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E. O. 11652: GDS
FROM : American Embassy Sanaa
TAGS: YE, YS, US, PFOR
SUBJECT : YAR Foreign Minister discusses contacts with PDRY

DATE: December 12, 1973

REF :

1973-12-12, Iryani, Numan, South

Following his return from the Arab Foreign Minister and Summit Conferences in Algiers, I asked YAR Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Muhammad Nu'man for comment on his contacts with PDRY officials en route to and from the conferences, on board President Iryani's plane, at the conferences and during his one day visit to Aden. I said I was particularly interested in whether he had detected signs of any softening of the PDRY leadership's truculent ideological extremism.

Commenting broadly, Nu'man said the YARG is on a new policy tack with the south. The policy of confrontation practiced from 1967, with Saudi Arabia's encouragement, had not worked. Contrary to early expectations, the southern regime had not collapsed or changed its nature. It had not ceased its support of subversion in Oman and North Yemen. It had become ever more closely linked with the Soviet Union and more dangerously armed. At the Algiers non-aligned Summit in the fall, he and President Iryani had decided that if the stick had not worked, the carrot might. At least there would be nothing lost in trying. There had resulted the joint communique announcing resumption of unity committee meetings, and the invitation to PDRY President Salim Rubayyi' Ali to visit North Yemen. From that visit stemmed an agreement to pull activist armed groups back from the

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border to minimize the risk of clashes. It was too early to see the probable result of the "carrot" approach but it could turn out to be positive. The recent contacts with PDRY leadership had pointed to some mellowing in their attitudes.

Nu'man thought Salim Rubayyi' Ali, for one, had learned something from the Arab summit. He had heard President Sadat and other senior Arab leaders talk in unemotional and rational terms about Palestine and the need to accept Israel's existence. While the PDRY's propaganda has portrayed America as the arch villain, in Algiers Ali had listened to others discuss their hopes for a constructive American role in bringing a permanent peace.

Nu'man said that earlier in the week he had met the PDRY Minister for Unity Affairs, Abdullah al-Khamiri, in Aden. In a long private conversation, they had discussed whether it might be possible for the PDRY to moderate its ideological extremism. Khamiri had replied that he felt this was already in progress. As a case in point, he said that quite recently the PDRY had taken an internal decision to expropriate the American Embassy premises in Aden. A seizure order had been issued to the appropriate ministry. Before it was executed, Khamiri had gone to see President Ali. He had said to the President that if the PDRY did not care about another element of contention with the United States and had no intention now or ever of resuming relations, it should let the seizure order stand. If, however, the President thought he might some day wish to seek a resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States, perhaps he might wish to reconsider the merits of expropriation. Khamiri said President Ali had telephoned him some hours later asking him to instruct the appropriate ministries that the expropriation order was to be considered cancelled and the American Embassy premises reserved indefinitely for such use as the presidency might ultimately decide.

As an aside, Nu'man said that if there should ever come a concrete probe from the PDRY on the question of resuming relations, he hoped the United States would respond positively. The PDRY's stridently propagandistic, Marxist posture is reinforced by its isolation. The chances for its modification would be improved

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by the existence of relationships alternative to the Soviet Union and by greater contact.

In another vignette Nu'man said that he had found President Ali reading a summarized, Arabic version of Dr. Kissinger's theories on their plane trip to Algiers. The PDRY President was obviously reading carefully, underlining passages as he went. When Nu'man had teased him about exposure to imperialist propaganda, Ali had replied quite seriously "this is something we have to know about".

CRAWFORD