

~~SECRET~~

COPY NO. 83
OCI NO. 0269/63

1 March 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

~~SECRET~~



GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

222523/1

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

1 March 1963

NR Record



THE BAATH PARTY IN THE ARAB WORLD Page 10

The success of the Baath Party in engineering the coup in Iraq has encouraged Baathists elsewhere to try to carry out their plans to topple other "reactionary" governments, especially in Syria and Jordan. The Baath is pan-Arab, anti-Communist, and socialistic, with members in every Arab state except Egypt. Baathism and Nasirism, which share many of the same socialist ideas, are competing revolutionary movements. Their sharpest point of difference has been the Baath's insistence on legal restraint of the executive power and on the guarantee of individual liberties, as contrasted with Nasirism's acceptance of a single dictatorial leader.

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~

v

BRIEFS

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

THE BAATH PARTY IN THE ARAB WORLD

The 8 February Iraqi coup against Qasim has brought the Baath Party again into prominence and has greatly encouraged its adherents to try to carry out their plans to topple other "reactionary" Arab governments, especially those in Syria and Jordan.

The Baath, formally Hizb al-Baath al-Arabi al-Ishtiraki or Arab Socialist Resurrection Party, is a pan-Arab, anti-Communist, left-wing party with branches in every Arab country except Egypt. One of its founders, Michel Aflaq, has said that it "has fused Arab nationalism and socialism into a dialecticism for Arab nationalism."

The present Baath Party was formed in 1953 by the merger of two groups of Syrian origin founded in the 1940s--the Arab Resurrection (Baath) Party and the Arab Socialist (Ishtiraki) Party. The Resurrection, sometimes called the Renaissance Party, had been founded by Aflaq, a Syrian university professor, a Christian, and until 1943 a leader of the Syrian Communist Party, and by Salah al-Din Bitar, a Muslim. The Arab Socialist Party had been organized by Akram al-Hawrani, a radical anti-Western politician, for the purpose of countering the rightist Syrian Populist and Nationalist parties. Aflaq has been the party's theoretician, while for many years Hawrani played



HAWRANI

the role of the practical politician and organizer.

Ideology

The Baath advocates "Arab socialism"--a mixture of pan-Arabism and socialist objectives. The party's main objective is to revive the "glories" of the Arab past, to achieve unity of the "Arab homeland," and to free it from the influence and control of the "imperialists." The party seeks to preserve the Arab social system, which it



AFLAG

emphasizes belongs neither to the capitalist West nor to the Communist Soviet bloc.

In common with other Arab nationalist groups, the Baath distrusts the Western powers, which it considers the enemies of Arab unity. It opposes all forms of Western influence in the Arab world. Despite its differences with Nasir, the party is generally in agreement with his policy of nonalignment with either the West or the Communist bloc. It also strongly opposes any Arab acceptance of Israel, which it considers a creature and instrument of Western imperialism.

In the economic realm the Baath advocates redistribution of wealth; state ownership and management of communications, public utilities, and the chief means of production and transport;

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

revocation of all foreign concessions; land reform; and state supervision of small industrial enterprises, with the workers participating in their direction and sharing in the profits. Inheritance and ownership of property are asserted to be "natural rights," but also subject to state regulation.

Differences With Nasirism

The Baath never took root in Egypt, apparently because by the time it had gotten under way in Syria, Nasir had come to power in Egypt and banned all political parties. Nasir has, in effect, pre-empted many of the Baath's ideas. Nasirism has resulted from the successful exploitation of circumstances by one man, while Baathism has followed a fairly coherent policy, not dependent on a single charismatic leader. Baath also advocates legal restraint on the executive power and the guarantee of individual liberties--the point of greatest difference between Aflaq and Nasir. Nevertheless Aflaq will associate his policies with those of Nasir as long as Nasir's successes last and personal policy conflicts can be avoided.

Based in Lebanon since 1958, the Baath is organized into cells on the Communist pattern. Outside of Syria and Iraq the party is a clandestine, closely knit and centrally directed organization bent on undermining the foundations of the established order in every country opposing its aims.

Syria

Of all the Arab countries, Syria has experienced the most prolonged and deepest Baathist influence. Between 1955 and 1958 dissension among conservative political parties brought the Baath into a position of decisive importance. These were its "golden years." The Baath's alliance with left-wing army elements ended in the crushing of the conservative opposition by 1956. However, Syria's

present prime minister, Khalid al-Azm, and the Communists were able to increase their influence by exploiting the anti-Western pro-Soviet policies the Syrian Government adopted largely at Baathist insistence.

By late 1957 the Baath, fearing that it was losing control of the situation, appealed to Nasir for union with Egypt. This came into being on 22 February 1958, under onerous conditions for the Syrians. Two Baathist leaders, Bitar and Hawrani, became minister of state and vice president in the UAR cabinet, but in the end they were relegated to sinecures and the Baath, along with other parties, was liquidated. By October 1959 both Bitar and Hawrani had gone into opposition to Nasir.

The Syrian Baath, which may have as many as 50,000 adherents, now is divided into two main wings led by Aflaq and Hawrani. The dominant Aflaq wing espouses a conciliatory policy toward Nasir, regrets the break with Egypt in September 1961, and has a strong affinity with the Iraqi Baath. This group is reported to be planning to take over the Syrian Government in the near future and to have discussed these plans with the Iraqi Baathist leadership.

Akram al-Hawrani's wing is bitterly anti-Nasir, an attitude strongly influenced by Nasir's suppression of the Baath following the union in 1958. Hawrani, an astute, ruthless and forceful politician, recognized early in his political career the growing importance of the army in Syrian political affairs and soon capitalized on it. He figured in at least four of Syria's five military coups, and was instrumental in the Baath's gaining support among the junior and noncommissioned officers in the army as well as in intellectual and student circles. His army supporters are believed to outnumber Aflaq's, which may prove decisive in any test of strength between the two wings.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

Iraq

The Iraqi Baath Party which directed the coup against Qasim was founded in 1953 or 1954. From the outset it was a subversive group and its members were mostly students. By 1955 it had a clandestine press and was disseminating antiregime pamphlets. Throughout 1957-58 the Iraqi Baath cooperated with the Communists and several other groups against the royal regime. The party's aims were similar to those of its Syrian counterpart and the UAR Embassy probably was the channel of communication with central headquarters, then located in Damascus.

After the 1958 revolution, one of its leaders, Fuad al-Rikabi, now a pro-Nasir exile in Cairo, became the first minister of development in the Qasim government. The Baath soon fell out with the new regime, however. In 1959 its members participated in the abortive Mosul revolt and Baathists critically wounded Qasim in an assassination attempt.

Current Baath strength in Iraq is estimated at 5,000 to 7,000 members, plus about 20,000 militant supporters and 50,000 to 100,000 sympathizers. Ten members of the 21-man Iraqi cabinet are known Baathists several being members of the Baath's international leadership. These include the prime minister and deputy prime minister and the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, interior, social affairs, and education.

An Iraqi cabinet delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Saadi visited Cairo on 22 February, apparently to reach an understanding with Nasir on Iraqi's relationship with the UAR. Saadi made a high-sounding statement of cooperation and "brotherhood."

Jordan

In Jordan, the Baath reached its peak of influence at the time of the 1956 Suez war. A prominent Baathist, Abd Allah Rimawi, became foreign minister, and in alliance with a sympathetic army chief of staff worked openly for the absorption of Jordan into a Baathist Republic of Greater Syria. Cooperation with the Communists was close.

When King Husayn blocked this scheme, however, Rimawi fled to Syria and became closely identified with Nasir, after Syrian-Egyptian union. He has remained at odds with both Aflaq and Hawrani. Although the Rimawi faction of the party has received support from Nasir and can hardly be termed Baathist any more, it still had adherents in Syria and Lebanon as well as Jordan.

Baathists in Jordan now number about 1,500, including an unknown number of army officers. In addition there probably are about three times that many sympathizers. The compromising of the Baathist conspiracies against Husayn cost the party some of the strength it enjoyed in the army in the mid-1950s.

Munif al-Razzaz, the present Baath leader in Jordan, is in contact with other antiregime elements regarding a new move against King Husayn if the Baathists take over in Syria. Razzaz also recently visited Baghdad to meet with Syrian and Iraqi party members.

Lebanon

Although Beirut is the headquarters of the international Baath leadership, the Lebanese Baath is neither particularly widespread nor specifically Lebanese. The country's divisions along religious lines, its laissez-faire economic policy, and the existence of a rival socialist party led

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

by Minister of Interior Kamal Jumblatt, has left but a small field for the Baath to work, and its members and sympathizers probably number only about 1,000.

Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia

In the Persian Gulf area the Baath is strongest in Kuwait. Its actual membership in Kuwait is largely confined to expatriate Arabs working there, but it exercises considerable influence among Kuwaiti reformist elements, including members of the government. The relatively prosperous Kuwaiti Baathists help finance party activities elsewhere. Other Baathist cells exist in Bahrain and Qatar.

The Saudi Arabian Baath membership is comparatively small and is centered in the eastern part of the country where the American oil installations are located. The Baath is active in the labor syndicates and could bring about strikes and agitation against the royal regime.

North Africa

The clandestine Baath is the only organized political group in Libya, where parties are outlawed. The Baath numbers around 200 hard-core members, with the majority in Tripoli where the central committee is located and the remainder in Benghazi, the country's second largest city. It has penetrated the labor movement, whose leadership is non-Baathist, and there are a number of Baathists among non-Libyan Arabs. Its strength lies in the young educated element, however, which gives it disproportionate influence in a country where the number

of the educated elite is extremely small. The government cracked down on the Baath in 1962 and some leaders were jailed.

In Tunisia the Baath, through weak, is working assiduously to increase its strength. Despite its criticism of Bourguiba for not adopting a sufficiently "Arab" policy, it supports him against Nasir. The university students are a special target.

The Baath has been in touch with Algerian leaders, some of whom are said to be Baathists. Baathist organizations in Morocco are fairly active and are collaborating with the opposition to the royal regime.

Students Abroad

One of the greatest strengths of the Baathist movement lies in its inroads among Arab students abroad. Small Baath groupings have been formed of students in France and West Germany. Of the approximately 5,000 Arabs studying in the United States, an estimated 30 percent are Baathists, and recruiting goes on continually. Several members of the Iraqi cabinet evidently acquired their Baathist tendencies while students abroad. These include the foreign minister who studied in Britain, the finance minister who studied at the University of California, and the minister of agrarian reform who received a doctorate at Wisconsin. Strength in such student groups provides the Baath with a reservoir of trained youth that will help ensure the party a continuing and probably growing influence in the Arab world.

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~