way of a secret agreement inside the Military Committee with Amin al-Hâfiz. Jadîd now took over the place of 'Umrân in the National Command<sup>50)</sup>. Another point of rivalry between Jadîd and 'Umrân was the post of Chief of Staff, that had been vacant since the dismissal of Ziyâd al-Harîrî in June, 1963. Although a majority inside the Military Committee supported the candidature of 'Umrân for this post, Amin al-Hâfiz, who was Commander in Chief of the army, succeeded in appointing Salâh Jadîd as Chief of Staff, by cleverly making use of the absence of 'Umrân during a military meeting that had been convened for this purpose<sup>51)</sup>. Jadîd was officially appointed on November 11, 1963. The same day Amin al-Hâfiz formed a new government after Bitâr had resigned once more. Also during the Sixth National Congress Bitâr was not reelected. 'Umrân, by way of compromise, became vicepremier.

### The ousting of al-Shūfi and al-Sa'di

The tactical alliance between the Military Committee with the group of Ḥammūd al-Shūfi against the group of Michel 'Aflaq that was started during the First Regional Congress in September, 1963, did not last long. The main reason for this was that the extreme leftist group of al-Shūfi started spreading rumours about the alleged rightist character of military party members and their intention of swallowing up the party. There was not one military leader whom they did not accuse of conspiracy and reaction. They also attacked, on a large scale, all other civilian party leaders. The military in return accused al-Shūfi of destroying the prestige of the army<sup>52</sup>).

Due to the fall of the Ba'th regime in 'Irāq and because of the difficulties between the group of al-Shūfi on the one side, and the military and some members of the National Command on the other side, an extraordinary session of the First Regional Congress was convened at February 1, 1964, which lasted until February 6. The main result was the fall of the Regional Command of Ḥammūd al-Shūfi and the election of a new one<sup>53</sup>). The new and enlarged Regional Command comprised seven of the most prominent members of the Military Committee, while the new civilian members were mainly Qutriyīn. Together, the military and the Qutriyīn totally controlled the new Regional Command<sup>54</sup>). For the same reasons as the extraordinary Regional Congress, the National Command on February 12, 1964, convened the Seventh Extraordinary National Congress in Damascus which lasted until February 17. During the congress 'Aflaq heavily attacked the group of al-Shūfi and al-Sa'di, and tried to press the party to return to its orthodox ideology. Although the military Ba'thists during the Sixth National Congress had openly supported the group of al-Shūfi and al-Sa'di they now changed sides for tactical reasons, and supported 'Aflaq in his attacks. Together, they succeeded in causing the fall of the remaining civilian marxist Ba'thists. The final result was that al-Shūfi and al-Sa'di, together with their anti-militaristic supporters, were expelled from the party<sup>55</sup>).

The congress ended with the election of a new National Command of sixteen members. Of the six Syrian members three were prominent members of the Military Committee<sup>56</sup>). Now that the group of al-Shūfi and al-Sa'di had been expelled, the military could turn against 'Aflaq and his followers with the final aim of expelling them from the party as well.

### 'Aflaq leaves Syria

After the extraordinary Regional Congress in February, 1964, the struggle between the National Command and the Syrian Regional Command, which was in the hands of the military, started. Although the National Command was officially the highest party authority to which the Regional Commands were subordinate, she was prevented from having normal contacts with the lower party members in Syria, which made it impossible for her to explain the serious situation that had developed inside the party. When the National Command, for instance, wanted to issue statements to the lower party members the Syrian Regional Command prevented this by confiscating them and by refusing to distribute them<sup>57</sup>). In this way the National Command lost its control over the Syrian party branch as a whole.

How serious this situation was, became apparent later, when 'Aflaq told some party members: "In the beginning of 1964... I wanted to visit some (party) branches, and I requested comrade Fahmī al-Āshūri, the regional assistant secretary general at that time, to accompany me and we agreed to travel; but on the fixed day comrade Fahmī did not come so I postponed the journey. I did not know the reason for that except after a few months when comrade Fahmī, during an official meeting, stood up and said that he had submitted the matter to the Regional Command, and that the Regional Command had considered the visit of the secretary general (Michel 'Aflaq) to the (party) branches as not suitable"<sup>58</sup>).

In June, 1964, 'Aflaq left Syria. In this he saw the only way of warning the Syrian party members of the grave situation that existed inside the party. 'Aflaq decided to stay for some months with his brother in Bonn, hoping the party members would begin to realize for themselves how serious the party crisis really was<sup>59</sup>). The military and the Qutriyīn used the absence of 'Aflaq, however, to enlarge their grip on the party by purging it from his followers<sup>60</sup>).

During a joint session of the National and Syrian Regional Command on June 14, 1964, it was approved to suspend the internal party rules for a period of six months in order to make it possible to carry through some changes in the party organization<sup>61</sup>). Commissions of the Regional Command, most of whom were members of the Military Committee or Qutriyīn, travelled throughout Syria to purge the party from the followers of 'Aflaq, and to supervise the elections for a new leadership of the branches. In some branches the 'Aflaqists were purged by the dozens<sup>62</sup>). Since there were no official documents that contained data on the number of party members, their party rank, or their way of admission<sup>63</sup>), the commissions of the Regional Command could very easily purge the branches from 'Aflaqists and replace them with Qutriyīn and supporters of the military. In the district of Dayr al-Zūr the number of official party members was only 93, most of them neither Qutriyīn nor supporters of the military. A commission under 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jundī travelled to Dayr al-Zūr and asked a great number of Qutriyīn to reenter the Ba'th party. On the same day 108 Qutriyīn separately signed petitions in which they requested to be readmitted to the Ba'th party. Their requests were complied with immediately. That very same day a new leadership for the branch of Dayr al-Zūr was elected, with the result that it contained a majority of members who had just been readmitted to the party. The new branch leadership with a majority of Qutriyīn then purged the branch and expelled most of its original ninety three members<sup>64</sup>). Using practices as these, the Ba'th party in Syria was totally infiltrated by Qutriyīn and supporters of the Military Committee.

### The expulsion of Muḥammad 'Umrān from the Military Committee

In the end of November, 1964, Michel 'Aflaq returned to Damascus after having been convinced by other members of the National Command that there was to be a congress where the crisis between the National and Syrian Regional Command which had lasted already for several months, would be discussed. During this congress, which was held in Damascus from the 4th until the 14th of December, 1964, the National Command for the first time came to know about the secret plans of the Military Committee which had been made in Egypt during the union. The reason was a breach inside the Military Committee between 'Umrān and the others. For some time already 'Umrān had been pressing for restarting a dialogue with 'Abd al-Nāsir, while the other members of the Military Committee, and especially Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, strongly opposed this. Because of his rapprochement with 'Abd al-Nāsir, 'Umrān lost much support among the 'Alawī officers, who were a majority in the army, and who now went over to the side of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd<sup>66</sup>). To assure himself of a majority in the army Jadīd promoted some officers of the Military Committee to the rank of Major General<sup>67</sup>). 'Umrān considered this to be corruption and threatened with his resignation from the army and the Presidential Council. To his surprise his resignation from the army was immediately accepted by Ṣalāḥ Jadīd<sup>68</sup>). Now that the rift inside the Military Committee could no longer be mended, 'Umrān went over to the group of Michel 'Aflaq in the National Command and for the first time, revealed the secret plans of the Military Committee<sup>69</sup>). The Military Committee then decided to expell 'Umrān from Syria on the accusation of spreading sectarianism in the Syrian army<sup>70</sup>). According to the party rules, the expulsion of 'Umrān was impossible because he was a member of both the National and Syrian Regional Command. While the Regional Command had approved the decision of the Military Committee to expel 'Umrān, the National Command rejected it and issued several decrees of which the most important were: 1- The army has to be separated strictly from politics; 2- The Military Committee must be dissolved and be replaced by a Military Bureau that is to be subordinate to the Regional Command; 3- It is forbidden to have more than two positions in the party and the government at the same time; 4- The authority of the Regional Command will be temporarily taken over by a commission of the National Command; 5- The decision of the Regional Command to expel 'Umrān is not valid<sup>71</sup>).

The military, however, rejected all decisions taken by the highest party authority, the National Command, and on December 14, 1964, forced 'Umrān to leave Syria by air-plane. He was appointed Syrian ambassador in Madrid<sup>72</sup>).

Immediately afterwards the military called up the Syrian party branches, a majority of whom supported them. Although many party members agreed with the decrees of the National Command they did not want to oppose the military because these threatened with their resignations from the army, the government and the party if they were not supported in their attitude towards the National Command. In this way the National Command had to revoke its decrees issued five days earlier. The Regional Command which had been dissolved, again received the "confidence" <sup>63)</sup>.

Immediately after the Regional Command had regained the "confidence", the military called for an emergency session of the NCCR. The 'Aflaqist supporters of the National Command who were also members of the NCCR were not informed of this emergency session and thus were not present. The result was that the military in one night nationalized 108 companies. With these totally improvised nationalizations they wanted to show that the military Ba'thists and the Qutriyîn were "leftist" and that the National Command was "conservative" <sup>74)</sup>. In what measure the nationalizations, that were announced on January 2, 1965, were arbitrary appeared when the government within a few weeks was forced to revoke a great number of them <sup>75)</sup>. Afterwards it appeared that some companies had "only existed in the telephone directories" and further not! <sup>76)</sup>

### The Second Syrian Regional Congress and the Eighth National Congress

From March 18 until April 4, 1965, the Second Syrian Regional Congress was held in Damascus where the military and the Qutriyîn reaffirmed their grip on the Syrian party organization and the Regional Command <sup>77)</sup>. The struggle between the National and Syrian Regional Command continued as before. In another effort to come to a solution of the party crisis, the Eighth National Congress of the Ba'th was convened in Damascus in April, 1965. The main theme during the congress was the relation between the party and the military, and the relation between the party and the government. A number of the resolutions, which the National Command, under pressure of the military, had revoked in December, 1964, were now accepted. The existence of the Military Committee was recognized but its authority was to be strictly confined to military affairs. Army and politics were to be separated. The Military Committee was to be dissolved and replaced by a Military Bureau which was to be subordinate to the Syrian Regional Command. The National Command regained some of the powers it had had before. It was again allowed to supervise the foreign and economic policy of Syria. Among those who had proposed these accepted resolutions were Amin al-Hâfiz, Salâh Jadîd and Michel 'Aflaq, which had brought an optimistic atmosphere to the congress. The feeling existed that the crisis between the military and the National Command at last had faded away <sup>78)</sup>.

During the elections for a new National Command Michel 'Aflaq refused the candidacy as secretary general. 'Aflaq demanded a clearer resolution of the congress on the relation between the military and civilian branches of the party. According to 'Aflaq the military either had to be subordinated totally to the civilian Ba'thists, or the National Command was to condemn the militarist regime of Syria, and should declare that the military had misused the Ba'th party as a cover for their own political aims. The congress, however rejected the proposal of 'Aflaq, because it did not want to stir up the crisis right away again. Moreover, most non-Syrian party members were not very familiar with the party crisis in Syria, and, especially after the fall of the Ba'th regime in 'Irâq, they wanted the party to stay in power in Syria at all costs <sup>79)</sup>.

Despite the refusal of 'Aflaq to prolong his term as secretary general, the Qutriyîn pressed for his reelection in order to be able to use his name for some time longer as a cover for their own political activities and the power of the military. Nevertheless, 'Aflaq continued to refuse and proposed Dr. Munîf al-Razzâz, a Jordanian, as the new secretary general. Finally al-Razzâz was chosen. Of the six chosen Syrian members of the new National Command, two were prominent members of the Military Committee and one belonged to the Qutriyîn <sup>80)</sup>.

### Resistance in the Syrian Army against the Military Committee

Directly after the Eighth National Congress a fierce quarrel broke out between Salim Hâtûm and Şalâh Jadîd which caused the last to threaten with his resignation as Chief of Staff. Quickly, a meeting between the Regional Command and the Military Committee was held. The result was that Jadîd withdrew his threat to resign, and that there was to be a meeting of the military party organization at which the leaders of all branches and sections were allowed to be present. For the first time also three civilians were allowed to attend the meeting, notably Munîf al-Razzâz, Şibli al-'Aysamî and Nûr al-Dîn al-Atâsî.

Until that time any contact between civilian and military Ba'thists had been strictly forbidden, except at the highest party level. Moreover most officers had started to realize that the Military Committee was not open to elections and that the leaders of the Military Committee did not want to be responsible to anyone but themselves <sup>81)</sup>. This had caused much opposition among the Ba'thist officers. Until this time the Military Committee had played a double game. To the civilian party they had given the impression that they represented the army, while they gave the officers of the military party organization the impression that they represented the party leadership <sup>82)</sup>. During the military meeting the civilian party leaders that were present, for the first time came to know about this double game. It appeared that except for two or three officers, among whom 'Izzat Jadîd a cousin of Şalâh Jadîd, all Ba'thist officers were strongly opposed to the Military Committee and demanded its dissolution. The members of the Military Committee were accused of dictatorship, opportunism, arbitrariness, favoritism, etc. The members of the Military Committee, indeed, had allowed many persons into the army because they were good friends or relatives, or belonged to special minorities or tribes.

The military meeting charged a commission which consisted of Amin al-Hâfiz, Şalâh Jadîd, Hâfiz al-Asad and Hamad 'Ubayd (all prominent members of the Military Committee) and four civilian Ba'th party leaders, with drawing up new regulations for the Ba'thist military organization. The commission came to the following proposals: 1- A chosen Military Bureau will replace the Military Committee; 2- This Military Bureau will be subordinated to the Syrian Regional Command; 3- An Officers' Committee will be appointed, consisting of the officers from the National and Syrian Regional Command, from the Military Bureau and five other officers. This Officers' Committee has the power to transfer or to promote officers, etc.

One and a half month later these proposals were accepted during a second military meeting. At the same time a Military Bureau was chosen. The abolition of the Military Committee had given the impression that its members had lost a considerable amount of their power, but this was very misleading, because the most prominent members of the abolished Military Committee like al-Hâfiz, Jadîd, al-Asad and 'Ubayd, were now members of the Military Bureau. Moreover, the Military Bureau was subordinate to the Syrian Regional Command which in turn was completely controlled by the members of the abolished Military Committee. Consequently, the situation, in reality, had not changed at all. Only the name of the Military Committee had changed, while its members had retained their power <sup>83)</sup>.

### Amin al-Hâfiz against Şalâh Jadîd

'Abd al-Karîm al-Jundî once compared Amin al-Hâfiz strikingly with Şalâh Jadîd when he said: "The Major General (Şalâh Jadîd) is an artillery officer who calculates and estimates in grades and minutes while measuring exactly the angles before he strikes his blow. As for the Lieutenant General (Amin al-Hâfiz), he is an infantry officer, who is very daring and courageous, but he contents himself by shouting 'wên hum' (where are they!) and then attacks while drawing his sword" <sup>84)</sup>.

After Amin al-Hâfiz and Şalâh Jadîd in December, 1964, had succeeded in eliminating Muhammad 'Umrân, their common rival inside the Military Committee, they suddenly were confronted with each other. Since the erection of the Military Committee in Egypt, Şalâh Jadîd had been the "thinking brain" who made the plans of the Military Committee and decided its tactics. First after the revolution of March 8, 1963, Amin al-Hâfiz had been invited to enter

the Military Committee. The Military Committee, with behind it Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, tried to create from Amīn al-Ḥāfīz a leader who, for those on the outside, would appear to possess an enormous amount of power but who, in reality, was to exercise the will of the Military Committee<sup>85</sup>). Amīn al-Ḥāfīz was to be used as the spearhead of the Military Committee, directed against its opponents. Amīn al-Ḥāfīz, however, was by no means willing to do exactly what the Military Committee wanted him to do. He once even declared in a speech: "I refuse to be a façade, other than for the party"<sup>86</sup>). Amīn al-Ḥāfīz began contemplating to transfer officers who interfered in politics to civilian posts. Several times he proposed unofficially that both he and Ṣalāḥ Jadīd should give the example by giving up their own military posts.

During an extraordinary Regional Congress that was held in Damascus from June 11 till June 14, 1965, it was decided once more that the army was to be completely separated from politics, that only the highest party leadership was allowed to interfere in governmental affairs, and that it was forbidden for one man to have more than two posts in the party and the government<sup>87</sup>). These resolutions had been supported by both Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and Amīn al-Ḥāfīz. To make a start with removing the army from political life, the Military Bureau, under leadership of Amīn al-Ḥāfīz, Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and Ḥāfīz al-Asad, issued orders to transfer some officers who until then had often interfered in Syrian politics. The most important among these officers were Salīm Ḥātūm, 'Uthmān Kan'an and Sulaymān Ḥaddād, all of whom belonged to the just dissolved Military Committee. Salīm Ḥātūm, however, refused to respond to the order of his transfer, which caused his former quarrel with Ṣalāḥ Jadīd to flare up once more. Ṣalāḥ Jadīd again threatened with his resignation and retreated to his home where he waited until the transfers were accomplished. At last Ḥātūm gave in and with his commandos left the buildings of Damascus radio and television stations which he had been occupying since coup of March 8, 1963<sup>88</sup>).

The crisis between Amīn al-Ḥāfīz and Ṣalāḥ Jadīd which had already existed for some months came out in the open when al-Ḥāfīz tried to push Jadīd out of his position as Chief of Staff. After having come to an agreement with a majority inside the Military Bureau that Jadīd had to disappear from the general staff, Amīn al-Ḥāfīz, in his function of Commander in Chief of the Syrian army, issued a decree in which he relieved Jadīd from his post as Chief of Staff<sup>89</sup>). As an argument for his decree Amīn al-Ḥāfīz used the party resolution according to which the army was to be separated from political life. Since Ṣalāḥ Jadīd was a member of the Presidential Council he had, according to al-Ḥāfīz, to give up his position in the army. Jadīd, however, used the same party resolution as an argument, and resigned from the Presidential Council, keeping therewith his position as Chief of Staff.

No solution of the problem could be found and both al-Ḥāfīz and Jadīd called up their supporters in the army and threatened to use violence to defend their interests. The tension in Syria increased enormously for fear of an armed encounter between al-Ḥāfīz and Jadīd. Under these circumstances the Regional Command resigned, giving as one of her reasons that Jadīd refused to follow the party orders.

#### **The extraordinary Regional Congress (7—15 August, 1965)**

From August 7 till 15, 1965, an extraordinary Regional Congress was held in Damascus during which efforts were made to solve the crisis between Jadīd and al-Ḥāfīz, but the tension only increased due to a continuing fight of words between them. As 'Umrān had done in December 1964, when he was attacked by a majority of the Military Committee, Jadīd, once more, in his struggle with al-Ḥāfīz, revealed the secret plans of the Military Committee that had been made during the union with Egypt<sup>90</sup>). Jadīd accused al-Ḥāfīz of being a small and concealed dictator, who stood as a stranger towards the revolution and who had not had a single part in the revolution of March 8, 1963, because at that time he was military attaché in Argentina. Al-Ḥāfīz accused Jadīd of exploiting sectarian ties inside the Syrian army, and of interfering in politics<sup>91</sup>).

The situation remained tense because both Jadīd and al-Ḥāfīz enjoyed great support among the army officers. Ṣalāḥ Jadīd could rely on his two cousins 'Izzat and Kāsir Jadīd. The first had the command of the tanks in Qābūn, while the second had the command over the tanks of the 70th brigade, which is usually the backbone of any Syrian régime. Besides, Jadīd could rely on Ḥāfīz al-Asad, the commander of the airforce. Amīn al-Ḥāfīz was especially

supported by the Sunni officers and the Druze, including Salīm Ḥātūm and Ḥamad 'Ubayd<sup>92</sup>).

On August 15, 1965, a new Regional Command of 16 members was chosen. It included seven officers of whom six had been members of the dissolved Military Committee<sup>93</sup>). Of the nine civilian members seven had first reentered the Ba'thparty after the revolution of March 8, 1963, and had been leaders of the Qutriyīn<sup>94</sup>). The majority of the new Regional Command neither supported Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, nor Amīn al-Ḥāfīz but a third group of extreme leftist Ba'thist officers who in Damascus had the name of "Council of Majors". This group consisted of those Ba'thist officers who, during the coup of March 8, 1963, had commanded the most important army units, and who had formed a majority inside the Military Committee. The "Council of Majors" was led by Salīm Ḥātūm, Ṣalāḥ al-Dallī and Muḥammad Rabāḥ al-Ṭawīl<sup>95</sup>).

Finally, due to the mediation of neutral party members, and because of a heavy Israeli attack on Syria, the tension between al-Ḥāfīz and Jadīd temporarily lessened. Shortly after the congress they even reconciled, but the roots of the conflict remained, since Jadīd had retained his post as Chief of Staff<sup>96</sup>).

#### **The manoeuvre of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd**

After endless efforts to solve the crisis between Amīn al-Ḥāfīz and Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, Jadīd on August 21, 1965, suddenly tendered his resignation as Chief of Staff. Although the position of Jadīd at the day of his resignation was weaker than that of al-Ḥāfīz it was the more surprising to the party leadership since Jadīd proposed as the new Chief of Staff Muḥammad Ṣhunaywī, and as minister of defence Ḥamad 'Ubayd, who both were supporters of Amīn al-Ḥāfīz<sup>97</sup>). Although both Ṣhunaywī and 'Ubayd were not really capable enough to fulfill their new posts they were appointed nevertheless to make an end to the crisis between al-Ḥāfīz and Jadīd. Further it was agreed that the post of Commander in Chief of the army was to disappear, and that the powers of this post, which was occupied by Amīn al-Ḥāfīz, were to reside under the minister of defence<sup>98</sup>). After Jadīd had made his proposals he retired to his house and wrapped himself in silence. The military guard disappeared from the door of his house because he had no function in the army anymore. Jadīd left his house only to do some shopping in the sūq, or to play trick-track somewhere. Jadīd declared that he had not wanted to decide his quarrel with al-Ḥāfīz by force, but that he wanted to make of his "idealism" and discipline an example to the other party members<sup>99</sup>).

The proposal of Jadīd was, according to al-Razzāz, part of an extensive plan. By proposing the appointment of the two supporters of Amīn al-Ḥāfīz, Jadīd hoped to make one of his supporters premier. It had already been decided upon that Dr. Nūr al-Dīn al-Atāsī was to become prime Minister, but Jadīd was not sure whether he could rely on al-Atāsī since he feared that al-Atāsī would not be strong enough against eventual pressure put upon him by Amīn al-Ḥāfīz. For that reason Jadīd preferred his loyal supporter Dr. Yūsuf Zu'ayyin as the new prime minister.

Another thing that Jadīd hoped to achieve by his "manoeuvre" was to secure the empty post of assistant secretary general of the Syrian Regional Command. From there he wanted to transfer all governmental powers to the Regional Command. From then on the Regional Command was to be the only source of power.

By his amazing proposal he also hoped to achieve that the supporters of Amīn al-Ḥāfīz would transfer to his side. By proposing two supporters of Amīn al-Ḥāfīz for the very important positions of Chief of Staff and minister of defence, Jadīd had "proved" to put the interests of the party above those of his own, and by this had solved the crisis between himself and Amīn al-Ḥāfīz. But Amīn al-Ḥāfīz knew very well about the lack of capabilities of his two supporters 'Ubayd and Ṣhunaywī, so he hesitated before appointing them at such high positions. This very hesitancy of al-Ḥāfīz allowed the manoeuvre of Jadīd to succeed. Several supporters of al-Ḥāfīz thought that he had only hesitated because he, according to them, in reality wanted to concentrate all powers in himself. This led al-Ḥāfīz to be suddenly isolated from his most important supporters, among whom the Druzes, such as Salīm Ḥātūm, Ḥamad 'Ubayd and Jamīl Ṣhayyā. Many of them soon transferred to the camp of Jadīd, and turned against the "individualist and dictatoralist" Amīn al-Ḥāfīz<sup>100</sup>). By means of this "manoeuvre" Jadīd succeeded in obtaining a majority in the Regional Command totally isolating al-Ḥāfīz.

### Salâh Jadîd against Amin al-Hâfiz

After Jadîd had firmly dug in himself in his strong position of assistant secretary general of the Syrian Regional Command of the Ba'th he started to undermine from there the position of Amin al-Hâfiz. An excellent occasion was the Arab summit which was held in Casablanca in September 1965.

The Political Bureau of the Ba'th held several meetings to discuss the line that was to be followed at Casablanca. Although Salâh Jadîd in his function of assistant secretary general of the Regional Command had to be present at those meetings, he never attended them. By not coming Jadîd wanted to keep both hands free to be in a stronger position when al-Hâfiz would return from Casablanca. By not attending the preparatory meetings Jadîd would not be bound by anything that would be decided and later would be able to say what he wanted<sup>101)</sup>.

From the 13th until the 17th of September, 1965, the Arab summit was held in Casablanca. During their stay in Casablanca, Amin al-Hâfiz and president 'Abd al-Nâsir sought a rapprochement and came to some kind of reconciliation<sup>102)</sup>. Exactly on this point Jadîd had always been very sensitive, as he hated 'Abd al-Nâsir. Jadîd was strongly opposed to any rapprochement with Egypt, especially since it was ruled by 'Abd al-Nâsir<sup>103)</sup>.

After the Syrian delegation had returned from Casablanca to Damascus, a joint session was held between the National and Syrian Regional Command. During the meeting Amin al-Hâfiz was strongly attacked for having said all kinds of wrong things in Casablanca. Amin al-Hâfiz was accused of "wanting to sell Syria to 'Abd al-Nâsir". According to other accusations al-Hâfiz "had not informed the other members of the delegation of what exactly happened during the summit". "Al-Hâfiz was not a real Ba'thist" and was accused of "preparing a coup against the party", etc.<sup>104)</sup>. These accusations strongly undermined the position of al-Hâfiz.

On September 23, 1965, Yûsuf Zu'ayyin formed a new government of which a majority supported the Regional Command and Salâh Jadîd. How large the gap between the Regional Command and the National Command had grown became clear from the fact that the National Command was not informed of the composition of the new cabinet, but learned it by means of the Syrian radio and press<sup>105)</sup>!

After the Arab summit in Casablanca, the Ba'th became divided in two groups. The first group supported a cooperation between the Arab states as had been agreed at Casablanca, and pleaded for closer relations with Egypt and the Soviet Union. This group was represented by Amin al-Hâfiz and a greater part of the National Command. After al-Hâfiz became isolated in the Regional Command he went over to the side of the National Command. The second group opposed a cooperation between the Arab states as had been agreed at Casablanca, and rejected any rapprochement with Egypt. This group which was represented by Salâh Jadîd and a number of extreme leftist officers, among whom were many 'Alawis and Druzes, preferred a rapprochement with communist China instead of the Soviet Union<sup>106)</sup>.

Due to the fact that his opponents continued to demand that Amin al-Hâfiz should renounce the agreements which had been made at Casablanca, he threatened to resign as President of Syria. According to his own opinion he would lack self-respect and personality if he would not adhere to the agreements he had made<sup>107)</sup>. At last al-Hâfiz withdrew his threat to resign and continued to strive for better relations with Cairo.

In the meantime, the extremist group of Salâh Jadîd started a campaign against the "Hawrânists" in the army, of whom many were arrested. Anyone who opposed Jadîd was accused of being "Hawrânist" and of preparing a coup against the regime. In the paper al-Thawrah the Hawrânists, 'Aflaq, Bitâr and the National Command were strongly attacked; the members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party were even acquitted of the murder of 'Adnân al-Mâlîki<sup>108)</sup>.

The Officers' Committee which now mainly supported Jadîd, began to transfer supporters of al-Hâfiz to less important posts in the army. In the same way Jadîd tried to obtain his own supporters on strategic positions in the army until he would be strong enough for an eventual armed clash with al-Hâfiz.

### The dissolution of the Regional Command (December 21, 1965)

In the period between the 8th and 20th December, 1965, the National Command held daily meetings and tried to come to a solution to the crisis inside the party and the army. The tension between the supporters of al-Hâfiz and Jadîd increased, however, day by day. Jadîd had been successful in rallying the most important army units behind him in his struggle for power with al-Hâfiz. Only the tank brigade of Homs was still a weak point for Jadîd. At the instigation of Jadîd, the minister of defence, Hamad 'Ubayd, had issued a decree according to which three supporters of al-Hâfiz and the National Command who commanded the tank brigade of Homs were to be transferred to other posts. The three officers, however, refused to obey the orders of the minister of defence, and the National Command declared the transfer invalid. Jadîd, therefore, ordered Mustafâ Tallâs to arrest these three officers and to overpower the tank brigade of Homs. In this Tallâs succeeded during the night of December 19<sup>109)</sup>.

When the rumours about the incident in Homs reached other army units, a tense atmosphere arose. Several officers hastened to the National Command and asked permission to make an end to the rebel movement at Homs. In this tense atmosphere the National Command met, and issued a decree in which it concentrated all civilian and military powers within itself. All officers were prohibited to leave their units. The officers who had been arrested in Homs were released again and Mustafâ Tallâs was summoned to Damascus. On December 21, 1965, the National Command dissolved the Syrian Regional Command.

By dissolving the Regional Command the National Command wanted to concentrate all powers within itself. This was not very realistic, however, because the army held the real power, and of this army a major portion supported Jadîd. During a meeting on December 23, 1965, the National Command decided that the highest authority in Syria was to be a commission which consisted of the members of the National Command and five more Syrians, all of them 'Aflaqists. This commission was to exercise the authority until a new Regional Command would be chosen. Bitâr was asked to form a new government. The dissolution of the Regional Command had automatically caused the fall of the cabinet of Yûsuf Zu'ayyin<sup>110)</sup>.

The dissolution of the Regional Command by no means implied that there was total agreement inside the National Command, itself. It was divided into three groups: 1: the 'Aflaqists, 2: Amin al-Hâfiz, and 3: Hâfiz al-Asad and Ibrâhîm Mâkhûs, who both supported the group of Salâh Jadîd. Usually there was a loaded atmosphere during the meetings of the National Command. Many feared the preponderance of Amin al-Hâfiz and his military methods of solving matters. Both Amin al-Hâfiz and Hâfiz al-Asad were usually accompanied by heavily armed bodyguards, who, during the party meetings occupied the building of the National Command. This did not improve the atmosphere. During the meetings of the National Command, Hâfiz al-Asad and Ibrâhîm Mâkhûs even went so far as to answer, without restrictions, by telephone the questions of the supporters of the dissolved Regional Command who wanted to know exactly what was discussed during the meetings of the National Command<sup>111)</sup>. All this caused the relations inside the National Command to be extremely strained. On January 2, 1966, Bitâr, at last, formed a new government. As a precondition for forming a new government Bitâr had demanded that several officers, who were against the National Command, first be transferred. The most important of these were Salîm Hâtûm, 'Izzat Jadîd and Aḥmad Suwaydânî. However because there was no minister of defence, who could effectuate the transfers, Bitâr decided to wait until his new cabinet would be formed.

### Sectarianism in the Syrian Army and the Ba'th

In the struggle between Amin al-Hâfiz (a Sunni) and Salâh Jadîd (an 'Alawî) the Syrian army became strongly divided along sectarian lines. Al-Hâfiz continuously accused Jadîd of spreading sectarianism in the Syrian army. In constantly accusing Jadîd of this, al-Hâfiz achieved exactly the opposite of what he wanted. The 'Alawî officers were even more motivated by the attacks of al-Hâfiz to choose the side of Jadîd to defend their own position. For the same reason, many Sunni officers were forced to choose the camp of al-Hâfiz, although they, perhaps, in reality detested the weapon of sectarianism<sup>112)</sup>. As mentioned above, al-Hâfiz, after the Arab summit in Casablanca also became



isolated from his former Druze supporters, who had chosen for the side of the 'Alawis and Ismā'ilis. This had caused an abnormal situation in which the army was divided in a camp with a majority of Sunni officers, and an opposing camp consisting of mainly 'Alawī, Druze and Ismā'ilī officers.

In this situation it was difficult to find a minister of defence who would be acceptable to both groups. If it would be a Sunni this would accentuate the sectarian character of the struggle. 'Umrān appeared to be the only person who would be acceptable to both groups. In the first place 'Umrān was an 'Alawī like Jadīd, which would put the 'Alawī officers at ease. Secondly, 'Umrān was neither a supporter of Jadīd nor of al-Hāfiz, because they had expelled him in December, 1964. By appointing 'Umrān as minister of defence the National Command also hoped to divide the 'Alawī officers among themselves, of whom a part would then support Jadīd, and another part 'Umrān<sup>113</sup>). The main task of 'Umrān as minister of defence was to restore discipline in the army and to transfer a number of officers who were dangerous to Amīn al-Hāfiz and the National Command. The most important of them were Salīm Hātūm, 'Izzat Jadīd and Ahmad Suwaydānī, who handled their army units as if they were their personal property. They threatened to resist with arms if they were forced to transfer. While the National Command had hoped that 'Umrān would transfer these officers something rather different happened.

When 'Umrān in December 1965 had returned from Madrid his supporters and those of Jadīd had contacted each other in an effort to do away with their mutual differences. They decided to form a common front against the officers of al-Hāfiz<sup>114</sup>). 'Umrān tried to rebuild his own following in the army. He hoped to get many 'Alawī supporters of Jadīd on his side in order to be able in the end to take over the leadership from Jadīd. The army soon then became divided into three groups. The 'Alawī and Druze officers, who supported Salāh Jadīd and Ḥamad 'Ubayd, controlled 60 % of the army units; the Sunni officers, who supported Amīn al-Hāfiz, controlled 25 to 30 % of the army units; Muhammad 'Umrān had a personal following amongst the remaining 'Alawī officers, who controlled 10 to 15 % of the army units<sup>115</sup>). Consequently the 'Alawī and Druze officers dominated the army. The posts in most divisions and brigades were divided among these two minorities. In case the commander would be an 'Alawī, his deputy would be a Druze, or the other way around<sup>116</sup>).

Several factors have added to the preponderance of 'Alawī, Druze and Ismā'ilī officers in the Syrian army. One of these goes back to the time that Syria was a French Mandate. The French favored the recruitment of minorities in all ranks of the *Troupes Spéciales du Levant*, out of which later grew the armies of Syria and Lebanon. The wealthy Sunni Arab landowning and commercial families who were the leaders of the Arab nationalist movement reinforced this trend by refusing to send their sons to the army, because, in their eyes, this only served the French imperial interests<sup>117</sup>).

Another factor was the Syrian law which made it possible to buy off the compulsory army service for an amount of 500 Syrian pounds. While the majority of Sunnis lives mainly in the cities, most 'Alawīs and other minorities are concentrated in the countryside. While the people from the cities often are rich enough to pay £S 500 to escape the military service, the people from the poor countryside almost never are. For them the army offers an opportunity to climb up the social ladder and to lead a life that is relatively more comfortable. In this way the Sunnis became a minority in the army, with the result that the countryside started dominating over the cities in the army.

Another factor which contributed to the rise of the minorities in the army at the cost of the Sunnis was the fact that Syria until 1963, was mainly ruled by Sunnis who, in their struggle, gradually eliminated each other, until in the end they themselves were weak enough to be eliminated by their rivals from the minorities<sup>118</sup>).

The socialist thought of the Ba'th that attacked the feudal bourgeoisie, which was mainly Sunni, met with ready response in the poor countryside, where a majority of the Syrian minorities lives. Ba'th socialism was much less attractive to the trading people of the cities. In this way it could be explained that a high percentage of the Ba'thists comes from the countryside, and consequently, especially from the Syrian minorities<sup>119</sup>). Until here everything could

be explained normally. In reality, however, the 'Alawīs, Druzes and Ismā'ilīs became abnormally strongly represented in the Ba'th party and the Syrian army. This was especially the case after the union with Egypt, because many former Ba'thists from the cities had split from the Ba'th party and had formed their own movements.

Directly after the revolution of March 8, 1963, the officers of the Military Committee, who were mainly 'Alawīs, Druzes and Ismā'ilīs, called up many officers with whom they had family or tribal connections, and appointed them at strategic positions in the army. The coup of March 8, 1963, can be considered as a large scale revolution of the Syrian countryside against the cities. While, formerly, the villagers were subordinated to the people from the cities, the Ba'thists now started to turn the tables and to dominate them. The villagers migrated in great numbers to the cities, where they joined their family or tribal members who had taken over the power. Afterwards they also started shutting the doors of the Military Colleges in the face of their Sunni rivals, and they admitted mainly new students from special minorities. Sectarianism also became apparent in the transfer of officers. Those officers who were "trusted" were stationed close around Damascus and were concentrated in tank brigades and the airforce. The "not trusted" officers were stationed far away at the Israeli front, in Aleppo or in for instance in Latakia<sup>120</sup>). Moreover, in the civilian Ba'th party, the Military Committee took care that many persons belonging to their families or tribes could enter. This caused that the party branch of Latakia became abnormally great if compared with other branches<sup>121</sup>). In one case a tribal shaykh even tried to interfere in the party elections<sup>122</sup>).

Opponents of the Ba'th regime, and members of minorities that were excluded from power, have often accused the officers from the minorities who were in power, of sectarianism. It should be questioned, however, whether this really was sectarianism, or, whether it was mainly regionalism and tribalism, that has been politicized by the opponents of the Ba'th regime into sectarianism. Since the Syrian religious and ethnic minorities are usually strongly regionally concentrated, it could be easily argued that the concepts of regionalism, tribalism and sectarianism, can almost completely overlap each other. So the strong representation of some minorities in the Syrian army and the Ba'th party could also, for a great part, be explained by regionalism and tribalism.

If Syria would unite with, for instance, Egypt, the 'Alawī, Druze, Ismā'ilī and Christian Ba'thist officers might get into an inferior position as to the majority of Sunni officers that would then exist. The Egyptian Sunni officers might threaten the positions of the Syrian Ba'thist officers from the minorities, by exploiting the "sectarian" anti-minority feelings of Syrian Sunnis. For this reason one would expect the Syrian Ba'thist officers from the minorities to be rather cautious, before committing their army to a complete union with the army of Egypt, which is dominated by Sunnis<sup>123</sup>). It should be stressed here that most Ba'thist 'Alawīs, Druzes, Ismā'ilīs or Christians despise the weapon of sectarianism of which they have been the victims so often, and that they would like to have an Arab union irrespective of the religion of the majority of the population in such a union. But because of the often discriminating and "sectarian" attitude of many Sunnis towards the members of these minorities, they are sometimes forced to use their sectarian, regional and tribal ties in order to achieve their socialist and Arab nationalist ideals. And they are only in a position to effectuate their ideals when having political power, which, in Syria, implies control over the army.

#### **The Coup of Salah Jadīd (February 23, 1966)**

Although Bitār had formed his new government on January 2, 1966 he had not yet received the confidence of the NCCR which contained a majority of supporters of Jadīd. To be sure of a majority in the NCCR a decree was issued by which it was enlarged from ninety-five to 134 members. The members of the dissolved Regional Command were expelled from the NCCR and supporters of the National Command took their places<sup>124</sup>). After this had been done the government of Bitār could receive the necessary "confidence" of the NCCR.

It had been decided that a Regional Congress was to be convened in Damascus on February 20, 1966, to choose a new Regional Command. But because a majority of the congress members would be supporters of Jadīd, Amīn al-Hāfiz forbade the Regional Congress and postponed it until

February 25. The tension had increased so much that the civilian supporters of al-Ḥāfiẓ and Jadīd even started threatening each other in the coffeehouses of Damascus<sup>125</sup>). In the night of February 21, 1966, the National Command issued a decree, according to which some officers, who endangered its position, were to be dismissed from the army and to be expelled from Syria. Among these officers were Salīm Ḥātūm, ʿIzzat Jadīd and Aḥmad Suwaydānī<sup>126</sup>). During the session at which this decree was issued, Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad suddenly stood up and said: "O, brothers, I declare you from this moment, that I am with those officers. If they are silent I am silent with them. And if they will fight I will fight with them"<sup>127</sup>). That same night Ḥātūm already had surrounded the building of the National Command, wanting to take its members as prisoners. But Ṣalāḥ Jadīd asked Ḥātūm not to strike yet because he was not yet ready with his preparations for the coming coup.

Except for the dismissals of Ḥātūm, ʿIzzat Jadīd and the others, there was another reason why the officers were in a hurry to prepare their coup. This was because Muḥammad ʿUmrān had contacted president ʿAbd al-Nāṣir to restart the dialogue between Damascus and Cairo<sup>128</sup>).

In the early morning of February 23, 1966, Salīm Ḥātūm marched on Damascus and attacked the residence of Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ whose bodyguard fiercely resisted the attack. After several hours ʿIzzat Jadīd made an end to the struggle by firing firebombs at the residence of al-Ḥāfiẓ, who then came outside and surrendered. The army units that were controlled by the ʿAlawī and Druze officers, and some extreme leftist Sunnī officers such as Aḥmad Suwaydānī, immediately rallied behind the coup. The army units of Dayr al-Zūr, Aleppo, Hama and Homs, where the army units were dominated by Sunnī officers, for some time resisted the coup and continued to support Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ and the National Command. During the coup the airforce of Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad remained alert in order to suppress any ressurcutive movement. Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ and most members of the National Command were arrested<sup>129</sup>).

The revolutionary communiqués were issued in the name of the Provisional Syrian Regional Command, whose composition was about the same as the one that had been dissolved in December 21, 1965. The power was now totally in the hands of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and his supporters<sup>130</sup>).

## Annotations:

- 1) Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War 1958—1967, A Study of Ideology in Politics*, Second edition, London 1967, p. 14.
- 2) Muḥammad ʿUmrān, *Tajribatī fi al-Thawrah (My Experience in the Revolution)*, Bayrūt 1970, p. 16. In this book ʿUmrān announced a second book, titled "Fi al-Istrāṭījiyah al-Thawriyah wa al-Tatbiq" (On Revolutionary Strategy and Practice), supplementary to the first. Its appearance is doubtful due to the fact that ʿUmrān was assassinated on March 4, 1972, in Tripoli (Lebanon). Al-Hayāh, March 5, 1972.
- 3) Sāmi al-Jundī, al-Baʿth (The Baʿth), Bayrūt 1969, p. 76.
- 4) Hizb al-Baʿth al-ʿArabī al-Ishtirākī, al-Qiyāḥ al-Qawmiyah, Lajnah al-Tawjih al-Hizbi, al-Inhirāf wa al-Zawāhir al-Inqisāmiyah fi al-Hizb wa Dawr al-Yamin al-Takhribī, Silsilah al-Tawjih al-Hizbi, 2 (The Arab Socialist Baʿthparty, National Command, Commission for Party Instruction, The Deviation and the Splitting Phenomena in the Party and the Sabotaging Role of the Right, Series for Party Instruction, 2), Damascus 1970, pp. 50—54.
- 5) Interview of the author with Shibli al-ʿAysamī in his function of assistant secretary general of the National Command of the Baʿthparty (the "group" of Michel ʿAflaq), Baghdād, August 30, 1971. Munif al-Razzāz, al-Tajribah al-Murrah (The Bitter Experience), Bayrūt 1967, p. 87. This book of Munif al-Razzāz was printed two months before the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The 3000 copies of the first edition were sold out within a few weeks. Al-Razzāz first thought it his duty to reveal what had happened inside the Baʿth party until the coup of February 23, 1966. The war of June 1967, however, changed the situation in the Arab world in such a way that he thought it not suitable to have these facts published another time. So he refused the book to be reprinted. Interview of the author with Munif al-Razzāz, former secretary general of the National Command of the Baʿthparty, ʿAmmān, September 5, 1971.
- 6) Interview of the author with a person who prefers to remain anonymous, and who personally heard this from Aḥmad al-Mir, Bayrūt, July 8, 1971. After the revolution of March 8, 1963 the composition of the Military Committee was as follows: Muḥammad ʿUmrān, Salāḥ, Jadīd, Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad, ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jundī, Aḥmad al-Mir, Salīm Ḥātūm, Hamad ʿUbayd, Muḥammad Rabāḥ al-Tawīl, Husayn Muḥim, ʿUthmān Kanʿān, Sulaymān Haddād, Mustafā al-Ḥājī ʿAlī, Aḥmad Suwaydānī, Mūsā al-Zuʿbi and Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ. Some of them, like Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ, first after the revolution of March 8, 1963, were admitted to the Military Committee. According to al-Dustūr, August 16, 1971, p. 12, ʿUmrān had Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad enter the Military Committee after the break-up of the union with Egypt, but before March 8, 1963.
- 7) Muḥammad ʿUmrān, op. cit., pp. 18, 19; Sāmi al-Jundī, op. cit., p. 86. According to Munif al-Razzāz the book of Sāmi al-Jundī (al-Baʿth) is distorted, and not exact in its data. Interview of the author with Munif al-Razzāz, ʿAmmān, September 5, 1971. Nevertheless Sāmi al-Jundī should be considered as an important informant, because he had close relations with some members of the Military Committee, especially with Muḥammad ʿUmrān, and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jundī, who was his nephew. Although Sāmi al-Jundī in February, 1964, was elected as a member of the Syrian Regional Command of the Baʿth, the Military Committee decided to expell him from Syria. On April 28, 1964 he was appointed as ambassador of Syria in Paris. Sāmi al-Jundī, op. cit., pp. 136—138.
- 8) Munif al-Razzāz, op. cit., p. 91.
- 9) Mutāʿ Safadī, Hizb al-Baʿth, Maʿsāḥ al-Mawlid, Maʿsāḥ al-Nihāyah (The Baʿth party, the Tragedy of its Birth and the Tragedy of its End), Bayrūt 1964, p. 302.
- 10) Monte Palmer, The United Arab Republic — an assesment of its failure, Middle East Journal, vol. 20, nr. 1, winter 1966, pp. 50—67.
- 11) ʿAbd al-Karīm Zahr al-Dīn, Mudhakkirātī ʿan Fatrah al-Infisāl fi Sūriyah (My Memoires about the Period of Separation in Syria), Bayrūt 1968, pp. 92—94.
- 12) Salaheddin Bitar, The Baath Party, Middle East International, no. 4, July 1971, p. 14; Nāji ʿAllūsh, al-Thawrah wa al-Jamāhīr (The Revolution and the Masses), second edition, Bayrūt 1963, pp. 371—373.
- 13) Mutāʿ Safadī, op. cit., pp. 284, 285.
- 14) According to Sāmi al-Jundī, Muḥammad ʿUmrān proposed to oppose the separation with armed force. Sāmi al-Jundī, op. cit., p. 88.
- 15) ʿAbd al-Karīm Zahr al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 174, 175. Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAsad had been dismissed from the Syrian army on December 2, 1961. Sūriyah, ʿAhd Jadīd (Syria, a New Era), al-Anwār, ʿAdad Khāss (Special issue), June 1971, p. 10.
- 16) Khalīl Mustafā, Suqūt al-Jawlān (The Fall of the Golan), ʿAmmān 1970, p. 21.
- 17) The officers of the Military Committee during this time first thought of cooperating with Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ, but he was dismissed from the army and transferred to Argentina as military attaché. Sāmi al-Jundī, op. cit., pp. 88, 89.
- 18) Munif al-Razzāz, op. cit., pp. 85, 86.
- 19) Nidāl Hizb al-Baʿth al-ʿArabī al-Ishtirākī, ʿabar Muʿtamarātih al-Qawmiyah (1947—1964) (The Struggle of the Arab Socialist Baʿth party across its National Congresses) (1947—1964), Bayrūt 1971, p. 270.
- 20) The commission that supervised the reorganization of the Baʿth party in Syria consisted of: ʿAlī Sālih al-Saʿdī (ʿIrāq), Hamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd (ʿIrāq), Ḥānī Fukaykī (ʿIrāq), Shibli al-ʿAysamī (Syria) and al-Walīd Ṭālib (Syria). Ibrāhīm Salāmāh, al-Baʿth min al-Madāris ilā al-Thuknāt (The Baʿth from the Schools to the Barracks), Milaff al-Nahār, nr. 25, March 18, 1969, p. 19.
- 21) Hizb al-Baʿth al-ʿArabī al-Ishtirākī, al-Qutr al-Sūri, Nashrah Hizbiyah Khāssah bi al-ʿAdā ʿal-ʿAmilin faqat (The Arab Socialist Baʿthparty, The Syrian Region, Special Party Publication for Active Members only), p. 2. This publication is in fact the "Organizational Report, 1963" that deals with the organizational problems the Syrian party-branch has had in the years 1962 and 1963 until the First Syrian Regional Congress in September 1963.
- 22) Al-Inhirāf wa al-Zawāhir al-Inqisāmiyah fi al-Hizb wa Dawr al-Yamin al-Takhribī, p. 63.
- 23) Interview of the author with Munif ʿAbd Allāh, one of the Baʿth-leaders who during the union with Egypt kept their party organizations secretly intact, Damascus, July 17, 1971.
- 24) Members of the Regional Command of the "Qutriyin" were: Riyād al-Mālikī, Sulaymān al-Khashsh, Khālid al-Jundī, ʿAbd al-Ghanī Qannūt and Fayīz al-Jāsim. Interview of the author with Munif ʿAbd Allāh, Damascus, July 17, 1971. Other prominent Qutriyin were Mūslih Sālim, Yūsuf Zuʿayyin and Ibrāhīm Mākhūs.
- 25) Interview of the author with Mālik al-Amīn in his function as member of the National Command of the Baʿth party (the "group" of Salāḥ Jadīd) and the Political Bureau (Syria), Damascus, April 28, 1970. Although the term "Qutriyin" is of ʿAflaqist origin, and may not always be objective, it will nevertheless be used throughout this article to facilitate the differentiation of the several groups inside the Baʿth party.
- 26) Paul Balla, La Syrie Baasiste, An VIII, II — L'armée, source du pouvoir, Le Monde, March 24, 1971. According to Munif al-Razzāz the number of registrated partymembers was at this time between 500 and 600. Interview of the author with Munif al-Razzāz, ʿAmmān, September 5, 1971. Before the union with Egypt there had been thousands of Baʿthists in Syria. After the break-up of the union most of them did not reenter the party but joined other parties or erected new ones. The former Baʿthists became divided in Nasserists, Socialist Unionists, Hawrānists, Qutriyin, independents and those who reentered the Baʿthparty.
- 27) Munif al-Razzāz, op. cit., p. 90.
- 28) ʿAbd al-Karīm Zahr al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 422, 423; Ibrāhīm Salāmāh, op. cit., pp. 30, 31; Qissah al-Thawrah fi al-ʿIrāq wa Sūriyah (The Story of the Revolution in ʿIrāq and Syria), Baghdād 1963, pp. 54—59; Sāmi al-Jundī, op. cit., pp. 112, 113.
- 29) Mutāʿ Safadī, op. cit., pp. 300—302.
- 30) Interview of the author with Shibli al-ʿAysamī, Baghdād, August 30, 1971.
- 31) Muḥammad ʿUmrān, op. cit., p. 20; The military members of the NCCR were: Muḥammad ʿUmrān (Baʿth), Salāḥ Jadīd (Baʿth), Mūsā al-Zuʿbi (Baʿth), Ghassān Haddād, Fahd al-Shāʿir, Luʿay al-ʿAtāsī, Ziyād al-Hariri, Rāshid Qutaynī, Fawwāz Muḥārīb, Muḥammad al-Sūfi, Mahādir Jalasāt Mubāhathāt al-Wahdah (The Minutes of the Sessions of the Union Negotiations), Cairo 1963, p. 44. The civilian Baʿthist members of the NCCR were: Michel ʿAflaq, Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Bitār, Shibli al-ʿAysamī and ʿAbd al-Karīm Zuḥūr. Shibli al-ʿAysamī, Fi al-Thawrah al-ʿArabiyah (On the Arab Revolution), second edition, Bayrūt 1969, p. 80.
- 32) Munif al-Razzāz, op. cit., pp. 91, 92. Already in 1954, ʿAflaq founded a separate party organization for the military Baʿthists. In the summer of 1959 a great number of Baʿthist officers who belonged to this military Baʿthist organization, were transferred to Egypt. The UAR army command knew about their party connections because Mustafā Ḥamdūn had given a detailed list with their names to ʿAbd al-Hakīm ʿAmīr. Munir ʿAbd Allāh, al-Baʿth, Muqaddimah lil-Naqd al-Dhātī (The Baʿth, Introduction to Selfcriticism), Damascus 1965 (unpublished), pp. 8, 9. The members of the Military Committee who in Egypt founded their secret organization, had originally been members of the military Baʿth party branch that was founded by ʿAflaq in 1954. Interview of the author with Munir ʿAbd Allāh, Damascus, August 3, 1971.



- <sup>106)</sup> On April 22, 1965, Lieutenant-Colonel 'Adnân al-Mâlîki, deputy Chief of Staff of the Syrian army was assassinated by a member of the SSNP. The most important SSNP officer in the army at that time was Ghassân Jadîd, a brother of Salâh Jadîd. Ghassân Jadîd, who was involved in the murder, succeeded in escaping to Lebanon where he himself was murdered later on. After the murder on 'Adnân al-Mâlîki the SSNP was purged from the army, and became forbidden in Syria. Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria, A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945—1958*, London 1966, pp. 238—246. At first many 'Alawis had adopted the principles of the SSNP. After its collapse in Syria in 1955 the 'Alawis in great numbers joined the Ba'th party. Idrâr Sa'b, al-Ba'th: Hizb al-Hukm (The Ba'th: Party of Regime), al-Qadâyâ al-Mu'âsirah, vol. 1, first year, July 1969, p. 133. It may be interesting to note that Salâh Jadîd during party meetings of the Socialist Unionists (former Ba'thists) was often accused of belonging to the SSNP. Sâmî al-Jundî, op. cit., p. 105. Although Jadîd was probably not a member of the SSNP, he in fact has pursued some of its most important aims, particularly by his anti-pan-Arab attitude. During the regime of Salâh Jadîd Syria became totally isolated from the rest of the Arab world. One might perhaps even suggest that Jadîd was professing "Ta'qiyah" (dissimulation) while proclaiming pan-Arab Ba'thist slogans as a cover for a Syrian regionalist policy that comes closer to some principles of the SSNP. It may also be argued that Jadîd heavily stressed the socialist part of the Ba'th ideology at the cost of its nationalist part. Acting as an extreme leftist socialist, Jadîd refused to cooperate with any government that was not as leftist as his, and thus isolated Syria.
- <sup>107)</sup> Munîf al-Razzâz, op. cit., pp. 161—168.
- <sup>108)</sup> al-Hayâh, 25-12-1965. The five Syrians who were added to the commission of the National Command were: Salâh al-Dîn al-Bitâr, Ilyâs Farah, Sulaymân al-'Alî, Sa'îd Haydar and 'Abd al-Qâdir Nayâl.
- <sup>109)</sup> Munîf al-Razzâz, op. cit., pp. 185, 186.
- <sup>110)</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 159, 160.
- <sup>111)</sup> Interview of the author with Shibli al-'Aysamî, Baghdâd, August 30, 1971; Interview of the author with Munîf al-Razzâz, 'Ammân, September 5, 1971.
- <sup>112)</sup> al-Hayâh, 5-10-1965.
- <sup>113)</sup> al-Sarâtân al-Tâ'îfî fî al-Ajhzah al-Sûriyah yujammid al-Dawlah wa al-Sha'b (The Sectarian Cancer in the Syrian Systems Stagnates the State and the People), al-Hayâh, 5-2-1966.
- <sup>114)</sup> al-Hayâh, 20-10-1965.
- <sup>115)</sup> J. C. Hurewitz, *Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension*, New York 1969, p. 153.
- <sup>116)</sup> Tariq Sûriyah ba'd Dhihâb 'Umrân wa Madrasatib (The Road of Syria after the Leaving of 'Umrân and his School), al-Hayâh, 19-12-1964.
- <sup>117)</sup> Martin Seymour, *The Dynamics of Power in Syria since the Break with Egypt*, Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 6, January 1970, No. 1, p. 40, suggests: "But whatever stimuli may drive the Alawites, a purely social origin (i. e. an 'Alawi revanchisme against the Sunni landlords) cannot be claimed for the fervid particularism of the other main sectarian minority, the Druse, since in their territory Sunni landlordism is virtually non-existent." One of the factors that may have contributed to the anti-Sunni sectarianism of some Druzes, is the fact that the population of the Jabal al-Durûz often has been severely suppressed by the Sunni authorities of Damascus. Seale, op. cit., pp. 74, 133 ff.
- <sup>120)</sup> Munîf al-Razzâz, op. cit., p. 159.
- <sup>121)</sup> Muqarrarât al-Mu'tamar al-Qutri al-'Âdî al-Thâni lil-Qutr al-Sûri, p. 32.
- <sup>122)</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.
- <sup>123)</sup> See: N. van Dam, *Integratieproblemen van de Federatie van Arabische Republieken*, Internationale Spectator, XXVII, nr. 4, 22-2-1973, pp. 127—132.
- <sup>124)</sup> al-Hayâh, 15-2-1966. The previous NCCR had been enlarged and appointed on August 23, 1965. al-Hayâh, 24-8-1966.
- <sup>125)</sup> al-Hayâh, 20-2-1966, 24-2-1966.
- <sup>126)</sup> al-Hayâh, 26-2-1966.
- <sup>127)</sup> Munîf al-Razzâz, op. cit., p. 195.
- <sup>128)</sup> According to al-Hayâh, 26-2-1966, 'Umrân on February 17, 1966, flew with a military delegation to Cairo where he met president 'Abd al-Nâsir. That the meeting had had any result appeared from the fact (according to al-Hayâh) that 'Abd al-Nâsir for the first time since years did not attack the Ba'th party in Syria in his speech on February 22, 1966. According to Munîf al-Razzâz and Shibli al-'Aysamî, 'Umrân did not go to Cairo. Interview of the author with Shibli al-'Aysamî, Baghdâd, August 30, 1971, and interview of the author with Munîf al-Razzâz, 'Ammân, September 5, 1971.
- <sup>129)</sup> Munîf al-Razzâz succeeded in escaping and went underground in Damascus. From his hiding place al-Razzâz remained leading the activities of the ousted party fraction. He also organized a secret organization in the army, that was directed against Salâh Jadîd. The leader of the secret organization in the army was Fahd al-Shâ'ir. On August 25, 1966, the secret organization was discovered, and many members of it were arrested. On September 25, 1966, seven months after the coup of Salâh Jadîd, Munîf al-Razzâz secretly left Syria. Interview of the author with Munîf al-Razzâz, 'Ammân, September 5, 1971.
- <sup>130)</sup> al-Hayâh, 24-2-1966, 25-2-1966, 26-2-1966, 1-3-1966. The Provisional Syrian Regional Command already existed some time before the coup of February 21, 1966, and already had met some 34 times. Mustafâ Tallâs, al-Kifâh al-Musallah fî Wajh al-Tahaddî al-Sahyûni (The Armed Struggle counter to the Zionist Provocation), Bayrût, no date, p. 133.