

Jordan has youngest ever PM

BY JOHN BONAR

Financial Times, May 29th 1973 AMMAN, May 28.

MR. ZAID AL RIFAI, King Hussein's chief political adviser, has formed a new young Government here following the resignation of Mr. Ahmed al Lawzi on grounds of ill health.

Mr. Rifai, a Harvard-educated political scientist, is, at 36, the youngest Prime Minister Jordan has had. He is the son of the late Samir Al Rifai, one of Jordan's Prime Ministers in the early years of King Hussein's reign and was the last Jordanian Ambassador in London.

His Government has been charged by King Hussein in his letter of appointment with reorganising and reforming Government administration with an implied streamlining of bureaucratic procedures and clamp-down on corruption. Mr. Rifai has also been asked to continue measures to maintain internal security in Jordan and give emphasis on development.

There is no possibility of rapprochement with other Arab states who support the Palestinian guerilla groups. Mr. Rifai's first clash with guerillas came in 1970, before the September civil war when guerilla organisations named him as one of their chief enemies in the country. In June he was forced to leave his post in the royal court along with the Chief of Security, the Commander of the Army and the Commander of the Royal Guard Regiment in face of guerilla demands.

Mr. Rifai's cabinet is composed

largely of young technocrats. The majority of the Ministers are under 45, and only one is over 60—the Minister for Reconstruction and Development, Dr. Subhi Amin Amer, who has held this post for several years.

The new Minister of National Economy is a theoretician, Dr. Kamal Abu Jabber, a young professor of Economics at the University of Jordan. The Minister of Finance is Dr. Nuri Shafik, brought over from his post as Head of the National Planning Council. A young judge, Mr. Salem Masaadi becomes Minister of Justice. A key official of the Arab National Union, Jordan's only political organisation, becomes Interior Minister for Municipal and Rural Affairs.

A new Ministry for affairs of the occupied territories has been

created, witnessing Jordan's growing concern at the situation in the West Bank and the first Minister is the youngest in any Jordanian government, 29-year-old Mr. Taher Al Masri, a businessman and industrialist from a prominent business family in Nablus the important West Bank town under Israeli occupation. Mr. Masri was in the West Bank on a private visit recently.

Richard Johns writes: Diplomats in London yesterday discounted a report in the Jerusalem Post to the effect that the new Jordanian government was willing to negotiate a peace settlement directly with Israel. The newspaper said that the "decision" was taken at a meeting between King Hussein and Mr. Rifai on Saturday.

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Baathists retain power

BY OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

BEIRUT, May 28.

MEMBERS of the ruling Baath Party and their allies in the National Progressive Front have won two-thirds of the seats of the People's Council which was elected over the week-end, according to the official results announced by Colonel Ali Zaza, Minister of the Interior.

Five Communists, including the Party secretary General Khalid Bakdash, have been re-

turned. This is the largest number of Communists ever to be elected to Parliament in Syria. Mr. Bakdash, regarded as the Arab world's most noted pro-Moscow Communist, served in the Syrian Parliament in 1957.

Our Foreign Staff writes: Diplomatic relations between the U.K. and Syria, broken off nearly six years ago at the time of the June War in 1967, have been formally resumed.