

Yemen and the Socialist Countries, 1955–1970

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Our doctoral dissertation is divided into 10 thematically organized parts. As the history of Yemen is said to be an unknown part of the Hungarian scholarly literature we do not only focus on the relationship with the socialist countries. We think that the history of the background is indispensable for a thorough analysis of this difficult and complex relationship. In accordance with this we paid attention to the important events of Yemen's internal policy as well as its international consequences.

In the first chapter the detailed history of the Arab monarchy was presented. Within the framework of this period we outlined the social division of Yemen, the power of the monarchy, the hopeless economic conditions as well as the undeveloped education system and healthcare. In this context we came to the conclusion that the backwardness of the conservative regime gave lots of chances for the socialist countries to exercise influence in the country.

We also devoted a significant part to presenting the opposition movements, which appeared with the claim to reform or even overthrow the political system. Their birth can be dated from the defeat by Saudi Arabia in 1934. At that time their aim was only to change the regime with peaceful means. However, they started to radicalize due to the dynastical crisis, the experience of the students who studied abroad and as a result of the ideas of Arab nationalism. Following from this it can be concluded that the revolution of September, 1962 was bound to happen. Only the time of it remained uncertain.

In the second unit of our work we studied the relationship between the Yemen monarchy and the socialist countries. Two periods can be separated thematically. The first, almost 10-year-long period started in 1928 when the Soviet-Yemen relations became official. The reason behind it can be found in their mutual dependence. In connection with this we reflected on Yahja imam's most important aim in foreign policy after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, namely the restoration of Great-Yemen. However, the southern part of the country was under the supervision of Great Britain. With this Britain wanted to secure the sea routes to India and the oil concerns. Because of the limited resources the monarch of Yemen was not able to oppose the British effectively in the evolving confrontation. In this situation he needed to ask for foreign support. The Soviet Union was

said to be an attractive version from different points of view. Besides compensating for the Italian influence in Yemen, the Soviets had a perfect anti-imperialistic policy; moreover the geographical distance could prevent this power from becoming involved in internal politics.

For Yemen's request Moscow's answer was positive. It started to make an attempt to create an economic influence in the Persian Gulf or in East-Africa and to cooperate with the opposing powers of the Muslim states.

We wanted to emphasize that it was not only the economic perspectives that were important in the Soviet approach to Yemen between the two world wars but the imam's efforts against the British and the Italians were also respected.

In connection with the decline of the relationship we can say that it was caused by the Soviet Union's weak economic potential, which could not make the maximum use of the advantages possible. Moreover, it was helped by the dynamic advance of Italy and Germany, which first lead to the revision of the relations, then to the reduction of them. It is important to emphasize that the Soviet Union was able to keep a distance from the vision of the socialist revolutions all around the world by deepening the connection with the totally different system of Yemen in its foreign policy.

There was a new chance in the 1950s to restore the relations. It was due to many new conditions, like the Soviet Union's new approach to the Arabic states after Stalin's death or the ambition to increase the number of anti-imperialist allies during the cold war. However, in this period not only the Soviet Union could renew the connections, but we can also witness the creation of new connections with China and the Eastern-European countries. Although the financial assistance to the monarchy and the slow modernization of the army and infrastructure did not help China deepen the relations. Besides talking about the details of the aids we discussed the spread of Arab nationalism, which seemed to be the biggest obstacle of the socialist influence. We stated that their support was only necessary as long as the imam could use it for his national interests. The fall of the United Arab States and Cairo's action against the monarchy had serious effects on these slowly progressing relations inasmuch as the sovereign decided to close it radically for the protection of his system.

There was a similar chance for the creation of the Hungarian-Yemeni connections, which was analyzed in the third chapter. We stressed that the most important reason for that was to break out from the isolation on the stage of the Hungarian foreign policy after the events of the 1956 revolution. Because of our country's geographical and financial conditions it was not able to and did not even want to create strategic goals like Moscow. Similarly to the other socialist countries the stress was on widening the commercial relations, which turned out to be a failure not even under the monarchy but at the beginning of the republic, too.

In the fourth part of the dissertation the events of the revolution in September, 1962 are analyzed with the problems of Cairo's interaction and the long process of the recognition of the new republic. It can be stated that most of the Arabic republics and the socialist countries accepted the new system of Yemen. The main

reason for it was the government's nationalist and socialist attitude, as well as its negative standpoint towards the Western camp. Although, the question of acknowledgement rose in connection with the inter-Arab conflict soon after the involvement of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Great Britain. As a result, the establishment of the diplomatic connections with the new government of Yemen depended on the supporting partners' point of view, and the civil war became the substitute for the Arabic cold war.

In the next chapter the problems of the newly established republic were presented. The overthrow of the monarchy was not supported unanimously by the population. The country became divided into two parts and a civil war began. The dragging on of the conflict - in our opinion - was due not only to the intervention of the UAR and Saudi Arabia, but also to the failure of the international attempt to solve the problem, as well as to the problems of the formulating republic. The socialist countries were determined to keep the political distance with the republicans, because they did not want to risk the chance of the western intervention and the breakdown of the balance in the Persian Gulf. Likewise, it was ascertained that Saana's direct support was only economic and diplomatic to avoid the disturbance of the working relations with Nasser's Egypt.

From the beginning the socialist countries were adherent to the republican system. However, their indirect support was very moderate until 1964, due to the Egyptian hegemony in the rule of Saana. The first chance for direct negotiations came in the spring of 1964 when Egypt seemed to leave Yemen to itself by liquidating the military presence in the country. In the sixth chapter we presented the negotiations of Yemen's delegation in Moscow, Prague, Sofia, Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest, and Beijing with special emphasis on the Hungarian visit's results. In connection with the negotiations we reached the conclusion that those were successful concerning the agreements and support; however in practice they showed less efficiency. Commodities were still delivered with Egyptian cooperation. President Sallal could not have himself accepted as the country's sovereign leader, and the internal affairs were still led by the UAR's officials. In conclusion, it can be said that the conferences could not reach their original aim; therefore they can be rated as a failure.

The period between 1964-1967 was characterized by the different attempts for solutions such as the diplomatic and the armed. In the seventh chapter we outlined the reasons behind the divided republican side, the process of disorganization, the birth of the Jeddah Agreement whose aim was to finish the civil war, and the fulfillment of the Egyptian hegemony. From the socialist countries' point of view it meant the continuation of the policy toward Yemen, which also met with Cairo's interests. In practice it meant the realization of the aid promised in the contract of 1964 related to the improvement of the highway system of Yemen, as well as the health care and education system. All of it changed only after the fall of 1967 when the UAR needed to withdraw its troops from Yemen due to the defeat in the Six Day War.

In the eighth chapter the dynamism of the Hungarian-Yemeni relations was presented. After 1964 our country focused on the fulfillment of the assumed obli-

gation related to the contract of 1964. Besides it helped to deepen the two countries' relationship. It contained health supply, an economic delegation was sent to check the precise demands of Yemen. The number of scholarships between the two countries was raised. A Hungarian crew shot a documentary movie about the country. The most serious supply was the installment of a public health institution and its cooperation with the Hungarian staff. It also can be observed that there was no high increase in the trade connections after Sallal president's visit in Budapest, because the Hungarian partner did not see any hope for that.

In the ninth part the Six Day War's consequences in Yemen were analyzed. As we observed the leadership of UAR could not continue its mission in Yemen due to the defeat from Israel. After the Khartoum agreement the UAR gave up its position in return for the financial support from Saudi Arabia with which it was able to recover its damaged economy. After the leaving of the Egyptian forces the republican system seemed to break up but due to the socialist countries' sudden assistance the main attack of the royalist forces turned out to be a failure. Apart from helping in the very critical situations there was no unconditional commitment of the Saana system toward these countries. What is more, the opposite happened when the republicans could carry out effective activity toward the closing of the civil war, making the peace as well as stabilizing their weak foreign relations. As far as the internal affairs were concerned the socialist countries were disappointed because of the strengthening right-wing political forces and newly revitalized relations with the West in Yemen. Thanks to that the previous started to focus on the revolutionary South-Yemen.

In the last chapter we came to a conclusion that the relationship between Hungary and Yemen remained political during our period. In the spirit of solidarity our country offered economy aid, scholarship programs, training of experts and public health assistance. In contrast with the agreement Hungarian doctors worked in the hospitals installed by Hungarians. Hungary was open-minded toward the wide range of necessities of Yemen but it failed due to the absence of the requested data. As we observed the Hungarians did not expect any change related to this, and the sign of the declining relations was the lack of the high-level meetings. After this they focused on the Middle East region, where they hoped more economic and political advantages.