

Qasim's erstwhile friend Arif and his military faction. Qasim himself leaned toward the Communists and sought their support once he became involved in a struggle for power with Arif. Arif's supporters first staged a military uprising against the Qasim regime in March 1959, but failed. In the same year, there was also an unsuccessful attempt on Qasim's life. As a result, Qasim took drastic measures against his opponents, executing the leaders of the military uprising and sending the would-be assassins to prison.

However, the Ba'thists were not discouraged and began, once they had recovered from Qasim's repressive measures, to build up their activities throughout the country. They approached army officers opposed to Qasim, suggesting another military uprising against the regime. Ba'thist agitation eventually was to lead to Qasim's overthrow in 1963.

#### THE BA'TH IDEOLOGY

The Ba'thists began as a Syrian intellectual group in 1940, led by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Baytar. Aflaq, who studied in Paris during the early thirties, had been a Marxist initially, but felt later that Marxism was inadequate to meet Arab needs and aspirations. Therefore, he sought to combine nationalism with socialism and formulated a doctrine based on both ideologies. He called for the emancipation of the Arabs from colonialism and the creation of some form of Arab union. He contended that emancipation from colonialism, which he regarded as essential for any Arab revival, could not be achieved until Arab lands were united.

Arab unity, therefore, forms the first and basic principle in the Ba'th program. However, it also calls for the revival of Arab national feeling based on Arab cultural and moral values. Arab nationalism, according to the Ba'th ideology, aims not only at unifying Arab lands, but also at the creation of a cohesive, progressive, prosperous, and strong Arab nation, deriving its ideals from its historic traditions.

Aflaq maintained that this aim could be achieved by combining socialism with Arab nationalism. Socialism, he pointed out, would lead to national cohesion and solidarity by achieving justice and equality and creating a homogeneous, classless society.

Aflaq's ideology appealed to young Arabs in Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, especially Arab nationalists who were dissatisfied with the negative program of the older generation. The Ba'th was thought to combine in its program the best elements of nationalism and Com-

munism, so that young men with communist no less than nationalist leanings were attracted. In Iraq, the Ba'thist call appealed to students in colleges and high schools who had been disappointed with the failure of the older nationalist parties to press for reform. Nor had the Iraqi Communists been successful in spreading their doctrine, for their violent activities under the Qasim regime antagonized many elements who had been sympathetic previously and who went over to the Ba'thists now.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE BA'THIST COUP OF 1963

The overthrow of Qasim in February 1963, could be ascribed to the Ba'th party only indirectly. For it was, in the last analysis, the dissident faction in the army which carried out the coup and killed Qasim and his associates. The Ba'thist task was to create a climate of opinion favorable for a coup against Qasim and to coordinate the efforts of the various elements opposed to him.

Ever since Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif, deputy Premier and Minister of Interior in the Revolutionary regime of 1958, had clashed with Qasim and resigned from office, he had attempted to rally various elements in the army opposed to Qasim. He was, however, unable to match either Qasim's power or his tactics and was imprisoned in December 1958. Some months later, his supporters staged an abortive coup against Qasim; nevertheless, in 1962, Arif was pardoned. Soon after his release he began to contact his followers secretly. In the meantime, other opposition groups, both civilian and military, had grown stronger and indicated willingness to collaborate with the Ba'thists in order to remove Qasim. The Ba'thists succeeded in recruiting army officers, such as Tahir Yahya, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, and Mahdi Ammash, who were in a position to lead a military rebellion.

Qasim seems to have heard about an impending uprising in the army and may even have known the names of the principal officers concerned. He began to lean on forces opposed to the Ba'th—Communists and others—resorting to his habitual tactics of playing off one faction against another. When, however, he moved to purge army officers opposed to him, the leaders of the opposition decided to strike. On February 8, 1963, the dissident officers launched an air attack upon Qasim's headquarters at the Ministry of Defense. Qasim was on his way back to his office when the coup started. Upon his return, he entrenched himself in the Ministry of Defense, but the