

**Zoltán Prantner**

### *Yemen and the Socialist Countries*

The traditional aims of the Former Czarist Empire in the Middle East and Arabia expanded with new dimensions after the Bolshevik Revolution. The efforts to gain overrule over Persia and to threaten the British positions in India were replaced by the vision of a global socialist revolution. At this point the Russians stressed the importance of the role of some undeveloped and colonial countries in Asia, Africa and Latin-America. Because of this, after 1920 the Bolsheviks slowly started to focus on these countries and tried to find the opportunity to build up relations with the leaders of the sovereign states and the popular-nationalist movements of the colonies. First they achieved this in Arabia in 1923 when they opened their general consulate in Jiddah.

In the period under investigation the soviet foreign policy had the potential opportunity to build up relations only with two countries in the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The aim of the present essay is to show the backgrounds, periods and results of the established relations in the case of the latter state on the basis of the Western press and sources until September 1962, when the system of Imamate was overthrown.

#### *Yemen and the Soviet Union between 1928–1938*

Imam Yahya had to face a number of difficulties after the World War I. when he started to organise the new Yemeni administration and to consolidate the internal politics after the withdrawal of the Ottoman troops. His centralist policy led to riots in the circle of the tribes that enjoyed wide autonomy before. Additionally, he had to drive out Emir Idrisi with force from the occupied Tihamah plain and he continuously confronted with the British in Aden because of the border-question; his relations with them aggravated by the middle of the 1920's. He won the support of Italy for his struggle, at the same time Rome sold obsolete weapons and industrial products of poor quality at a high price and also aimed to gain the control over the country, too. To decrease back the Italian influence and strengthen the commerce, reduced by the British pressure, in December, 1927 the Yemeni ruler ordered his son Prince Muhammad to contact the Soviet agents in Jiddah and to suggest establishing interstate relations on official level.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> As the Prince wrote in his letter: „At present our Government persistently expresses its desire to establish mutual understanding with the Eastern people, especially with those who hold progressive views and who fight against imperialist oppression. The Great Russian Government vigilantly guards the interests of the Eastern peoples. The imperialists are fighting this Government, spending enormous sums of money and applying military and political force to prevent the peoples of the East from being educated in the spirit of freedom. This Government is

Earlier the Russian also showed interest for Yemen, too.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the negotiations were finished quickly for the satisfaction of both sides on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1928 they signed a trade and friendly agreement for ten years. Though in the first agreement they signed with an Arabic state, the Soviets acknowledged Yemen as a sovereign kingdom and emphasised its equality with them they were not allowed to establish a diplomatic agency in Yemen. They solely got permission for the operation of a permanent trading delegation with diplomatic privilege.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after the signature of the agreement, the Yemeni markets were overflowed with the oil-products of Naphthexport Company and the Soviets continuously organised exhibitions of agricultural equipments and machineries in Hudaydah and Sanaa. Besides, they exported great amounts of wheat, sugar, starch, soap, cement, wood, cloth, toilet-articles and shoes to the country.<sup>4</sup> The Yemeni market slowly became dependent on the Soviets; however, the Imam succeeded in realising his aims that he expected from the treaty: the economic penetration of the Soviets and their dynamic headway triggered serious concerns in Great Britain and in other Western countries.

Parallel to the advance of commercial relations the Soviets wanted to ensure medical aid too. They established an assistance mission in Sanaa, which consisted of two doctors, a dentist, an engineer and a governmental trading commissioner.<sup>5</sup> There were also initiatives for the building up of cultural relations between the two countries. They sent Soviet journals to the country and

---

*winning the sympathy of the oppressed peoples. We hope that good relations will be established between our two Governments.*" LUKIN, V.: *The Soviet Union and the Arab Countries*. International Affaires (Moscow), 1962, V. 87.

<sup>2</sup> The envoys fled to Eritrea in December 1925 for a short period, when the wahhabites occupied Jiddah. During their presence they collected some useful pieces of information about Yemen in the Italian colony. In this time Ibn Sa'ud, as well as the Yemeni Imam were looked at by the Comintern as the leaders of a developing anti-British nationalist movement. Soon after this they had to disappoint when this Arabic 'revolutionaries' turned out to be willing to negotiate with the British. PAGE, S.: *The USSR and Arabia*. The Central Asian Research Centre, London 1971. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> However, one of the articles of the contract stressed that the Soviet Union had right to appoint a permanent agent in Sanaa, if any other country is allowed to do the same. *Soviet and Arabia. Treaty with Ruler of the Yemen*, Times, January 25, 1929. *Soviet Activity in Arabia. Text of Yemen Treaty*, Times, August 16, 1929. *Text of treaty of friendship and commerce between Yemen and the U.S.S.R.*, effective June 25, 1929. Oriente Moderno, 8, 1928, 394.

<sup>4</sup> The Soviet dynamism and the acceptance of their low prices are perfectly presented by the fact that they carried nearly 22.000 tons of goods to Yemen from the ratification of the trade agreement in 1929 to 1931. However, it is more expressive to examine the distribution of these goods. According to this, the Yemenis imported apart from the agricultural equipment fifty per cent of its petrol, sixty per cent of its soap, thirty-five per cent of its sugar and eighty per cent of its wood materials from Russia. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 17. WENNER, M. W.: *Modern Yemen 1918-1966*. The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1967. 155.

<sup>5</sup> MACRO, E.: *Yemen and the Western World*. C. Hurst & Co. London 1968. 113.

a film-making expedition in 1929 „with the aim of revealing the lies spread by imperialist propaganda” and making „the first authentic film” about Yemen.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning the Yemeni-Soviet relations seemed to be enormously successful, but after some years the interest in the maintenance of the previous dynamism continuously declined on the Soviet's side. Because of the economic conditions of the Soviet Union it was not possible for them to take actively advantages of the strategic position of Yemen in this period. The staff working in the country became indifferent and their work reached dead-point, when the Imam embarrassed their activity. In addition to this, the Soviets, seeing the expansive German and Italian foreign policy, looked for cooperation with the British from the middle of the 1930s, which among others demanded a radical change in their Arabian policy. After all, the entire delegation in Yemen was ordered home to report on the failure of the mission and their private material affairs.<sup>7</sup>

Finally the outbreak of the World War made it possible to stop the Italian influence on the Eastern bank of the Red Sea. They were forced out from East Africa by the Allied Forces meanwhile their agents in Yemen were deported by the Imam ordered by the British. After that the activity of the Russians was desultory and haphazard until May 1944, when Yemeni emigrants established the Free Yemeni Party in Aden. This time the Soviets tried to latch on to the Yemeni internal affairs representing themselves as the advancer of the movement. But after a short time it turned out that their efforts were useless, thus, they gave up their attempts.<sup>8</sup>

### *The revival of the Soviet-Yemeni relations*

After the World War II, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union was focused importantly on Europe and on international problems.<sup>9</sup> They carried on a

---

<sup>6</sup> The Imam was presented as a popular nationalist leader who succeeded in consolidating the sovereignty of his country by signing the treaty with the Soviet Union. At the same time they recognised the abject conditions of the inhabitants, they blamed the landlords and merchants and the British in Aden inducing border incidents for the circumstances of the people. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 17.

<sup>7</sup> Those who returned home fell victim to the purge raging in the Soviet Union in these years. The others – two men – fled to Jiddah, where they converted to the Muslim religion. MACRO, E.: *op.cit.* 113.

<sup>8</sup> In Western circles it caused worries to hear that the Free Yemen Party was under Soviet influence. After all, the investigation soon showed that this was not true. Therefore, in accordance with the previous experiences, they estimated that Moscow considered the Yemeni movement solely as a possibility to overthrow an actual non-communist system. In spite of this, the British did everything to prevent that the Yemeni opposition and the Soviets build up relations. After this, there was not any essential attempt from the Soviets' side to enter Yemen until 1955, though they followed the events in internal politics. AL-RASHID, I.: *Yemen Enters the Modern World. Secret U.S. Documents on the Rise of the Second Power on the Arabian Peninsula*. Chapel Hill, N.C. Documentary Publications, Vol. VI. 1984. 120-121.

<sup>9</sup> Moscow did not give up its plans in the Middle East during the World War II. It was expressed first by Molotov during the negotiations about Four-Power Pact when he declared the

militant propaganda with the Arabic countries, contravened the emerging Arabic unity movement, confined the Muslim citizens in practicing their faith, supported the establishment of Israel and failed to revive the relations of the interwar years with the Arabic states. For instance, Imam Yahya was strongly criticized instead of being supported in his fights against the British on the southern part of his country. Yemen was disapproved in the Soviet books and articles on several occasions referring to the archaic form its governments and the medieval structure of the society albeit that its ruler continued his fight against the British across the border.<sup>10</sup>

After Stalin's death, there was an essential shift in the Soviet foreign policy. The new, more flexible policy towards the developing world took effects slowly. The communist ideology and the previous anti-Islam propaganda campaigns meant a seriously restrained power for the Arabic countries, which made possible for them to take the advantages offered by the Soviet Union only in 1955.

Ahmad, the descendant of the Imam Yahya – assassinated in 1948 – continued the policy of the previous ruler aiming at the expulsion of the British in these years. This caused increasing border incidents between Yemen and the Southern Yemeni areas occupied by the British, in spite of the British–Yemeni agreement of 1950. It created a great opportunity for the Soviets that the rulers of the Protectorate arranged with each other to unite their state in a federation and parallel to this Great Britain attempted to strengthen its influence in the highland and in the circles of the tribes across the disputed border zone. This meant not only the failure of the formation of a 'Great Yemen' for Ahmad, but there was a serious danger that a pro-British state will come into being, which would be strong enough to overthrow the Imamate-system and would be attractive for the adumbrated Shafi'i sect. For insuring against the danger Ahmad begun to support with money and weapon the dissident elements of the Protectorate to create a buffer zone between his state and the territory of the British and its allies. He needed foreign support to realise this plan, because his country was rather poor. Additionally, there was an inland claim for modernising the country – especially after the repression of the insurrection of 1955 – the accomplishment of which was urged by the migrant groups, the members of the royal family and particularly the Crown Prince, Muhammad al-Badr.

---

claim of the Soviet Union to the territories south from Batum and Baku in the direction to the Persian Gulf. They came forward with their second unsuccessful suggestion in the Potsdam Conference, where they expressed that they would like to extend their control over the former Italian colony, Lybia.

<sup>10</sup> In the Soviet encyclopaedias Yemen was described as „a feudal absolutist state of landowners and of trading and usurer bourgeoisie, built on theocratic foundations”, which was „in semi-colonial dependence from the American and British imperialism” with „anti-popular” rulers and government. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 20.

In this situation the Soviet Union had several exceptional opportunities unlike those Western countries that showed great interest. Beside to its growing popularity among the Arabs its anti-imperialist policy and its previous friendly relations with the country were of great importance. Another significant feature was that at the beginning of 1955 Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia declared their isolations from the Baghdad Pact and started negotiations to create its own defence pact. In the view of Moscow this meant another blow to the West and an opportunity to be the army-supplier of Yemen and Saudi Arabia, in case the Egyptian arms-business proved to be successful.<sup>11</sup>

Making use of the opportunities of the situation preferred by Moscow from many aspects in October 1955 they took their first step to revive the previous relations with Yemen, when Daniel Solod, the Soviet Ambassador in Egypt met the Yemeni Foreign Minister in the capital of Egypt.<sup>12</sup> On 31<sup>st</sup> October they agreed in to revive of the treaty of friendship of 1928 for five years, to establish diplomatic relations on official level, to exchange representatives and to strengthen trading and economic relations.<sup>13</sup> By this time Great Britain did not take into account the treaty and the pieces of news about the Soviet–Yemeni commercial negotiations in Cairo, due to its false estimation.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it was a huge surprise for them to learn from the press about the negotiations of the Soviet mission in Yemen, which was followed by the signature of the commercial treaty on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1956. According to this agreement, the Soviet Union delivered smaller factories, agricultural machinery

---

<sup>11</sup> Imam Ahmad did not incline to join an alliance in which the British had membership. King Sa'ud, who was the main supporter of President Nasir in this time, considered the Pact as an opportunity for the growth of power of its greatest enemy, the Hashemite dynasty. In the viewpoint of Nasir, the Baghdad Pact was equal with the weakening of his leading role in the Middle East in favour of his Iraqi rivals, who could defeat Nasir's pan-Arab ambitions from the dominant position reached by the Western weapon deliveries.

<sup>12</sup> Surely, the Soviet desire to use the country as 'jumping-off-point' for entering to East-Africa and obtaining influence there played an important role along with ideological reasons, the displacement of Great Britain from the Persian Gulf, the Imam's traditional anti-Western motivation and that the British-Yemeni conflict was getting critical. Gaining control over the Straits of Bab al-Mandab could have made it possible for them to bring Eritrea under their auspices and to build fortifications near Shaykh Sa'ud. In connection with this, soviet writers alluded to the idea of establishing air route between India and the Malagasy Republic (formerly Madagascar), where Yemen should be an intermediary stop. WENNER, M. W.: *op.cit.* 176-177.

<sup>13</sup> *Russia's Middle East Moves. Growing Initiative. Stronger Ties with Yemen*, Times, October 18, 1955. *Soviet Treaty with Yemen. Friendship Revived*. Times, November 1, 1955.

<sup>14</sup> Although the British were fully aware of the Soviet offer that they build factories and routes as well as develop the agriculture in return for coffee, tobacco and agricultural products, they questioned the successful realisation of the agreement. They came to a false conclusion; remembering the Imam's suspicious attitude towards the foreigners and the Yemeni underdeveloped economic situation they thought that the Yemeni partner would not be able to succeed in sending the equivalents for the Soviet goods, the Imam would not permit the presence of the Soviet technicians in the country and the Yemenis would be incapable of using the delivered installations or carrying out the various projects without assistance. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *Records of Yemen 1798–1960*. Vol. 12. Archive Editions, 1993. 430–431.

and 'industrial equipment' – secretly including weapons in the value of 5 million pounds – oil products, wheat and rice in exchange for Yemeni hides, coffee and other commodities.<sup>15</sup> The expression of 'exchange' meant essentially a polite phrasing in this case because the Soviets were aware of the fact from the beginning that the value of the expected material would be minimal in return for their huge support.<sup>16</sup>

Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, President of the United Arab Republic organised a meeting in Jiddah in April 1956 reacting to the formation of the Baghdad Pact, where they came to an agreement on 21<sup>st</sup> April. According to this, his country, Saudi Arabia and Yemen created their own defence treaty and established a collective military leadership aiming to unite the command of the military forces of the three countries.<sup>17</sup> After the negotiations King Sa'ud gave weapons to Yemen to arm the dissident elements in Aden. Moreover, he transferred a great amount of money – 3 million dollars, according to some claims – officially for the modernisation of the Hudaydah harbour, but indeed to buy more weapons. The United Arab Republic sent military advisers for training the Yemeni Army.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Even if the agreement meant a big surprise for the British diplomats in the region, - due to the lack of reliable sources – they doubted its effectiveness and considered the claims of the press to be exaggerated. Their views were based on the reports coming from Hudaydah according to which the Russian mission made only a half success during the negotiations in Yemen. Also, they attached negligible importance to the Yemeni discussions of the two-member Czechoslovakian mission because they were not informed about a particular part of the Soviet–Yemeni treaty dealing with the delivery of the armaments. The report of the Soviet–Yemeni agreement caused more serious concerns in Washington. Undersecretary John Dulles concluded – regarding the growing intensity of the relations between the Soviet and Yemeni diplomats residing in Cairo and the fact that the weapon delivery from the Soviet Union to the countries of the Middle East is getting more and more intense – that the trading agreement of the 8<sup>th</sup> March can most probably be estimated as a sign of the possibility that the Yemenis will buy weapons from the Soviets. ALMADHAGI, A. N. K.: *Yemen and the United States. A Study of a Small Power and Super-state Relationship 1962-1994*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London 1996. 22. BISSEL, Richard, E.: *Soviet Use of Proxies in the Third World: The Case of Yemen*, Soviet Studies, Vol. 30. No. 1. 1978. 90. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 436.

<sup>16</sup> The trade agreement with Yemen was not an individual case because we have to see it as a manifestation of orientation change in the Russian trade in 1955/56. This is proved by the fact that total trade turnover of the Communist countries with the underdeveloped countries showed a rise by more than 70 per cent over the figures of 1953. The same tendency appeared in connection with the Middle East; the trade with the region grew more than double within two years. On the basis of these, the Soviets hoped for their growing prestige in the Arabic states and expected from the patronized countries to support the Soviet aims in their diplomacy. MACRO, E.: *op.cit.* 114. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 32.

<sup>17</sup> *Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen in Military Pact. Unified Command Agreement Reached at Jeddah*, Times, April 23, 1956. *A Tripartite Arab Defence Treaty Between Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen*, International Affairs (Moscow), 1956, VIII, 157-160.

<sup>18</sup> INGRAMS, H.: *The Yemen. Imams, Rulers & Revolutions*. Camelot Press Ltd, London, 1963. 92.

We have to estimate the weapons given by Saudi Arabia chiefly as moral support since the quality and quantity of the weapons did not meet the Yemeni demands. Another problem was the money for the modernisation of the Yemeni Army came from Saudi Arabia; the provided amount proved not to be enough. Yemen had to find new sources because Great Britain was successful in impeding the selling of weapons of the Western countries to Yemen by using its diplomatic and economic influence. Therefore, the procurement of modern weapons was realisable only from the Eastern Bloc. President Nasir – becoming enthusiastic about the success of the previous Egyptian–Czechoslovakian weapon business – saw the solution of the problem in the expansion of relations with the socialist countries. It can be assumed that in May the visit of the Czechoslovakian mission in Yemen – where he certainly discussed about weapon selling apart from diplomatic and educational questions with the Crown Prince – could have happened owing to his intercession.<sup>19</sup>

It was likewise due to President Nasir's personal assistance that the Yemeni Crown Prince, al-Badr was invited to Moscow, which the latter accepted gladly. So he paid a visit not only in the Soviet Union, but in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia, too, between May and September. He signed a variety of agreements concerning the interstate relations – establishment of diplomatic relations, trade and payment agreements, friendship, economic and technical assistance treaties – and made arrangements about constructing factories and delivering large supply of weapons in return for deferred repayment over many years. He also agreed with the Soviet Government to exchange diplomatic representatives 'in the near future'. Furthermore, Moscow agreed to extend an interest-free credit of approximately 32 dollars million for ten years. One half of this loan could be repaid in form of coffee and had to be turned to the construction of roads, factories and the modern port of Hudaydah, as the other half was a military aid, which had to be repaid in cash. During the sessions, Al-Badr also granted concessions to the Soviet Union for oil prospecting and for uranium extraction.<sup>20</sup>

The discussions in the socialist countries showed considerable perspectives for the development of Yemen. However, a small part of the signed pacts were realised, so the visits of the Crown Prince gave negligible practical results especially due to Imam Ahmad.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 461.

<sup>20</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 466-473. 477-479. MACRO, E.: *op.cit.* 115-116. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 33. *Yemen Prince in Moscow. Desire to Strengthen Mutual Ties*, Times, June 12, 1956. *Moscow and the Yemen*, Times, June 25, 1956. *Soviet Relations with Yemen*, Times, June 25, 1956.

<sup>21</sup> The Yemeni ruler was very disappointed, when he realised that his son signed treaties especially concerning on the delivery of factories and necessary goods for the modernisation of the country instead of the delivery of tanks and weapons. This must have been the reason why the Eastern German and Czechoslovakian commercial delegations failed in the negotiations for

## *The armament of the Yemeni army*

The rocket-threat to London, Paris and Tel Aviv enlarged exceptionally the Soviet prestige and popularity in the Arabic countries during the Suez Crisis of 1956. For them, it was of advantage that Great Britain participated in the conflict and sustained defeat, suffered a loss of prestige in the region. Nasirist disturbances inspired by the Cairo Radio emerged not only in Aden, but in the other Persian Gulf Protectorates under British control.

The Soviets were prepared to turn this favourable situation to advantage. There were clashes of changing intensity along southern boundaries of Yemen between the troops of the Imam and those of the British and its allies during 1957. The reaction on the conflict generated a daily occurring vitriolic propaganda campaign for the condemnation the '*British aggression*' in Cairo, Sanaa and – to much lesser extent – Moscow from the beginning of the year. Recruiting centres were opened in Moscow, Cairo and Damascus, where they welcomed the volunteers, who wanted to fight for the Yemeni case.<sup>22</sup>

Although the report of a great number of volunteers failed, the Soviets began to deliver the military equipment according to the previous treaties. Allegedly, on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1956 a Russian ship carrying among others 20 anti-aircraft guns and sugar boarded and was packed out at night by the order of the Crown Prince near Salif.<sup>23</sup> At the end of November, the Soviet Smela ship discharged another 15 Czechoslovakian anti-aircraft guns, small arms, ammunition and other kinds of military equipment at the same place.<sup>24</sup> Soon rumours were afloat that there were fighters in the cargo, which were debarked too.<sup>25</sup>

---

building a cement factory. Moreover, the Czechoslovakians were not able to displace the Western Germans prospecting for oil, moreover, neither the glass and rubber factory established by the Eastern Germans nor the concessions given to the Soviets were mentioned. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 474–475.

<sup>22</sup> Concerning Moscow it came to light soon that the recruitment of volunteers stuck on the level of moral support. There is no data about a Soviet citizen who arrived in Yemen to volunteer to fight for the Imam. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 37.

<sup>23</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 475.

<sup>24</sup> Although the weapons were mainly given to equip the army, rifles were distributed among the tribes along the border and the Imamist forces living in the Aden Protectorate from the beginning. The Yemeni ruler demanded assurances from the receiver so that later they don't use these arms against Yemenis; every tribe that supported the Imam had to give a hostage for every ten rifles. O'BALLANCE, E.: *The War in the Yemen*. London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1971. 56. *Yemen Rifles for Aden Tribesmen. Attempt to Cause Disruption*, Times, December 31, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> From October 1956 there were some non-affirmed rumours according to which MIG fighters would arrive to Yemen, which would be run by Soviet pilots until the Yemeni pilots get military training. But the authenticity of these rumours was questioned by the fact that the fighters mentioned were of MIG-16 type, which the Soviets had never used. It was another critical problem that the airports of the country were inadequate for receiving and stationing modern airplanes. Therefore, the Imam ordered to make the necessary steps to develop and rebuild them, and after the innovations the Soviets delivered indeed 20 YAK fighters to Yemen.



The Egyptians sent advisers to establish training centres in Sanaa and Hudaydah, where they could give instructions the Yemeni regular forces how to use the newly delivered automatic weapons. The Imam sent a mission to Cairo in January 1957 to clarify the conditions of the additional armament of the Yemeni Army by Russian weapons with a delegation of eight people paid by the Soviets. According to the arranged treaty by this occasion a ship called Muiz with three cargoes of weapons on the board arrived from the direction of Suez and boarded likewise near Salif between 18<sup>th</sup> February 1957 and the beginning of April, which was followed by additional discharges during June and July. Thirty-five Soviet military instructors arrived with the same ship full of rockets, tanks and thousands of tons of ammunition.<sup>26</sup> Additional two cargoes arrived at the beginning of August; more infantry weapons, anti-aircraft guns, light and heavy field artilleries, SU- 100 self-propelled guns, T-34 tanks and armoured troop carriers and substantial amounts of ammunition were discharged.<sup>27</sup> The seventh supply arrived one week later with further Eastern European technicians to bring the new armaments in action.<sup>28</sup> In the last week of August eight shipments of military equipment arrived.<sup>29</sup> Together with this, the total value of the delivered goods

---

Later on a beginner Yemeni pilot tried to run one of them, but the plane crashed a few seconds after the take-off. The other planes stayed at the airports without being used. The planes delivered by ships later had not been used either. The packed planes were taken to stores and left there undone. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 475–476, 487. O'BALLANCE, E.: *op.cit.* 56.

<sup>26</sup> It was a fortunate situation for the Soviets that the Imam considered the assistance of the Eastern Block less dangerous for his regime than the Egyptian aid. Seeing President Nasir's growing popularity he was afraid that his country could be a vassal of Cairo in return for its aid. In the case of the Soviet technicians arriving in the country a connection between them and the Yemeni citizens seemed to be impossible for him because they were not Arabs and most of them did not speak the Arabic language and considering this, it seemed to be unlikely that these would act against the system of the country. WENNER, M. W.: *op.cit.* 185.

<sup>27</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 123.

<sup>28</sup> From January 1957 at least four socialist military trainers worked in Sanaa. Their number continuously increased; four Soviet officers and nine Czechoslovakian technicians of the Skoda Company trained ten officers of the Yemeni Army for using the new weapons in April according to the pieces of information the British had. In September there were altogether 57 Czechoslovakian experts and technicians and 58 Soviet officers with those ones who arrived to the country with the deliveries in the summer of 1957. *Another Shipment of Soviet Arms for Yemen*, Times, August 10, 1957. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 81. 84. 114.

<sup>29</sup> Until the end of 1957 the Soviet Union delivered to Yemen about 30 T–34 tanks, 56 SU-100 self-propelled artilleries, at least 20 piston-engine YAK-11 and IL-10 aircrafts, 2 helicopters, at least 74 BTR-40 armoured personnel carrier, 106 37mm light anti-aircraft gun, at least 52 57mm anti-tank guns, 30 122mm and 73 766mm field artilleries, 10 rocket launchers, and several tons of ammunition, small arms, machine guns, landmines, rockets, flamethrowers in great quantities with mobile cranes as well as workshops, trailers, troop carrier lorries and vehicles of different types together with the last cargo. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 127.

reached 5 million pounds (3 million dollars), which corresponded one third of the budget of approximately 10 million dollars.<sup>30</sup>

The instructors achieved a half success in training during their activity. They succeeded in teaching the Yemenis how to use the automatic weapons and anti-aircraft guns; although the punctuality left much to be desired in the latter case. The delivered tanks, fighters, artilleries, anti-tank guns and troop carriers proved to be in vain. On the one hand, the strategically lagged Yemeni army was incapable of bringing these armaments into action answering to the pace of takeover. On the other hand, it turned out soon that the mountainous area on the Yemeni frontier is not appropriate for the effective application of these weapons. Therefore, the Imam put the greater part of the delivered goods into stores, next to the weapons that they got from Germany before the World War II. He forbade handling these arms, because he was afraid that later on his relatives or some nationalist groups would make use of the better equipped and more effective army to overthrow him.<sup>31</sup>

After all, the problems concerning the usage of weapons did not affect the Soviet-Yemeni relations. Irrespective of the application or avoidance of the equipments, the Soviets succeeded to gain not only the approval of the leaders of the Yemeni army, but also the friendship of the Crown Prince due to the continuous delivery. The cooperation with Moscow and the socialist countries was not restricted on the one-sided military assistance. The rapidly expanding relations were shown by the fact that the Imam accepted the offer of the Czechoslovakian Government to train a number of Yemenis in engineering and medicine at Czechoslovakian universities for six month without charge. The trade continuously expanded between Yemen and the Soviet Union between 1957 and early 1958, several Eastern European technical missions visited the country, where a group of Soviet specialists worked on agricultural and mineral development schemes and more than hundred socialist experts worked in various fields.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> King Sa'ud gave the Americans – who were worried about the arms shipment – an answer to the question of how could Imam Ahmad allow himself such a great volume of purchase with minimal finances of his state: „*The Imam has enough money. He has been hoarding riyals – he is very miserly. We have given him \$ 3 million to build the Port of Hudaydah ... we must take into account the way they do things ...*” DRESCH, P.: *A History of Modern Yemen*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000. 82.

<sup>31</sup> PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 37-38.

<sup>32</sup> In January 1957 two Soviet doctors began their practices in Hudaydah. Two other Russian engineers examined the conditions of building a new harbour at Ras al-Khatib on the spot, to the north of Hudaydah, meanwhile nineteen of their Eastern German colleagues worked in Hudaydah, Bajil and Sanaa to construct a cement-factory, the public-lightning and the telephone-centre. After a year there were more than 140 experts of which more than 40 people – among others four Czechoslovakian doctors with their families, seven Eastern German experts from the Siemens Ltd. and six Yugoslavian pilots – came from Eastern Europe. Their full number grew over 180 by the end of the year. INGRAMS, D. - INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 12. 176. 184. INGRAMS, D. - INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 79-81. 84.

### *Another Yemeni trip through Eastern Europe*

The continuous frontier incidents and the reports about large quantities of socialist armaments arriving to Yemen caused serious distress in Great Britain.<sup>33</sup> This is why they invited Prince al-Badr in September 1957 to London to discuss the settled situation fulfilling the offer of the Imam made one month earlier.<sup>34</sup> The Crown Prince met the invitation and negotiated with British authorities about the question in London between 10<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November. But neither side moved from its previous statement and the session was a total failure for the Yemenis. The British not only refused the attempts of the Prince concerning Aden and the Protectorates, but they declared the establishment of a new military command in Aden and proposed many constitutional changes to drive back the Imam's influence.

Before the discussions in London Imam Ahmad ordered his son – if the assistance of the socialist countries proves to be not enough – to force concessions from the British to visit the Eastern European countries again and make more treaties with them. Therefore, al-Badr immediately made another trip through the Eastern Bloc after the failure in London and visited Rumania, Poland, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China between 9<sup>th</sup> December 1957 and 29<sup>th</sup> January 1958. His mission was successful; he managed to come to an agreement with Poland, Yugoslavia and Rumania about establishing diplomatic relations, exchanging of representatives within a fixed term and about commercial, scientific, economic and technician cooperation.<sup>35</sup> For the Soviets, the negotiation of the Yemeni delegation in China was more considerable. In spite of the fact that on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1956 Yemen formally recognised the communist China, and agreed on establishing diplomatic relations at ministerial level, this was not followed by further agreements. However, when the Crown Prince arrived in Peking he was nicely welcomed. This also was shown in the joint communiqué, where China unanimously assured its support about the aims of Yemen in connection with the retrieval of the territories occupied by the British. They signed friendship and economic treaties,

---

<sup>33</sup> Great Britain essentially was not worried about the armament deliveries from the socialist countries; they did not think that the Yemeni army armed by the socialist countries meant more dangerous strategic threat than before. They attached much more importance to its effects in the circle of the rulers of the Protectorate, and in the international propaganda.

<sup>34</sup> Presumably King Sa'ud managed to convince Imam Ahmad to solve the conflict situation with Great Britain through negotiations. Like London the Saudi Arabian ruler was worried about the armaments-export to Yemen. Therefore, he offered material support to prevent that the Soviets gain influence in Arabia. He was willing to support al-Badr's claim for the throne and the claims of the Yemenis in connection with the Protectorate, if the country cuts back the relations with the Eastern Block and stabilizes its connections with the West. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 194.

<sup>35</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 159. 164-172. 214-235.

as commercial, technician, scientific and cultural cooperation. Most important was the 10-year interest free loan of 70 million Swiss francs (about 16,380,000 dollars), where the Chinese ensured to finance the realisation of various light industries projects and the road construction between Ta'izz–Hudaydah–Sanaa. In addition to the material and technician assistance, this agreement still made possible for Yemeni technicians to be trained in China and for many Chinese experts and labourers to work in Yemen.<sup>36</sup>

The Chinese–Yemeni treaties extended the East–West rivalry in the Cold War, and were the roots of the Chinese–Soviet competition for Yemen, too.<sup>37</sup> The Crown Prince did not finish the negotiations in Peking, when the Soviets prepared an agreement for him by offering a loan of 25 million dollars (100 million rouble) for a 15-year period at a 2,5 per cent interest rate.<sup>38</sup> Parallel to this, they opened their embassy in Ta'izz, proposed 'unconditional assistance' on the fields of public health, irrigation, hygiene, education and public works during a five-year term. Moreover, the construction of the new harbour near Ras al-Khatib and of seven new airports was started in spring under their control.<sup>39</sup> Their relations with Yemen did not change after the country became member of the United Arab Republic; Moscow focused on the realisation of the admitted obligations.

The visit of the Yemeni delegation in Moscow in December 1959 got great publicity, where the Soviet government agreed to put one part of the loan of 20 million rouble assessed in 1956 to develop the agriculture – especially for growing cotton and cereals –, to build dams and to supply irrigation apparatuses for making the greater part of the Tihamah plain adaptable for

---

<sup>36</sup> After a slow beginning, Chinese engineers and technicians arrived in huge numbers to Yemen from November 1958. Accordingly, the number of their staff increased to four hundred until the end of the year. *China Provides Loan for Yemen*, Times, 14 January, 1958. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 184. 238-255. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 14. 66.

<sup>37</sup> There were many alternative reasons why China chose Yemen in the competition for the influence in the Middle East. Surely, cardinal viewpoint was the fact that Yemen was one of the most backward countries of the Middle East. This being the case they could compete with the Soviet contributions offering minimal aid-programmes which did not burden the Chinese economy. Ideologically the assistance of a 'reactionary theocratic' state which was in conflict with the imperialists was important, too. Namely this support made possible for them to begin refuting their reputation of being revolutionary extremists and to be more acceptable to the nationalist government of developing countries. It is also possible that they noticed the importance of the strategic location of Yemen because they could not only threaten the oil-supply routes, but it could be a perfect springboard for the penetration into East Africa in case they have a strong influence there. BISSEL, Richard E.: *op.cit.* 91. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> Later the Imam accepted only sixty per cent (15 million dollars = 60 million rouble) of the offered money for constructing routes, dams, and public health buildings, for harbour modernisation and for mineral deposits exploration. ATTAR, Mohamed Said el-: *Le Sous Développement Economique et Social de Yémen: Perspectives de la Révolution Yéménite*. Algiers, 1964. 215.

<sup>39</sup> INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 187.

farming.<sup>40</sup> This is why the Soviet economic assistance focused on financing agricultural and communication projects after 1958, which was repaid in form of Yemeni commodities and agricultural products. Although this programme was not of a large volume, the considerable part of the Yemeni export went to the Soviet Union in 1960 on account of repaying the loan within commercial framework. The number of Soviet and Chinese technicians working in Yemen radically rose within a short time; their complement was estimated „700 Chinese and 200 European communists” in the middle of 1960 and again to more than 1100 by the end of the year.<sup>41</sup>

The technical assistance made it possible for many Yemeni students to do medical, engineering, technological and agricultural studies in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, or China.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, due to the cultural agreement with China Yemeni journalists visited China in 1958 and the Chinese shot a film in Yemen next year. A delegation led by the brother-in-law of Imam Ahmad visited the Chinese Muslim communities on the invitation of the Chinese Islamic Association in 1960, and an exhibition of Chinese goods that reached the most important Yemeni cities.<sup>43</sup>

### *The weakening of the influence of the socialist countries*

There was a considerable development progress in Yemen due to the Chinese and the Soviets. However, their presence and their continuous

---

<sup>40</sup> Due to the low efficiency of agricultural production the inhabitants depended eminently on weather conditions. Because of the frequent drought it happened quite often that the majority of the population had to starve most of the year. This was the case for example in 1959, when the Soviet Union and the Americans delivered 10.000 tonnes wheat as an aid in the emerged catastrophe situation. Most probably this event was the cause of the redeployment of the credit-treaty signed previously to finance agricultural projects. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 14. 67, 81.

<sup>41</sup> The labour-intensive methods of the Chinese and their dislike for occupying local labours were the reasons for their presence in great numbers in the country. This caused disapproval from the beginning in leading circles, which was further augmented by the foreign behaviour of the Chinese from the Yemeni circumstances, like showing films, publishing periodicals, their Trade Union's activity, travelling in the country without permission, or simply distributing rice among the starving population. The main problem of the suspicious ruler in connection with them was that they did not have any secret police which could keep an eye on them. Thence, on the one hand he asked for officers from Cairo to establish such a secret service, on the other hand he forbade the entering of further communists to the country. GULDESCU, S.: *Yemen: The War and the Haradh Conference*, Review of politics. 28, No. 3, (Jl 66) 321.; INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 14. 75.; PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 49.

<sup>42</sup> Due to the scholarships offered by the socialist countries the number of the Yemenis studying abroad doubled within three years. About 500 young people studied in other countries in 1958 and their number grew to 1020 until the school year of 1960/1961. 236 students took part in higher education or technician training in a socialist country, 76 of them in China, 50 in Eastern Germany, 40 in Czechoslovakia, 36 in the Soviet Union, 20 in Yugoslavia, 6 in Hungary, 4 in Rumania and 4 in Albania. ATTAR, Mohamed Said el-: *op.cit.* 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 49.

assistance did not grant the friendship of Yemen that started to appear in 1958. Imam Ahmad was very much worried about the presence of the socialist technicians in the country, whom he suspected of conspiring against him and his regime behind his back. His animosity grew more, when in 1958 President Nasir practically forced the Yemeni ruler to decision namely that Yemen would get the additional support from his country on condition that the socialist presence and assistance was cut back.<sup>44</sup>

The presence of the socialist countries in Yemen was staggering when Imam Ahmad expressed his desire for a less „positive” and more „neutral” position in his foreign policy apart from the dispute in Aden. Their position worsened more when President Nasir’s anti-communist comments were welcomed not only by the Yemeni citizens, unsatisfied with the abuses of the Soviet technicians and with the practices of the Chinese in their occupation, but it caused discredit towards them by their previous firm supporter, Prince al-Badr too.<sup>45</sup>

The Soviets had to face many problems concerning the realisation of some treaties signed earlier. It was a great disappointment for them that the Imam refused to repay the delivered weapons or to give concessions, which caused the gradual stopping of the military support from August 1957. It also embittered them that they did not succeed in accomplishing their main aim, namely to influence the population and the army. The ruler continuously discouraged the activity of the instructors of the Soviet military; their function was increasingly taken over by the Egyptians.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> The communist support of the Iraqi regime after the revolution in July 1958 resulted in political tension between the United Arab Republic and the Soviet Union. Presumably this affected President Nasir by his aim to limit the influence of the socialist countries in Yemen and to assure his position. It was a perfect occasion for him, when he learnt that some Soviet military installations had been built near Shaykh Sa’id on the Red Sea coast for ruling the Perim Island controlled by the British and for constructing a naval and submarine base near Ras al-Khatib. After this the Egyptian leader – alluding to the insecurity of trade in the Suez Canal – informed al-Badr that in that future his country would not support Imam Ahmad’s military provocations with Soviet equipment and trainers against Aden. *Russian’s Harbour Work for Yemen*. „Gun Emplacements on Red Sea, Times, April 3, 1958. *Construction of Naval Base*, Times, April 17, 1958. WENNER, M. W.: *op.cit.* 186.

<sup>45</sup> Prince al-Badr informed President Nasir in March 1959 that some Yemeni citizens pelted Chinese workers with stone thanks to his anti-communist speeches. Parallel to this the relations aggravated between the socialist experts and the growingly disappointed Imam and his officials due to the hitches in the building process of the new harbour. INGRAMS, D. - INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 14. 50. Page, S.: *op.cit.* 49.

<sup>46</sup> Rahmy’s opinion is that the socialist countries did not deliver more weapons to Yemen after August 1957. But his idea disagrees with the declaration of the Crown Prince on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1958. According to this there was a „continuous flow of arms from the USSR into Yemen”. RAHMY, Ali Abdel Rahman: *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World. Intervention in Yemen, 1962–1967*. University Press of America, Washington 1983. 80. ROUCEK, J. S.: *Yemen in Geopolitics*, Contemporary Review, 202 (1163), December 1962. 315.

Shortly after the beginning of the work it also turned out that the construction of the planned new harbour near Ras al-Khatib was impossible because of the quicksand. For a compensation they strengthened and enlarged the dam of the Hudaydah harbour, but they met some other problems when they begun the construction of the new route between the harbour and the city. The content of the 'unconditioned assistance' was not mentioned anymore, except for the arrival of those Russian doctors who had a bad reputation in a short time among the population.<sup>47</sup>

It led to further problems that the establishment of the United Arab Republic and then the United Arabic States became another reason for further disturbances in the territory of Aden and the Protectorate. Many rulers of then Protectorate worried about the growing influence of the Arab nationalism and the strengthening of the military potential of the Imam. Therefore, they revived the plan of federation protected by the British when the British-Yemeni conciliation discussions in the Ethiopian Diredawa failed in July 1958 like the previous conference in London. Soon, an agreement came into being between the parties concerned due to the interdependence and the Federation of the Arab Emirates of the South was declared in February 1959.<sup>48</sup>

The formation of the South Arabian Federation led to a new situation in the foreign policy of Imam Ahmad. The British supported six sultanates and three sheikhdoms which closely encompassed North Yemen and the army of the union was as large as the Imam's troops. The Imam's position worsened more in the region, when the tribes of the so-called Free Yemen joined the Federation. Estimating the new danger appearing on the borders of his countries, Imam Ahmad practically managed to terminate the frontier incidents absolutely and decided to cut back slowly the Egyptian and socialist assistance that he considered rather irrelevant, meanwhile he opened in his foreign policy towards Aden.

His belief was affirmed by the internal chaos that ruled the country between April and August 1959 when he left for Italy to obtain medical care. During his absence al-Badr, appointed regent agreed with President Nasir that the latter would send large numbers of Egyptian advisers and technicians to Yemen and introduced some 'progressive' reforms, which were previously carried out in the socialist countries.<sup>49</sup> This process caused the growing of the Egyptian

---

<sup>47</sup> Alike the Soviets the Czechoslovakian had to confront many disappointments. The Imam gave a concession for prospecting oil to an American Oil Company and at the same time he forbade the Czechoslovakian exploration team to continue their work on the Tihamah plain. Later he was afraid of loosing the loyalty of the army, therefore, he suspended the activity of the Czechoslovakian instructors, too. But it meant a more serious disappointment for them that the ruler denied paying – some 20 million dollars – for the weapons which were delivered in 1956. (INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 13. 188.

<sup>48</sup> INGRAMS, H.: *op.cit.* 106. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 50. WENNER, M. W.: *op.cit.* 186.

<sup>49</sup> The Crown Prince as an appointed ruler set up a Representative Council of seven members and discharged many conservative officers including the commander-in-chief to modernise the

influence parallel to the weakening of the central authority. There were disturbances all over the country and the army became nearby disorganised by the time Ahmad came back home. Therefore, after his returning the Imam discharged the Egyptian advisers from their position, suspended all of those decrees of his son he considered radical and repressed the reform movements originating in the new decrees. To prevent the occurrence of the same events in the future he signed further treaties with Western powers and companies and later he rejected the aid offers of the Egyptian government.<sup>50</sup>

There were new attempts to the approach of the Yemeni–British interests in the summer of 1960, but the effort proved to be a failure like the previous ones. Another socialist aid streamed to the country in large quantities, but at the same time the Imam agreed with the Americans to build the Mukha’-Ta’izz-Sanaa road, to establish the water-supply system of Ta’izz and the construction of a dam. At the beginning of 1961 the Yemeni ruler agreed with the Soviets about the realisation and financing of further plans and signed treaties with North Korea and Yugoslavia.<sup>51</sup>

The previous friendly relations between Yemen and Egypt had aggravated by 1961 because the cooperation attempts had failed.<sup>52</sup> Thus, when Syria withdrew from the United Arab Republic on 28<sup>th</sup> September, the Yemeni ruler composed a poem about his doubts and complaints concerning the Arab socialism of President Nasir. The results were the announcement of the destruction of the United Arab States on 26<sup>th</sup> December, the termination of diplomatic relations, the mutual critics and charges in the press and the start of the planning and organising of the overthrow of the Imamate-system.

---

army. Furthermore he dismissed some confidential helpers of his father who abused their power or did not do their work carelessly and appointed Egyptian officers and experts to replace them. As an unexpected consequence of the reforms there were soon disturbances in the circles of the army without leaders and the tribes, moreover, it was rumoured that the Crown Prince became the tool of Moscow and Cairo. *Yemen Purge on Scale of Revolution. Radio Tributes to Crown Prince*. Times, May 29, 1959.

<sup>50</sup> To counterbalance the socialist influence the Yemeni ruler signed a number of agreements among others with the West German Government and get into contact with the main opponent of the Russians, the United States, too. Although he rebuffed Washington’s application for establishing a mission in the middle of 1957, two years later he permitted them to establish the diplomatic representation of the International Cooperation Administration in Yemen and came to an agreement with the United States Overseas Investment Corporation as a sign of approach to the West. WENNER, M. W.: *op.cit.* 187.

<sup>51</sup> *The Middle East Journal*, XV. No. 1. (Winter 1961) 68. *The Middle East Journal*, XV. No. 2. (Spring 1961) 210.

<sup>52</sup> The development of the Egyptian–Yemeni relations was continuously blocked by Imam Ahmad’s distrust of President Nasir. This situation worsened because of the activities of the Egyptian experts, who were popular among the inhabitants since the Imam’s absolute power was threatened by the Arab nationalism promising the introduction of democratic and nationalist reforms. The gap between their views was deepened by the increasing vitriolic propaganda-campaign against the absolutist power of the Yemeni ruler Cairo Radio after the official visit of Sir William Luce, Governor of Aden in February 1960.



This time the socialist countries counted as the main supporters of the United Arab Republic and the Imam considered their ideology to be dangerous for the monarchy. Presumably this led to his conclusion that it was necessary to cut back the relations with the socialist countries and to expel their experts from the country to avoid the incidental sabotages. He orientated himself towards the Western countries and accepted western aid offers to compensate the missing socialist and Egyptian supports.<sup>53</sup> Already this was shocking for the socialist states and they were much more surprised when the Yemeni ruler denied the payment for the finished works both of the Soviets and the Chinese and deported their experts from the country.<sup>54</sup> It was another disappointment for the Soviets that the country did not support the standpoint of the socialist countries on international forums for repaying the economic favours. Nevertheless, they did not show obvious signs of their disappointment neither in the political life, nor in the press. The relations of the socialist countries with Imam Ahmad remained apparently friendly until his death on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1962.<sup>55</sup> Khrushchev emphasised in his message of condolence to al-Badr that Ahmad „*had made a worthy contribution to the cause of consolidating the political and economic independence of the Yemen*”, and later the Soviet Government also congratulated in another message to al-Badr on his accession.<sup>56</sup> The Soviets did not express any initial evaluation or expectation to the declared intention of the ruler to modernize and democratise the Yemeni society. But owing to the Revolution of 26<sup>th</sup> September he did not get the opportunity to prove his sincerity.

As a consequence we can divide the relations of Yemen and the communist countries two phases. In the first period, the inter World War period the Soviets highly estimated Yemen on account of its fights against the British and its role

---

<sup>53</sup> For example the Imam turned to the US for support when in the Hudaydah fire in 1961 six hundred houses burnt down and three thousand people became homeless. In the same year he accepted the donation of four million dollars from the US to stabilise the adverse budget – in 1961 the import was \$16,836 million, while the export was only \$8,161 million – and additional six and three quarter millions in 1962. ATTAR, Mohamed Said el-: *op.cit.* 201. GULDESCU, S.: *op.cit.* 322.

<sup>54</sup> Saudi Arabia stopped supporting Yemen after the presence of the agents from the socialist countries, which caused adverse budget and the country became unable to pay. Therefore, it was a serious problem from the beginning of 1959 that the Yemenis were unable to fulfil their duties and to pay the salary of the experts, or the costs of the works. After finishing and opening the Sanaa– Hudaydah road Imam Ahmad said to the Chinese that he would not pay any Maria Theresa taller for it and they could bring it with them, if they wanted. The same happened with the Russians in June, when they finished the construction of the Hudaydah hospital and the new harbour named Ahmadi. DRESCH, P.: *op.cit.* 82. INGRAMS, D. – INGRAMS, L. (ed.): *op.cit.* Vol. 14. 66. O’BALLANCE, E.: *op.cit.* 56–57.

<sup>55</sup> The disappointment of the socialist countries appeared only in the drastic drop of the number of delivered machineries and equipment, which decreased the total trade turnover to one quarter. There are similar reasons for why the Russian did not begin another aid projects after accomplishing the port at Hudaydah. PAGE, S.: *op.cit.* 64–65.

<sup>56</sup> BIDWELL, R.: *The Two Yemens*. Westview Press, Boulder 1983. 126.

in the drawing back of the expansive Italian influence beside the economic elements. But the economic potential of the Soviet Union could not make possible to effectively taking advantages of the relations, so the contact broke mainly because of the changing of the international conditions due to the dynamic German and Italian rise in Europe. After all, the ten-year-long cooperation proved that the Soviet Union was able to dispense with the idea of socialist global revolution and the relations depended on the foreign policy and not on the internal system of the state.

Thereafter, it became only in the middle of the 1950s possible to build up diplomatic relations again due to the changes in the foreign policy of Moscow, the decolonisation and the appearance of the thought of the Arab Unity. This time the granted support to Yemen by the Soviet Union together with other socialist countries was adapted for the realisation of the nationalist aims of the Arabic state. Therefore, they became popular and honoured in the country, which were not diminished by the antipathy of the inhabitants against the communist ideology. This circumstance proved to be balanced until the time when the Yemeni ruler considered this practically one-sided assistance to be dangerous. The Yemeni's disinterest changed after the fall of the United Arab States and the activities of Cairo against the realm. This time the Imam decided to cut back radically the previous dynamic relation to save the monarchy.