

ARABIA—THE BRITISH SPHERE

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I

IN the years immediately following the Second World War, Britain continued to hold positions of strength in Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, as well as South Arabia: that is, the eastern and southern fringes of the Saudi Kingdom. When Arab nationalists list the key events in Britain's retreat in the later 'fifties, the items read: the Egyptian-Czech arms deal, the failure of the Templer mission in Jordan, the dismissal of **Glubb**, the nationalization of the Canal, the failure of the Suez invasion, the end of the Anglo-Jordan treaty, the formation of the United Arab Republic, the association of the Yemen with the United Arab Republic, the breach with **Iraq**,¹ South Arabia is the last place in the Arab world where Britain has control and sufficient power still to make decisions. The successive retreats of Britain are all presented, of course, as the result of Arab initiatives. Less publicized is the development of the Middle East oil-fields and the deterioration of Britain's position. In 1939 the British share of Middle East oil production was 60 per cent, while that of America was only 13 per cent. Within fifteen years from the end of the war, the American share was 65 per cent, with only 30 per cent going to British-controlled firms.

If Arab nationalists want to present an objective history of Britain's decline in the Middle East, they should begin with this fact rather than a list of political defeats, although these are not unimportant. Certainly they meant that by 1958 Aden was left as the main concentration of British power. In the new post-Suez situation Britain must now try to give the impression that she was in Aden by public demand and that law enforcement was under the control of an acceptable, independent local government. Obviously Britishers would not do for the forces, and an Adeni force would be quite untrustworthy. But outside, in the sheikhdoms of the Protectorate, were plenty of illiterate warriors who ought to be happy to serve Britain's interests throughout this Federation. The technique had worked so well in the past throughout the Commonwealth: recruit from the rustics and give them a hold over the **townee** clerks. The South Arabian Federation carried to an extreme the common pattern of restraint. The restless and politically conscious townsmen of Aden were to be "balanced" by reliable up-country princes: autocrats with inarticulate subjects. The sheikhs, dependent on Britain, would weight the Federal councils, help turn every problem

in the Aden area into a "federal" matter, and vote British. The sheikhs could presumably expect some economic benefits from the merger, and in any event, they could always be deposed and replaced. They have never been permitted to communicate with other Arab powers, except through British intermediaries; the Sultan of Lahej was deposed for this offence in 1958. British policy has been to insulate their territories. Even U.N. observers have been kept out—by Sir Charles Johnston, the last Governor of Aden and first High Commissioner. (The U.N., it should be remembered, has kept up persistent criticism of British policy in the area during 1963–64.)

Sir Charles liked being a Governor. His jokey authoritarianism is cheerily expressed in his revealing *memoirs*.¹ He accuses without evidence, justifies the odd flogging and deposes the "traditional rulers." (When he's obliging, a sheikh is an "old eccentric"; when he's troublesome, he's deposed for madness.) Johnston has been permitted to publish the damaging account of his mission of the 1960s, on the ground that he has been transferred back from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office; one cannot help suspecting that permission was granted by some official hostile to his policy. The Protectorate sheikhs ought to be no trouble. Johnston's most important task was to secure the complicity of decent Arab bourgeois in Aden Town, men prepared to go slowly. As he puts it, constitutional advance was dependent upon "the support of the moderate democratic leaders who were our most reliable friends in Aden. Failing that support, our tenure of the Aden base would be precarious indeed."² He found some prepared, at least, for wary negotiation; but he would not allow even these much say in constitutional planning. If the opposition gained a majority of the local members, "it would be impossible in practice to justify proceeding with the merger plan."³ The franchise was limited to British subjects, thus excluding the many Arabs not born in Aden Colony, but admitting many non-Arabs. This stipulation, together with many indignant abstentions, resulted in a legislature of which the elected members represented the choice of 2·8 per cent of Aden's population. Of these, only one-half voted for Aden joining the Federation.

There is no point in examining more closely Johnston's method of securing this unsatisfactory result, nor the unfortunate politicians involved, since it appears, at the time of writing, that the Tories' federation plan is already shattered. Labour's new Colonial Secretary returned from Aden at the end of 1964, having promised an independent unitary state with "democratic rights" both for Aden and the sheikhdoms. This is what the People's Socialist Party has been asking for; the argument has shifted slightly to the Left, and the P.S.P. are now the moderates. They have strongly condemned the terrorist bombings which marked the Minister's visit, but are not convinced that the responsibility lies wholly with "extremist" Cairo-oriented Arabs, like the National Liberation Front; they suspect a wrecking job by the

American-backed Saudi. (This is possible; but whenever a repressive government slackens the bonds a little, it is more often the signal for increased violence, sometimes quite purposeless, than for gratified tranquillity.) The P.S.P. responds with wary satisfaction to Anthony Greenwood's new initiative. His predecessor, Duncan Sandys, had excluded them from the 1964 London Constitutional Conference, advised by the two High Commissioners—disdainful Johnston, and his successor, Kennedy Trevaskis, a keen sheikh-enthusiast and former Western Protectorate Agent—on the slim grounds that they were over-influenced by Cairo. The P.S.P. will play an important part in the next conference; several sheikhs have, for the moment, accepted their way of thinking, and Trevaskis resigned at the end of 1964. The P.S.P.'s difficulties now come from a different direction. As moderates to us, they may easily appear imperialist stooges to Cairo.

All British plans for working our will in Arabia depend on the received idea of retaining the base at Aden: which we want, anyway. Arnold Toynbee explains this desire in a recent pamphlet⁵ (distributed by the League of Arab States); it is all psychological—"we cannot bear to part with the last shreds and tatters of [our] empire." Since we cannot admit to so childish a motivation, "we search about for rationalizations of our behaviour." His argument kicks the rationalizations around, but comes up with nothing more useful than a questioning of the motives behind British Tory policy. There are three official reasons generally given for Britain's determination to hold Aden. It is a garrison for preserving good order within the peninsula; it is a military base, part of a scheme of defence against Communist or Soviet-inspired activity, particularly in the Far East; it protects British oil interests in the Persian Gulf.

II

Few states buy oil quite happily. The size and spread of the Western oil business has an obvious magnificence and makes for the kind of technical efficiency associated with single management; but it also inspires feelings of strong antagonism among the big buyers of motorized Western Europe. Sometimes it appears that the great oil companies, the "majors," are more responsive to the will of the producer nations' governments than to those European consumer States. The "host governments" have a hold on the companies, for their contractual obligations are subject to one important qualification; the host has an implicit right to give notice.

The oil-man may believe he has the local potentate in his pocket, but it may not be true. Even kings can haggle; they can also collaborate readily with a radical nationalist. The Shah of Iran blandly admits his support for Mossadegh during the nationalization dispute of the 1950s, when "Parliament overwhelmingly passed a bill, which I fully endorsed, nationalizing the oil industry."⁶ "I wanted to give Mossadegh every

opportunity to develop a constructive oil policy.. .I wanted to give him a full chance to succeed in securing the national aims." Though Mossadegh's plans did not pay off, and the Shah disowned him, the Shah noted with satisfaction that international law did not apply; in July 1952, "the International Court handed down its decision that it had no jurisdiction in the oil dispute."

These princes, and sometimes their peoples, have considerable influence over the industry—so long as they do not (as Mossadegh did) overestimate their strength. There is the (sometimes suicidal) threat of nationalization; there may be physical danger to company property, as in the Kuwait and Bahrain riots during the Suez adventure of 1956: such pressures help the "host" governments in tough negotiations which will often turn out contrary to the interests of European consumer States. The host governments have an interest in the maintenance of "posted" prices. They may complain that oil is sold too cheaply in Europe (or sold too *dear*, without the princes sharing the profit) and they may be able to carry their point. The consumer states—aware that oil-producing territories, from Mexico to the Sahara, have always been in weak, underdeveloped states emergent from colonial tutelage—find to their alarm that a Western-based industry is somehow ranged alongside mere tribal chieftains in collusion against Western electorates. Western Europe feels unable to discipline the oil companies. The Six cannot agree on a common energy policy; they have failed even to make the oil marketers publish the actual prices at which they sell their products to all customers.

Western governments begin to feel that they ought to negotiate directly with the oil princes, by-passing the interceding industry. The nationalized French concern has often been rumoured to be offering the hosts a better deal, a more genuine partnership. For the "partnership" proclaimed by the industry's public relations men is little more than a word; the fifty-fifty split is no more than rent, which it is convenient to pay in the form of taxation. When the British Government taxes a home industry, does that mean that State and industry are in partnership? Now, if the host government were offered the ownership and management of local refineries, tankers, the local establishment of a petro-chemical industry, a fertilizer plant, the development of natural gas: such offers might be a form of partnership worth consideration. These initiatives would come more credibly from governments and nationalized companies than from the "majors." Private concerns insist that it is obviously more sensible to establish refineries and other subsidiary organizations in Western Europe near "large-scale markets with high standards of living, fed by highly developed engineering industries on the spot." So it is, of course, when considered from the angle of profit and stability, rather than on the basis of what people need.

The producer and consumer governments also want to agree on taxation policy. How does one tax a gamble? Millions were spent in

Nigeria before payable oil was proved—whereas the Japanese succeeded with their first well off the Saudi-Kuwait neutral zone.¹⁰ There seems a need for some convention to determine at what stage of the transaction the "profits" can be said to be made: on the production in, say, Arabia or on the refining in Europe. Companies may claim to take their profit at the stage of production—offering their hosts a large revenue which it is convenient to call a half-share in the profits. In most areas, the operating companies—Qatar Petroleum Company, Kuwait Oil Company, etc.—are called "non-profit-making" companies. It is usually the local trading companies which show the profit and pay the hosts the tax. This is all, of course, absurdly artificial. The industry, operating under so many taxation systems (there are the oil transit countries as well), naturally aims to get the oil home with the least possible subtraction of tax; transit schemes depend on complicated methods of tax avoidance as much as upon technical efficiency. The host nations are little more satisfied than the consumer states. The American home industry is considerably influenced, to say the least, by the taxation policy of the United States Government. It is theoretically possible for other governments to put pressures on the oil industry, outside America, in a similar way. It would seem rational for the states involved to set up three international bodies—not only an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and a similar organization of *importing* countries, but also an organization of *taxing* countries. So far, of course, only the first exists. However fanciful it may seem, there must be some means for getting the Middle East oil business—that efficient, irresponsible robot—under rational human control. Yet all governments know that this business exists only on sufferance; both the United States and the Soviet Union in their own way maintain a tight control over the home industry, such that either of them can completely overturn the whole basis of the Middle East industry. Furthermore, the industry still depends on the stability of sheikhs, a stability that is neither probable nor justifiable.

Thus Britain, with American permission, is left to guarantee security in the oil sheikhdoms for the benefit, in theory, of the rest of Western Europe. Do other Europeans really want this? The French seem still to regard Britain as a rival in the Middle East, and propose themselves to the Arabs as a more liberal power; typically, the French voted in the Security Council last March against the R.A.F. raid on Fort **Harib** in the Yemen. But while some would like to replace Britain as America's querulous No. 2 in the area, probably most States would honestly prefer to see a situation in which the natural resources were more fairly divided and the political arrangements less obnoxious.

On the other hand, there is the NATO-minded element, which holds that the "Free World" is dependent on Britain maintaining her position. Dr. Ivan Lombardo, former Italian Minister for Commerce and Industry, warns that the Soviet aim is to "eliminate Great Britain

entirely from the Middle East by strengthening the Sallal régime in the Yemen and thereafter introducing similar régimes in Jordan, in Saudi Arabia and in the sultanates of the Persian Gulf." Dr. Lombardo goes on: "The precursory signs of a struggle aimed at rendering untenable the position of British bases in Aden has already started to become evident; conspiracies of small groups, spectacular deeds by terrorists and attacks by combined Egyptian and Yemenite forces against the emirdoms and sheikhdoms of the Arab Federation under British protection. . . . The countries of the West forget that the adversary is pursuing a remorseless struggle whose sole aim is the destruction of liberty throughout the world."¹¹ It would be very hard to destroy liberty in the emirates and sheikhdoms, because there is none to destroy. Moreover, the complex and distrustful relationship between Moscow and Cairo makes Dr. Lombardo's thesis somewhat less frightening than he imagines. Nevertheless, the fear is there; it has persuaded Western nations to tolerate Britain's anachronistic position on the peninsula until some more sane and equitable method can be devised for securing oil in a manner convenient to Western businessmen and electorates. From the Arabian democrats' point of view, their best hope lies in the rivalries which divide the West, and in governmental and popular dissatisfaction with the oil industry, its power and lack of responsibility. But community of interests, of a mean and bewildered kind, still binds the nations of Western Europe to the oil industry. One of the forces which makes it difficult for even the most liberal British Government to abandon the policy of sheikh protection is the pressure of Britain's allies, who can conceive of no other practicable method of ensuring oil supplies.

III

When we examine Aden as a garrison for maintaining order and security in the peninsula, it is necessary to consider the people who are in fact being policed. Here, more than anywhere else in the nations of fake frontiers, "nationality" lacks meaning. Far too often in Britain, the underdeveloped territories are known and discussed only if they are or have recently been under British control. Thus until civil war broke out in the Yemen Imamate, this important neighbour of "our" Federation was scarcely mentioned in political discussion. Even now it is normal to talk of Britain's interests in the peninsula with hardly a thought for the pressures which come from Saudi Arabia. Yet the British "sphere of influence" consists only of the southern and eastern fringes of this vast kingdom, and conditions are deeply affected by the political and economic circumstances of the land of Saud.

Saudi Arabia is an unnaturally stunted growth—preserved in oil. Created by a brilliant warrior during the first years of this century, the kingdom's development has been halted by industrialized foreigners. The young Abdul **Aziz**, called Ibn Saud, rode out from Kuwait in

1901 and welded most of the tribes of Arabia into his personal empire, all in the name of an eccentric puritan sect, as weird as the Exclusive Brethren. He died fifty years later, the second richest man in the world. He achieved as much for his people as could be expected of any man; but hardly a step forward have they gone since his death. The King of Saudi Arabia can still claim the loyalties of many peoples under British control or protection. Western-style frontiers have never been the rule. The *dira*, the territory of an Arab tribe, varies with the personal influence of the sheikh, with tribal amalgamations and defections. But Ibn Saud managed to settle the Bedouin tribes in villages at the wells, to turn them into "productive members of the community," says Sheikh Hafiz Wahba. "He also sent out religious teachers to instruct them in their duties to God, their king and their fellow-men."¹⁴

That is how it looks to the Saudi Ambassador to Britain. David Howarth¹⁵ puts it differently, noting how those Bedouin were brain-washed by the Ulema, the bigoted elders of the King's sect, into a military force irresistible to any other Arabian leader, save those who had British sponsorship; how "a time was to come when their fanatical brutality put him to shame, and he had to quell the monstrous faith he had given such power to"; how the Ulema were allowed to inflict "ferocious public floggings in the market-place of Riyadh for smoking a cigarette or singing or being late for prayers." A reactionary anachronism from its beginnings, the "monstrous faith" still exists; and the Saudi Kingdom, which sets a standard of behaviour for the whole peninsula, maintains a level of barbarity which seems incredibly remote from the hygiene and air-conditioning of the American oil company, ARAMCO, which dominates the economic base of the kingdom. One of the principal demands of the National Liberation Front of Saudi Arabia is "for the abolition of the chopping off of limbs as a form of punishment." It is somehow obscene that ARAMCO medical staff should have offered antiseptic dressings for the amputees. . . . Saudi Arabia makes neighbouring administrations feel comfortably liberal.

Western organizations, during this century, have lacked the reformist drive and confidence of, say, the Victorian English in India, appreciated by Marx in his famous essay. ("England was actuated by the vilest interest but, whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history.") If *suttee* had been the Saudi custom when the oil companies made their appearance, the widows of Riyadh might be burning now, without a word of protest from the West. The activities of ARAMCO rather resemble those of the Dutch East India Company as described by Stamford Raffles and quoted in that same essay: "they exaggerated the evils of a capricious and semi-barbarous government by working it with all the practised ingenuity of politicians and all the monopolizing selfishness of traders." The beautiful asceticism, the courage and chivalry of Ibn Saud are long gone. Fat, drunken princelings go hunting in fast cars, while Pharisaical fanatics keep

women cloth-bound, and whip cigarette-smokers; serious warfare is left to the United States Defence department.

Only one positive element in Ibn Saud's career is left to make its mark on history: his development of political and economic centralization, with its radical effect on the international oil industry, a key to world socialism. Saudi Arabia is "a paradoxical example of what one might call economic and political narcissism, since everything there depends on the king, his family, his allies, his 'brothers.' " (*Ikhwan*.) Everything, even the name of the State. This name, which goes back to 1932, coincides curiously enough with the granting of the first permit of exploitation. In 1944 this was taken over by ARAMCO. And then began a phase of financial ease and political prestige unaffected by any constitutional scruples. The first budget dates from 1954-55. . . .

"The royalties were devoured as soon as they were received, and even spent in advance. In 1958 this precocious squandering of wealth had risen to \$300 million. At this point Prince Faisal's reforms introduced an equalization of dividends to which the new middle class—a sparse but already challenging group—aspired as their minimum. . . . The economic point of view grew stronger. In 1960 there was formed a Ministry of Petroleum with the wily sheikh **al-Tariki** at its head. And even a High Council of Money and Economy. This centralism will no doubt survive when theocracy has disappeared." So predicts Jacques **Berque**.¹⁶ Survival depends, partly, on the skill of men like **Tariki**. This "wily sheikh" is no backwoodsman. A government-appointed director of ARAMCO, he has been a leading spokesman for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and, in 1960, presented a sophisticated claim for higher royalties from the eight "majors" which own ARAMCO; his best-known mot is: "We are the sons of the Indians who sold Manhattan Island. We want to change the deal."¹⁷

When the Saudi change the deal, everybody changes. It was here, in 1950, that the principle of the so-called fifty-fifty share was introduced to the Middle East (in line with the system in Venezuela). The Saudi Government is concerned to secure yet more oil revenue, both through the twentieth-century method of tough negotiation and through the older system of putting up legalistic claims to territories currently governed by other chieftains—and backing the claims with bribes and armed force. The peculiar institutions of Saudi Arabia—and her imitative neighbours—are still a great influence on the world oil business. The very bigness of this international undertaking is partially the result of the pattern of land ownership. In countries where no settled pattern of land tenure existed, "explorers had to deal with rulers whose ownership of territory and subsoil was absolute (or was promptly *presumed* to be)."¹⁸ Comprehensive rights have been granted and huge reservoirs created, so that the technical efficiency resulting from the lack of piecemeal competition has been made obvious. In a Socialist world, all the oil of the Arabian peninsula would be under single management,

and the various territories would form a single political unit. That would be the natural, civilized culmination of Ibn Saud's first negotiations with the Western oil explorers. But it is easier for a natural genius to build a nation, easier for enterprising pioneers to found a great industry, than for their greedy successors to develop their work.

The worst failure of Ibn Saud was his inability to provide his people with public works—no more than a railway and several water wells; they lacked schools, sanitation, roads, public transport and medical services, while their only insurance was the king's bounty. Sheikh Wahba writes of his old master's introduction of smallpox vaccination and his attempt to spread scientific education as well as religious instruction. "As Minister of Education, it was my privilege to launch this programme. . . . Unfortunately the programme had to be suspended in 1931 as an economy measure."¹⁸ But that was before the oil boom: they have enough money now. Yet what have the king's six million subjects achieved? In 1962 there were 800 secondary school graduates, 300 students at Riyadh University. Abroad there were 400 undergraduates in the United Arab Republic, 200 in the United States and 20 in Britain.¹⁹ Chieftains and nomads will eventually find these people a significant addition to the class structure—whether as Tshombes or Lumumbas—but not yet. The numbers of the skilled and useful professional classes are estimated thus by the revolutionary National Liberation Front of Saudi Arabia, in their London bulletin²⁰: with a similar-sized population, Ghana has almost six times as many doctors, more than thirty times as many midwives, four times as many male teachers. This Liberation Front, founded in 1954, works underground and claims such successes as the closure of the United States air base at Dahram in 1962. Propaganda concentrates on social conditions, insisting that slavery (officially abolished in 1962) "still exists today in Saudi Arabia and that mediaeval forms of punishment are practised in the second half of the twentieth century, the like of which can only be seen in the basement of Madame Tussaud's."²¹

The Liberation Front adds that Saudi Arabia provides the World Health Organization with no information about the incidence of disease, and that no census of births and deaths has been attempted.²² This is not through shortage of funds. The complacent Sheikh Wahba is content, in 1964, to recall the medical skills of Avicenna and Dawood of Antioch, while paying obligatory tribute to the medical interests of Ibn Saud—the theory of the Four Elements and the power of perfume over wounds. But then Sheikh Wahba can afford to fly to a European clinic when he is sick. It is a small world for a sheikh with an air ticket; for others the world is even smaller.

Oil is made from decomposed organic substances—a fair description of Saudi Arabia, its vitality consisting merely of a determination to preserve and extend the wealth and power of the ruling class, whose defences and escape route to civilization are guaranteed by the United

States. The ARAMCO concession, the largest in the world, covers an area one-sixth the size of the United States; it is also the most profitable — after Kuwait, 50 per cent American-owned. The discontents of the Saudi oil-workers are rarely reported outside the bulletins of the Liberation Movement. They record strikes and boycotts followed by mass arrests, while the government press threatens death to those "guilty of spreading discontent," those "who are stirred up and incited by fanatics and agitators inspired by the ideology of a sinful Jew."¹⁰ A lively recent account of the Saudi Establishment by the king's American steward supports the rebels' atrocity stories, writing with cheerful certainty about strikers publicly flogged to death by a local Amir; the same prince has displayed severed heads on a triumphal arch presented by ARAMCO.¹¹

Much of the oil industry's overheads goes on public relations: a main theme being that oil brings "progress" to underdeveloped nations. The recent history of Saudi Arabia refutes the claim. (It would be more agreeable to be a working man in the Lebanon, where they make the refrigerated cocktail-cabinets which accompany the Saudi princes on their hunting expeditions.) Saudi "stability," or stagnation, is, by the most objective test, far more profoundly threatened by the mere ideas and abstract principles circulating in Cairo than by the physical presence of American industrial and financial sophistication. Saudi Arabia is a political embarrassment to the modern Arab world, rather as Spain is in Europe; a repository of ancient tradition still half-admired as an emblem of racial identity and the glamour of the pre-industrial world. The kingdom is a desirable associate for Arab nationalists in the modern power conflict, yet so repugnant is it to modern ideals that any self-styled progressive (of any race) must want to thwart its policies and encourage internal rebellion. The only common ground it has with the rest of the Arab world is a vamped-up hostility towards Israel.

America offers the Saudi Establishment incomparable prosperity, apparently invincible military defences and the minimum of political interference: a mixture they would like no doubt to offer to similar administrations in South-East Asia and the Congo. Progressive forces in Egypt and elsewhere recognize the difficulties of a direct assault on Saudi Arabia and prefer to concentrate on the kingdom's weaker neighbours, which are the small-scale versions of the Saudi set-up. Most of these are under British "protection," which gives the policy the added kick of anti-colonialism without the danger of challenging America, the *real* great power. Arab nationalism would naturally concentrate upon those areas within the British sphere which are least productive and would provoke the least effective British reaction. Even before the infiltration of the British sphere, has come the assault on that one corner of the peninsula which had no foreign overlord, the Yemen. The turn of Saudi Arabia is bound to come. The principles of Saudi action are so wildly remote from those of other nation-states; exposed

in assassination, bribery, bomb-planting, the Saudi administration merely shrugs and sulks. And this abortion—born of regressive monarchy out of single-track exploitation—is the administration with the most obvious natural claim to the territories of the British sphere, if they are left to independence. The other prime claimant is, of course, the new Yemen.

IV

The Yemen has hitherto been something of a joke to British administrators. Until the military coup in September 1962, the region was ruled by an elected Imam, spiritual head of the Zeidi sect, a ruling minority of Shi'a Muslims occupying a part of the mountain area; the coast and the southern mountains were occupied by Shafa'is—Sunni Muslims. The neighbouring peoples in the British sphere, whether included in the South Arabian Federation or the East Aden Protectorate, are also predominantly Shafa'is; it used to be claimed—and probably still is—that both Aden itself and the British-protected sheikhdoms owe their allegiance to the Imam, he having lost his authority solely through British interference. (Nationalists in the British sphere refer to their neighbourhood as South Yemen, and think of the whole south-west corner of the peninsula as basically one unit.) The Yemen is the most fertile region of Arabia, with abundant, regular rainfall, but there has been practically no industry. The Imam was treated internationally as a small-time Saudi-type despot, with no foreign "protection" because he had nothing to offer. The Turkish Empire never supervised the Yemen effectively, and no one has bothered since. The boundaries are vague. The frontier with Saudi Arabia has not been defined; and the Imams never extended whole-hearted recognition to Britain's place in Aden and the Protectorate. Britain has occasionally made vague gestures to maintain the *status quo* when it seemed necessary. This quotation from a distinguished British administrator sets the tone of the relationship: "The Imam was now warned that, if there were any more raids, air action would be taken against some of his towns. In February 1928 there was a further Zeidi incursion, in which two Protectorate chiefs were kidnapped by the Imam's force. There followed the bombing of Taiz and other cities."¹¹

Imam Ahmad, who came to power in 1948 following the assassination of Imam Yahya, intensified his predecessor's isolationist policy and helped to worsen relations with Britain. His régime was widely detested for its exceptional cruelty: chopped heads, lopped limbs, imprisonment in chains—the present republican leader of the Yemen, President Sallal, spent ten years in the jails of Imam Ahmad. Stability in the Yemen has generally been maintained by operating a hostage system, whereby a number of boys from the different tribes were held in captivity by the central government, to ensure obedience in their home areas. In 1949 the R.A.F. bombed and destroyed a fort built by the

Yemen inside what was claimed to be the territory of the protected Sheikh of Beihan; the Yemeni threatened to appeal to the U.N. The same year there was trouble over a Petroleum Concessions party which wanted to explore the Shabwah district; Britain regarded this as part of the Aden Protectorate, but it was claimed by the Imam. The projected Federation of South Arabia alarmed the Imam, who feared that Britain's sheikhs would gang up against his caste (the Zeidi) and influence his Shafa'i subjects. By 1957-58 border incidents between the Imam and the British sphere had assumed minor war proportions.³⁴

British administrators were pleased when, in 1962, Imam Ahmad was succeeded by Imam Badr, a ruler less repellent and less effective. Badr has spent most of his reign hiding in a cave in case his subjects get at him, and doubtless enjoying the sentimentality lavished upon him by the Beaverbrook press and its reporting staff of itinerant noblemen. The successful rebellion which began only a week after Badr's accession has been directed by Egyptians, and strongly supported by the Communist world, but owes something to Yemeni awareness of the modern world through intercourse with Aden, its associations with the bourgeois parliamentary system, with elections and trade unions. The British felt somewhat guilty about this and in 1961, in a spasmodic attempt to gratify the Imam, "decided to take firm measures to prevent Yemeni emigrés in Aden from intriguing against the Imam's regime. A strong warning was issued and some of the leading trouble-makers were expelled."³⁵

This was unusual. The traditional British attitude to the Imam's régime is jokingly expressed in another passage of Sir Charles Johnston's extraordinary book; the son of Ronald Bailey, British Chargé d'Affaires in the Yemen, was talking, at school in England, with the son of the British Agent in the Western Protectorate. Young Bailey said: "My father's in Taiz. He looks after all the Yemenis." Young Trevaskis said: "My father's in Aden, and he *shoots all* the Yemenis." "Never," says Johnston, "have I heard the respective policies of these two great Departments of State more succinctly defined."³⁶ (He means the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office.) The older Trevaskis succeeded Johnston as High Commissioner, but has now resigned. Mr. Bailey was knifed by a Yemeni in 1962, before the revolution. The assailant was pushed downstairs by Mrs. Bailey, an ex-W.R.N.S., apprehended by the Imam's men and "imprisoned and interrogated for some time"; but "the whole affair remains a mystery, and the coming of the Yemeni revolution has made it unlikely that it will ever now be solved. It is, however, a grim reminder of the hazards to which British representatives are exposed in this violent and passionate area."³⁷

Exotic thrills, adventure story material . . . Anglo-Yemeni relations belong in the world of local hero Major Mike Banks, whose extrovert views are ably expressed in the *Evening Standard* and the *Geographical Magazine*. ("The fillip of danger is a stimulant. The men respect the

proud and hardy hill Arab. . . . Used to semi-playful combat with the Yemeni, British representatives were startled to find something serious happening in 1962. The isolationism of the Yemeni is already a thing of the past. They now have an opening to the outside world in their port, Hodeida, modernized by Russian technicians; passable roads link Hodeida, Taiz and Sana, the Hodeida-Sana road having been built by Chinese engineers. An Egyptian-Yemeni oil company was formed in 1964, the Yemen Republic holding 51 per cent of the shares and Egypt the rest.

The British Establishment appears to have been slow to recognize the importance of the Yemeni revolution. The Saudi saw the point quickly and began supplying military assistance to the Imam, whom they had previously regarded (as had the British) as a troublesome minor chieftain. The United Nations (and the United States) devised an agreement whereby the Saudi should cease to back the Imam, on condition that Egypt gradually withdraw support from Sallal. A U.N. mission was appointed to observe the process of disengagement which began in July 1963; the mission was dissolved a year later. The Saudi Government refused to continue paying for the mission, blaming the Egyptians for breaking the terms.

For Britain, it went against the grain to offer the Yemeni "Royalists" support. Conservative M.P.s urged their Government to back him "against Nasser" and, in April 1964, the R.A.F. bombed a Yemeni Republican fort. The R.A.F. are not unused to bombing recalcitrant Arabs, and the Tory Prime Minister proudly announced that he had personally authorized this exploit. A lukewarm attempt was made to whip up the Suez mentality—on a hate-Nasser basis—while the British press and Parliament were saturated with tributes to our gallant troops, "most of whom joined for a spot of adventure anyway," comments an able combatant. In May, it was alleged that two British soldiers had been killed and their heads taken to Taiz for display. (The indignation was absurd; simultaneously, Britain was employing keen head-hunters in Borneo.) In any event, American officials resident in Taiz denied the head-exhibition tale; it was widely believed that the two missing soldiers had been engaged in safeguarding the arms route between Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni royalist forces.

British efforts to assist the Imam were underground and unofficial. Sir Charles Johnston's A.D.C. in Aden, Tony Boyle, left the R.A.F. and helped to organize arms supplies to the Imam; or so it was proclaimed in the British press and never denied. Premier Home announced: "Both the present High Commissioner (Trevaskis) and his predecessor (Johnston) have assured my right Hon. friend that they were not aware that the person in question was involved in any way. . . I must take their word for it—and I do. I cannot say whether they should have noticed this. The fact is that they did not." The Labour M.P. questioning him (Richard Marsh), was doubtful whether "people as well

known as Colonel David Sterling, Major Cooper and the High Commissioner's own A.D.C. could, in an area as dangerous as this, carry on activities on this scale without anyone noticing it." He referred again to Johnston's book—in which he links Boyle's name with that of Colonel Neil McLean, a Tory M.P. who had been touring the territory of the Yemeni Royalists. Mere dithering, all this, devoid of policy—but the sympathies of Western Governments have been quite evident to the Arab world. The Imam has engaged a number of Western mercenaries, under Major Robert Denard, and these (like their comrades in the Congo) have been glamourized in the British press almost as if they were soldiers of the Queen. The Republicans have been much abused. Here is a typical British journalist (Winston Churchill's grandson): "Sorties were being made. . . to bomb the defenceless civilian population of Royalist villages. . . . Perhaps the closest parallel in modern times to Nasser's invasion of the Yemen was Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia. . . . The United Nations has failed to take action when confronted with a clear-cut case of aggression."¹⁴ Here is a German report from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, reprinted in America: "It is women and children who are generally the victims. . . . The Yemenites are used to wars in which man fights man. But the bombs that kill women and children sow hatred and contempt for 'the wicked sons of the Pharaohs.' Every child knows that the planes and bombs come from the Soviet Union. . . . Tell the Security Council about the war against women and children."¹⁵

Western reproaches can only sound hypocritical. We have bombed too many Arab villages in the recent past. Moreover, complaint without action does no more than intensify the impression of British feebleness. Nasser's most recent speeches treat Britain (as opposed to Israel) as a *ludicrous* adversary. The suffering involved in the Egyptian blitz of the fertile provinces of al-Hajjah and Saadah (headquarters of the Zeidi tribe) is indeed sickening—like the very similar Western operations in Vietnam and the Congo; but was there any other way whereby aggressive Arab nationalism could gain a bridgehead on the Arabian peninsula? The most remarkable aspect is the way in which the United States appears to have permitted the dubious victory in the Yemen. Saudi Arabia is now open to Egyptian penetration from the south; the gateway to the Saudi oilfields, and to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, is almost in the hands of Nasser. Last summer it was widely believed in the Middle East that Nasser had agreed with the Iraq Government to work from Yemen to liquidate Wahabi rule in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶ It was even believed that he had achieved agreement with the King of Jordan. But the Arab Summit Conference at Alexandria in September revealed fresh difficulties, and suggested the necessity for a compromise. It seemed likely then that both Imam Badr and President Sallal would disappear from the scene.

Nevertheless, there remains a bridgehead of "Arab Socialism"—

strongly connected with world Communism. Socialist education and industrialization can eventually sap the foundations of the Saudi régime. Perhaps the Americans do not mind, perhaps they even feel that they can use the menace of Nasser to help transform Wahabi rule into something more tolerable to American ideas; they will certainly find it more difficult now to maintain the "stability" of their barbarous kingdom.

Throughout the Yemen war, British influence, under the Tory Government, has been only peripheral; but the "British sphere" has been deeply affected. In the South Arabian Federation and the Eastern Protectorate, rebels against British suzerainty will soon have another power to appeal to, a power more dynamic and consistent than the Saudi, a power more hostile to Britain than Saudi Arabia's American overlords. Even the most old-fashioned British administrators (and some are very old-fashioned indeed) are coming to recognize that the days of casual, slow-moving indirect rule are coming to an end; to preserve their antique style they would have needed to forget old quarrels and make common cause with the Imam; and now, perhaps, from their imperial point of view, they need a genuine, whole-hearted alliance with the Saudi. If Aden is to remain a British garrison, then our troops' "police duties" will be directed against a different and more formidable type of enemy. No more desert fun taking pot shots at tribal warriors, but skilled warfare against men with a cause. And British disciplinary bombing raids will no longer escape world publicity and challenge.

V

If the challenge of the Yemen were to force any imperial-minded British Government into the arms of Saudi Arabia, the first difficulty would be that of frontiers. Saudi Arabia is short of these. Sir Rupert Hay,³⁴ former Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, has detailed the difficulties. In 1959 the borders of Kuwait and the Kuwait-Saudi Neutral Zone had been defined but not demarcated. Bahrain, being an archipelago, has no land frontiers but was still subject to dispute. The boundaries of the other states, with each other and with Saudi Arabia (or in the case of Muscat with the Eastern Protectorate), had never been finally settled except for certain inter-sheikhdom boundaries on the Trucial Coast. Sir Rupert remarks sadly that there was no difficulty until the oilmen arrived. Now every sheikh must claim as large a slice of desert as possible.

Sir Rupert had charge of ten sheikhdoms and what is called the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. The ten sheikhdoms are Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the seven Trucial States. It is in this region that the precedent was set whereby the advanced foreign power freezes the political situation of a developing Arab country. As Sir Rupert says, "The establishment of the Pax Britannica had the effect of freezing the

position as it then was. . . The descendants of the five sheikhs who signed the Perpetual Truce [of 1853] are still independent rulers of States, although two of them rule over little more than one village each. One of the larger sheikhdoms has however split into three." This is the normal consequence of indirect rule. As J. F. Fitzpatrick wrote of northern Nigeria in the 1920s, before the arrival of the British the autocracy of an Emir was at least tempered with assassination, but with the authority of the suzerain power to back him, he could do as he pleased.¹⁰⁸

Iraq and Iran both preserve ancient claims to these States; but geography suggests unification with Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud began his career in Kuwait, a town founded by men from Central Arabia. During the eighteenth century the Kuwaiti established Qatar, and wrested Bahrain from the Persians. The Turks occupied Qatar in 1871, and made the leading local sheikh, a pearl-trade king, their deputy governor; the present ruler is his descendant. The ruling families of the Trucial Coast have been long established, but warred incessantly, with many places changing hands, until their spheres of authority were roughly guaranteed by the British.

Sir Rupert explains his duties, based on "close personal contact between the Political Agent and the Rulers. . . mostly in an informal manner. . . . The late Sheikh of Kuwait once said to me that the best Political Agent he ever had was one who had no dealings with any Kuwaiti but himself."¹⁰⁹ Sir Rupert, who was born in 1893, has produced an invaluable record of Britain's imprecise but autocratic control; but he could find no English publisher for his interesting book, and it had to appear in Washington, with an enthusiastic foreword from an American service chief. The policy he describes has a bearing on United States' procedure in Saudi Arabia.

The disadvantages of being an ordinary Arab citizen of these States are blandly illustrated by Sir Rupert: "There is a tendency for laws to be made to meet an occasion without proper forethought or drafting, and in no State is it possible to obtain anything in the nature of a compendium of local laws."¹¹⁰ . . . The more severe penalties, e.g. the cutting off of a hand for theft, are now rarely awarded. . . . The Judges, usually the Rulers or their relatives, have no written code to guide them and what is sometimes termed 'palm-tree justice' is administered." Law and order is maintained by "armed retainers." Sir Rupert notes that this system was "not suited to the changed conditions resulting from the operations of the oil companies. Neither the *shari'a* (Muslim law) nor tribal customs gave the judges much help when dealing with "the *rights* and obligations of modern business concerns."¹¹¹

There must be justice for Oil, if not for people. It is hard to imagine a grosser case of double standards; we are reminded of those press reports of bloody civil wars—"no *European* casualties." Sir Rupert had to "promote good relations between the oil companies on the one

hand, and the rulers and their people on the other. . . . to make sure that nothing is decided which will seriously affect the position of the Rulers or the British Government." As for the people, "on the Trucial Coast, except at Dubai where there is a good prison, offenders are usually incarcerated in dungeons in the Rulers' palaces."¹³ Sir Rupert reports briefly on each State—Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Sharjah ("not much in the way of administration"), Umm al Qaiwan, whose ruler, an M.B.E., succeeded upon the murder of his uncle; Ras al Khaimah ("little in the way of organized administration. . . . The villagers in the hills are not used to strangers" and Western visitors should ask for an escort); Fujairah, which contains a picturesque fort—now repaired since it was bombed by a British man-of-war in 1952, to obtain the release of some slaves held by the Ruler. The Rulers have relatives whom Sir Rupert compares with "barons of the Middle Ages. . . . Unless they mend their ways, their profligacy and waste of State revenues will inevitably become the subject of popular agitation."¹⁴ Another menace lies in education, even if primarily religious; "in some States, Koranic schools are the only ones which exist,"¹⁵ but several teachers from Egypt and the Lebanon have been employed. "The Rulers are well aware of the dangers of this policy and take prompt steps to deal with any of these teachers who encourage subversive activities."¹⁶ Then there is the servant problem. Sir Rupert notes that "the Ruler of Qatar has officially abolished slavery. . . . Even in the primitive Trucial States the Rulers have declared that slavery no longer exists—though this statement must be accepted with some reserve." There is also the unusual concept of nationality. A great many nomads owe allegiance to various rulers (including, of course, the King of Saudi Arabia); they often change their allegiance. The Rulers issue travel documents to people they claim as their subjects, but nationalities are not fixed because of doubt over allegiances.

Britain kept the peace at sea but interfered little with land warfare until the post-war period. The last little war between Dubai and Abu Dhabi ended only in 1948. A *de facto* ruler was recognized by the British, even if he succeeded through assassination. But, says Sir Rupert, after World War II, "it became necessary to ensure reasonable safety for oil company personnel operating in the sheikhdoms" and the Trucial Oman Scouts were levied. British-officered, they make travel reasonably safe within the sheikhdoms. There is usually "close co-operation in security measures" between the oil companies and the Governments of the sheikhdoms. Some companies employ their own locally recruited guards, while others can rely on the protection of the sheikhs' henchmen. This occupation—alternating with labouring on drilling and surveying operations—provides little enough employment for the local men in those States where oil has not yet been proved; naturally many emigrate to Saudi Arabia or other oil-producing principedoms: if it is possible for men without nationality to "emigrate."

Oil-rich Kuwait and Bahrain are obviously in a different category from the primitive Trucial States. They are generally presented—by public relations companies and by trade supplements in *The Times* and the *Guardian*—as ideal welfare States. But dissatisfaction exists. Sir Rupert writes of Bahrain: "in spite of the high standard of the administration, in 1954 certain elements in the population, most of Persian origin, began to agitate for a more popular form of government. Strikes and disorders were prompted, culminating in large-scale rioting at the time of the Suez crisis in 1956. Five of the leading agitators were arrested and deported, since when there has been no serious trouble."⁴³ Three of these men were shipped to St. Helena and imprisoned there for five years, until agitation by some Labour M.P.s secured their release and compensation for unjust detention. (This tiny—though pleasing—success was regarded in some quarters as a triumph for the parliamentary system, and a tribute to the nobility of Britain.) The state of emergency has had a long life, no strikes, trade unions, press, demonstrations, political parties or meetings being permitted. Some Bahraini have an obsessive desire for a postal service; many Arabs are weary of being held incommunicado by the British. They feel they might be missing something.

The Bahrain Petroleum Company is owned in equal shares by Standard Oil of California and the Texas Oil Company, but it is registered in Canada and designated a British company. Most senior posts are held by Americans, but the bulk of the white staff is British. There is an important refinery which handles primarily oil from undersea pipes from Saudi Arabia, with whose King the ruler of Bahrain is generally on excellent terms. There is one secondary school, and good work has been done on the eradication of malaria; tuberculosis, however, is rife: surprising, it might be thought, in so wealthy a State.

According to *Free South Arabia*,⁴⁴ the \$13 million in oil royalties are divided thus: one-third goes to the ruler, one-third is deposited in Britain and one-third goes to the government of Bahrain—of which one-third is allocated to the efficient police force. If this is correct, the ruler receives \$4,400,000 a year, the police force costs \$1,400,000, and the average Bahraini receives \$20 in other social benefits.

Kuwait is even more admired as a welfare State. Half Britain's oil is produced here, and the ruler has over \$800 million invested in London. The concession was obtained in 1934 by the Kuwait Oil Company, a registered British company owned in equal shares by British Petroleum and the Gulf Exploration Company of the United States. The ruler auctioned his share in the Kuwait-Saudi neutral zone, and the concession was secured by the American Oil Company; the Getty Oil Company, which secured the Saudi share of the concession, agreed that the A.I.O. should carry out operations on behalf of both. The Kuwaiti offshore concessions were acquired by Shell (for £11 million) in 1961 but have not paid off.

The Ruler of Kuwait has indeed spent much of his income on his subjects' welfare. He is not, like some other sheikhs, an unmitigated swine. It is true that his kindergartens are only for Kuwaiti (half the population), that the technical schools are empty and that destitutes still live in ruinous shanty-towns; but his tiny kingdom is still a better place to live in than most of the peninsula. Sir Rupert recalls some "agitation during the Suez crisis in 1956 when an oil-well was set on fire but, generally speaking, the ruling family is in a position to suppress all dangerous subversive authority and to resist demands for effective local reforms."⁴⁴ The ruler insists that his State can remain viable without British protection; but this seems impossible without some Great-Power or international guarantee. This pocket State, the size of Wales, is the largest single supplier of capital to the English money market. Meanwhile other Middle Eastern countries send missions westward every year, seeking funds for development. How can these States be expected to tolerate, except under compulsion, British exploitation of Kuwait's resources?

VI

In the south-east corner of Arabia is the Sultanate of Muscat. The Sultan is under British protection, and is forbidden to enter relations with any other foreign power. He has received ample British support in his efforts to crush the "rebels" of Oman, to which he lays claim. The Omani had elected an Imam, according to their custom. The Sultan set out, in 1955, to crush them with a British-officered army. Robert Edwards, M.P., made a complaint to the United Nations about the Sultan's interrogation methods: "Those who refused to answer questions were thrown through the opening on to a spike which impaled them through the stomach. . . . According to a British N.C.O. some British soldiers were so disgusted that they made a complaint." But perhaps this is just another atrocity story. In any event, the employment of British military expertise in this mean, antiquated little war is a scandal which hardly needs to be stressed. Other Europeans, apart from oil prospectors, are rare visitors here. Special permission is needed before passengers on the mail steamers are allowed ashore. Smoking in public is forbidden. A curfew gun is fired after sunset, whereupon anyone found within the walled city without a lantern is liable to incarceration.

In 1964, proof was offered that British support of the Sultan of Muscat had paid dividends. Shell announced the discovery of a major oilfield in his territory, liable to produce six million tons in 1967—and all to be sold for sterling. The Saudi have a claim to the area—and have, in the past, backed the "rebel" Imam of Oman in order to get it—but their long-term interests would now seem to necessitate an accommodation with the British Government. The time is past when local autocrats, under Western protection, could feud with each other and

compete for the spoils. To pursue their greedy ends, they now need to co-operate.

The last serious inter-kingdom conflict in this region occurred during the 1960s at the Buraimi Oasis. An international commission was set up to arbitrate on the highly unreal question of the "ownership" of the oasis; it was claimed by Saudi Arabia, but the British backed the Sultan of Muscat and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi. Among the members of the International Commission was Sir Reader Bullard, former ambassador to Persia; he went out, as he remarks in his memoirs, aware that he might have to "vote against the case put forward by his own government." He quickly resigned from the tribunal, as did other members, and the negotiations collapsed. Instead of an agreed solution a body of British-officered troops was dispatched. In 1955 Buraimi was occupied and the Saudi were expelled. Thus British Petroleum—and not ARAMCO—secured control and now owns two-thirds of the oil of Abu Dhabi. Another beneficiary is the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, with 20,000 subjects, who can now do what he likes with £10 million a year. He happens to be one of the most ignorant and confused princes in the whole of Arabia.

Some Americans feel not unnaturally that Britain has been over-sharp. Major Mann in his recent history of Abu Dhabi, questions the integrity of Sir Reader Bullard, and his resignation from the Commission on the grounds of Saudi dishonesty and bribery. Major Mann considers British success an insolent *fait accompli*: "a continuous build-up of the Levies permitted Great Britain to establish the effective control of the Sultan of Muscat and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi in the disputed area."⁴⁶ He holds that this success was achieved by winning over the Imam of Oman from the Saudi side, and securing his support for the Sultan and his British protectors—only a few months before Britain and the Sultan went to work on the deliberate subjugation of that Imam. Major Mann regards Britain's actions as a determined effort to support British oil companies against American interests. But there is no point in any of the parties getting holy about the incident; all are unclean.

VII

All this seems maniacal, centuries out of date. A disinterested reaction can only be one of contempt and incredulity. Slave-owning barons assassinate each other, incarcerate their subjects and seize land by force of arms; advanced industrial nations send out sophisticated military forces to back one illiterate tyrant against another. Yet this is the pattern on the eastern fringe of the Saudi kingdom, in the very part where one might expect a degree of industrialization and the development of representative institutions. Still less then can be expected from the southern fringe. The territories south-west of Aden are known as the Hadhramaut, or the Eastern Protectorate of Aden. There has never

been much economic incentive to administer these States, and the task of keeping the peace (occasionally) has been left to admired eccentrics, like Harold Ingrams. This distinguished administrator wrote of his career: "As there is no over-riding necessity for us to control such an area as the Hadhramaut closely, it does not, on political grounds, seem worth while to do so. The less we interfere with the internal affairs of Arabia, and the more we can give assistance, including financial . . . the more welcome we shall be."⁴³

He held that "whatever dangers there may be in the 'benefits' of modern civilization, it is certain that no man, if he wants them, may be denied access to them," but, nevertheless, "every effort should be made to avoid 'spoiling' the country and its character."⁴⁴ This romantic principle has been adopted by British administrators throughout the peninsula—the emphasis being on "not spoiling" rather than "civilization." Ingrams tells of the ill-equipped government schools in the Qaiti State: "I do not think this is a bad thing myself. Arabia is a very poor country and half the secret of living in it is to be able to make do on very little. The standard could be raised if more trained educational officers were imported, but in the long run that might take responsibility and initiative away from the people of the country."⁴⁵

Ingrams was responsible for pacification during the 1930s. The people of Diar al Bugri told him: "The British are the best of the governments, but we don't like them because they leave us to the mercies of these Sultans. We want a government here which will enforce peace."⁴⁶ Ingrams himself achieved pacification mainly by bombing villages. The people of Bin Yenani came to thank him. "You did well to bomb us. And we thank you. If we had given in before, people would have said we were cowards." The same policy has been operated in the 1960s. Sir Charles Johnston writes: "The main political problems of the Qaiti State were a nationalistically-minded city mob in Mukalla itself which required constant watching; and a number of turbulent tribes in the interior. . . . In July 1961 one of these tribes. . . inflicted heavy casualties on troops of the Mukalla Regular Army which had set out to punish them. . . . Combined operations by the Qaiti State Forces, the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion *and the* R.A.F. were required to bring the tribesmen to submission."⁴⁷ Government, in short, has consisted of spasmodic disciplinary bombings, occasionally breaking the pattern of non-administration. That burst of activity in Qaiti State, during 1961, has an obvious explanation. In that year the Pan-American International Oil Company (a subsidiary of Standard Oil of Indiana) signed an agreement with the Qaiti and Kathiri States. On the island of Socotra, the Mahra Sultan suddenly began to press for British help in establishing his authority on the mainland. Rival frontier claims between the Qaiti, Kathiri and Mahra States were revived.

The whole of the Eastern Protectorate was to be left out of the Federation scheme. Johnston notes, with respectful disagreement, the

view of the veteran Harold Ingrams that the whole Federal concept was a mistake, that Britain should simply abdicate, since "Arabia must be left to fight out its own fatal and complex destiny."³⁴ Johnston thought the Federation, that belated British initiative, a daringly progressive scheme for drawing the sheikhdoms into the modern world; yet the scheme was to apply only to the Western Protectorate and, even so, would not include certain States, certainly not the Upper Yafai Sheikhdoms, in their wild mountains on the Yemeni border.

The States of the Western Protectorate which were intended to form the South Arabian Federation are Aqrabi, Shaibi, Upper and Lower Aulaqi, Beihan, Dhala, Audhali, Fadhli, Lower Yafai, Lahej, Wahidi, Haushabi and Dathina. They differ little from the other communities discussed; but, unlike the States on the eastern fringe, down the Persian Gulf to Oman, they have as yet no proven oil potential; and, unlike the Eastern Protectorate States, they are close to centres of political energy—the Yemen Republic and Aden Colony. This is one of the arguments put forward by Adeni democrats, when told that the peoples of the sheikhdoms are too primitive for self-government; though they have, admittedly, been denied normal liberties at home, many of them who have worked in Aden are accustomed to democratic forms. This is also the reason why, during late years, more attention has been paid to their political future and to the way in which they are disciplined by the British garrison—for, in fact, the 1964 bombing of the Radfan tribesmen, in order to force them to accept the disputed authority of the Amir of Dhala, was not extraordinary at all, but quite customary.

Following the negotiations of the closing months of 1964 the unexpected willingness of the sheikhs to join Aden in a unitary State has brought nearer some hopes of a civilized independence. But this proposed new State will almost certainly be involved in a kind of belated colonization. It can hardly be expected that men like the Radfan tribesmen—who, said Duncan Sandys, "have not been administered for as long as anybody can remember," or the forgotten tribesmen of the Upper Yafai, will be easily attracted into the new political framework. There is bound to be compulsion. If Aden and the Western Protectorate are going to be independent in the next few years, their government is likely to need powerful armed services. And when independence is achieved by this new state, what is to happen to the Eastern Protectorate and to the disputed territory of Muscat and Oman? Presumably these remaining states will not be left to savage each other; and presumably also the oil companies will expect protection for their explorations. In these matters the oil companies are usually successful in achieving their ends.

In theory, it is quite possible for Britain to abdicate totally from any responsibility for its fringe of the Saudi Kingdom. If this were to happen America is the most obvious power to take her place. Since this is not in fact likely to happen, Britain may well find herself increasingly

embroiled in border wars and general savagery for many years to come. The alternative, for a well-meaning British Government, is to encourage, in the brief period of independence, political institutions as dynamic as those likely to emerge in the Yemen; but to state the matter thus is to move beyond the bounds of reasonableness.

A political rationalization of Arabia could obviously best be achieved by bringing the oil companies under international control. There are ways and means, if the various possibilities are theoretically considered, of this being done. The only obstacles are the oil companies and their respective governments. The alternative method of securing an equitable division of Arabia's natural resources is through bloody revolution by the Arabs themselves.

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