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SOVIET GOALS IN THE YEMENI CIVIL WAR

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The winning of political freedom by the peoples of the former colonies and semi-colonies is the first and most important prerequisite of their full independence, that is, of the achievement of economic independence.... These countries, although they do not belong to the socialist world system, can draw on its achievements to build up an independent national economy and to raise the living standards of their peoples. Today they need not go begging for up-to-date equipment to their former oppressors. They can get it in the socialist countries, without assuming any political or military commitments.¹

With this statement, Nikita S. Khrushchev succinctly expressed the new direction that Soviet foreign policy was to take in the Third World. Competition between East and West would be reflected in a competition for the minds and economies of the emerging countries of the world.

Egypt and Gamal Abdel Nasser provided the focal point of Soviet foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East/North Africa. The "progressive" Arab movement, essentially anti-Western and anti-colonial, that Nasser headed had been both misunderstood and castigated in the West as Marxist and pro-Soviet. Nasser's proposals for "positive neutralism" and his participation in the founding of a non-aligned movement did much to isolate him from an America deeply committed to the precepts of Containment and actively seeking support for an expanded Middle Eastern regional defense alliance-the Baghdad Pact (later reformed as CENTO).

In this environment of misunderstanding and distrust, Soviet-Egyptian relations flourished, particularly following the 1955 Arms Deal and the 1956 Suez Invasion by the military forces of Great Britain, France and Israel. The Soviets met with much less success in dealing with the more traditional and less progressive monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula and Middle East proper.

Nasser's attempt to exert a widened leadership role under the banner of the Pan-Arab movement was reflected in his formation of several political alliances with his neighbors. Egypt and Syria joined to form the United Arab Republic; Egypt and Yemen joined to form the United Arab States. Nasser's hope was for these unions to grow and form the nucleus of a greater Arab nation/state.

Egyptian led Arab nationalism was widely felt in the Arab world. Egyptian officers, representing a new enlightened elite, spread the fervor to their many advisory missions, and hence, throughout the governments and bureaucracies of the newly independent Arab nations and traditional monarchies alike.

Egyptian participation in the Yemeni Civil War of 1962-1970 grew directly out of the spread of the new progressive Arab nationalism. The conflict would directly pit the forces of change against the forces of Arab traditionalism.

Argument

Soviet involvement in the Yemeni Civil War constituted a landmark in Soviet-Third World relations, and in particular, Soviet-Arab relations. Never before had the Soviet Union provided major quantities of military material and manpower to overtly support a client state's attempt to alter the political structure of a neighbor through force of arms.

This Soviet attempt to alter the political structure of a regional subsystem (the Arabian Peninsula) failed in the face of both Arab traditionalism and the constraints of the erupting 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

I intend to show that Soviet foreign policy objectives in the Egyptian-Yemeni Intervention Period were primarily focused on regional and international issues greater in scope than the nations themselves involved in the conflict; and further, that Soviet policy successes in the Middle East as a whole were at best "cosmetically skin deep."

The outcome of the Yemeni Civil War could have provided a number of lessons to the Soviet Union (and the United States for that matter) in the pursuance of non-regional policy goals in the Middle East. However, these lessons were, in the main, missed by the Soviet Union and remained to be addressed until a later date.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE YEMEN

The Yemen occupies an important place historically on the Arabian Peninsula; this has not been due to any rich endowment of natural resources, but strictly due to The Yemen's geographical position. The Yemen lies on the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, along the Red Sea and the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. This strait is the southern terminus to the Indian Ocean for the Suez Canal, which lies at the northern end of the Red Sea. This places The Yemen on one of the most strategically important waterways in the world.

The Yemen was a single country ruled from the capital of Sana by an Imam, an hereditary spiritual and war leader of the most powerful tribe/sect - the Zeidis - since the 6th Century. In 1728 a revolt in the South created a separate state; this separation was enforced with the British occupation of Aden, the southern capital, in 1839.

The Hamid al-Din family came into power in Northern Yemen in 1891. This family had as a conscientious policy prevented all but the most meager of outside contacts, and strictly enforced an iconoclastic isolation on all aspects of Yemeni life. As a result, Northern Yemen in 1962 was one of the most backward nations in the world. A glimpse of a few vital statistics confirms this view:²

- population approximately 4,000,000
- 15 doctors (none of Yemeni descent)
- 50% of population with some form of venereal disease
- 80% of population has trachoma
- no schools outside Islamic centers
- no paved roads
- no railroads
- no factories
- per capita income less than \$70
- national coinage - none - 1780 Maria Theresa Silver Thaler used
- populace divided over the principles of Islamic fundamentalism
(Sunni-Shiite rift)

The Pan-Arab movement led by Gamal Abdul Nasser was welcomed in The Yemen by Imam Ahmad as a means both to improve the country and to strengthen the traditionalism of Yemeni life. A proposed union with the United Arab Republic failed to materialize as the Imam came to fear the growing Egyptian influences. Egyptian military and economic advisors did, however, come into the Yemen to assist the Imam. This led in turn to a deterioration in relations with Saudi Arabia which did not welcome the expansion of an Egyptian led Pan-Arab movement into the Arabian Peninsula.

In 1962 a coup was attempted against Imam Ahmad's successor, Imam Muhammad al-Badr, by dissatisfied Yemeni officers, with both the

concurrence and support of their Egyptian advisors. The Imam managed to escape from the capital and flee to the mountains, the traditional power base of the al-Din family, where he rallied the tribes to his support. In the meantime, the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the new Republican Government in Sana. Only Britain and Saudi Arabia refused recognition to the new regime and backed the Royalist forces in the fight. Thus, the stage was set for the Yemeni Civil War.

The factions involved were drawn to one side or the other based mainly on their positions within the traditional Yemeni class structure. The Republicans were mainly urban, merchants or military men, and Sunnis--all people disaffected by the harshly restrictive and capricious lifestyle of the Imam. The Royalists were predominately Shia in religious orientation and members of a multitude of tribal clans, drawing their traditional power over the Sunnis from their ownership of the land.

In many respects, the causes of the Yemeni Civil War are to be found in the very process of modernization, which were to so profoundly change traditional societies throughout the world following the decline of the Western colonial empires. Yemen's traditional and backward society, in the process of emerging/evolving, was faced with many of the destabilizing influences common to Third World countries; i.e., competition between urban and rural groups, expanding middle class, and a growing role for the progressive military.

CHAPTER 3

MAJOR SOVIET SPEECHES AND DECLARATIONS

In examining public statements made by heads of state, one must always keep in mind that where statements are made is often more important than what is said. This is particularly important when considering Soviet pronouncements. Major policy decisions are seldom, if ever, made in a public forum, such as a Western-style press conference. The press itself is a government organ, thus, this type of "unofficial" outlet simply doesn't exist. Public speeches and statements, such as those made before the United Nations, for example, are generally lacking in depth, replaying instead a previously set propaganda theme or opportunistically exploiting some crisis.

Soviet speeches before party organs, such as the Central Committee of the CPSU or Supreme Soviet, obviously have more merit. Unfortunately, there is always a major time lag between the speech and its eventual (if ever) "leak" to the West. This is one of the major difficulties in ascertaining trends or changes in the actual conduct of Soviet foreign policy formation.

In this chapter, I have assembled from a variety of sources Soviet statements concerning Egypt, Yemen, and the Third World in general. These statements deal with Soviet Middle East policy prior to and during

the Yemeni Civil War. Constant anti-Western themes link such public and private statements and provide enlightenment on the ideological framework which surround Soviet policy formulation.

The degree of rhetoric seen in the more public domain statements, as well as the rather direct threats against both Western and regional power interferences in the Yemeni Civil War, reflect the difficulty in determining the actual level of Soviet commitment to Egypt. The difficulty lies in separating the message from "the static," as it were. Soviet statements were as aggressively vitriolic when addressing the U.A.R. and Yemen as when discussing the establishment of a socialist sponsored "zone of peace."

To a large degree, Soviet and Western leaders are separated by the phenomenon of the "revolutionary vocabulary," which is often misunderstood or misinterpreted in the West. This has given constant rise to problems over the years.

In considering Soviet foreign policy toward the Middle East, and indeed, the entire Third World, the key Soviet declaration of policy must be considered to be Premier Khrushchev's 14th of February 1956 speech to the Twentieth Party Congress (previously quoted on page 1). This declaration affirmed a new direction in policy, aimed at providing assistance (both economic and military) to emerging states, and lending support to the non-aligned movement, just then in the process of

formation. He linked socialist states and the emerging states into a so-called "peace zone" as an attempt to show Soviet solidarity with the goals of these new nations against the "aggressive forces' military gambles," i.e., the West.

This speech went a long way to explain the principles behind the Egyptian-Soviet arms sales agreement of the previous September, in which the Soviets had agreed to accept Egyptian cotton in payment for Soviet (Czech) weaponry. This deal, struck by Nasser in response to Western (American) reluctance to extend arms credits, placed Nasser in a position of reliance on the good will of the Soviets for parts and technical assistance. It also placed the Soviets in a position of supporting a fundamentally anti-communist nationalist as their main protege within the Arab world. This obvious marriage of convenience was never destined to be stable or fulfilling for either partner.

Third World development was a major topic of concern when the heads of twelve communist parties met in Moscow in November 1957, on the 40th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. All the major party leaders were present, including China's Mao Tse-tung, with the exception of Tito. From the declaration of their meeting comes:

.... [T]he positions of imperialism have been greatly weakened as a result of the disintegration of the colonial system. The countries which have shaken off the yoke of colonialism are defending their independence and fighting for economic sovereignty, for world peace. The existance of the socialist

system and the aid rendered by the socialist nations to these countries on principles of equality and cooperation between them and the socialist countries in the struggle for peace and against aggression, are helping them to uphold their national freedom and facilitate their social progress.³

The linkage of Third World emerging states with a "socialism on the upgrade"⁴ clearly was a play for these newly emerging states to join in the socialist sponsored "zone of peace" rather than remain allied or dependent on the previous colonial powers. Nasser, as co-founder of the non-aligned movement, was a particular target for such linkage statements. This anti-colonial, anti-imperialist rhetoric was quite symptomatic of Soviet pronouncements during this particular time frame of East-West competition.

This emphasis on freedom from colonial oppression under the banner of the peace-loving socialists is a constant theme. Khrushchev at the 21st Party Congress stated:

The successes of the countries of the socialist camp will unquestionably exert a tremendous effect on strengthening the forces of peace throughout the world. The idea that war is inadmissible will take still firmer root in the minds of peoples. The new balance of forces will be so evident that even the most die-hard imperialist will clearly see the futility of any attempt to unleash war against the socialist camp. Relying on the might of the socialist camp, the peace-loving nations will then be able to compel the militant circles of imperialism to abandon plans for a new world war.⁵

On January 6, 1961, Premier Khrushchev spoke to the Central Committee of the CPSU on the prospects for peace for the Soviet Union in

the 60s. He spoke of the possibilities of capitalist inspired world wars and local wars, and on the inevitability of anti-colonial wars of national liberation.

Regarding the first two types of wars, he stated:

We must therefore combat both world wars and local wars. As an example of local war unleashed by the imperialists, we may take the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt. They wanted to strangle Egypt and thus intimidate the Arab countries struggling for independence, and also to frighten the other peoples of Asia and Africa [T]his was in 1957, when the balance of power between the countries of socialism and the countries of imperialism was not the same as it is today. We were not as mighty then as we are today⁶

His thinly veiled implication in the speech reflects a major degree of commitment to Egypt as the main Soviet client within the Arab world. Khrushchev's estimate of the new Soviet correlation of forces, including both improved Soviet military capabilities and improved Sino-Arab relations (in light of the Soviet pro-Arab stance in the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis) was instrumental in his continued aggressive pursuit of a widened Soviet role in the region.

Castro's successful revolution in Cuba gave impetus for further Soviet support to wars of national liberation under the Leninist tenet of proletarian internationalism. Anti-colonial wars, both nationalist and socialist in nature, were ongoing in several global regions, including both Asia and Africa. The Soviets had definite cause for optimism.

On 26 September 1962, revolution broke out in The Yemen. Republican forces under Colonel Sallal, the Imam's Chief of the Palace Guard, supported by Egyptian officers, attacked the royal palace. Rapidly and prematurely declaring victory, they announced to the world their intent to strengthen progressive ties of "Arab Brotherhood" with their sponsor, Gamel Abdul Nasser.

Imam Muhammad al-Badr had managed to escape from the burning palace and flee to the mountains - home of his clansmen and his main power base. To complicate matters, his uncle, Prince Hasan, on hearing reports of al-Badr's death, had flown to King Saud of Saudi Arabia for support against the rebel forces. King Saud was only too willing to stop Egyptian encroachment onto the Arabian Peninsula. King Saud was both staunchly anti-communist and anti-Nasser.

Three days after the revolt started, Nikita Khrushchev publicly announced that the USSR would: "... meet any external aggression whatsoever by any government opposing the rebel regime."⁷ Three days later, the first Egyptian vessel, The Star of Sudan, arrived in Yemen with tanks and infantry to support Colonel's Sallal's Republican forces.

In the short space of a week, a poorly planned and executed coup in

a remote and impoverished country on the shores of the Red Sea had become a contest for power by regional factions and Superpowers alike.

In a characteristically enthusiastic speech before the Supreme Soviet in December 1962, Premier Khrushchev greeted the Yemeni Revolution thus: "People are thrusting their way through the thick layers of medievalism to a new life, as a shoot in the desert, when it receives a drop of moisture, thrusts its way up through the soil."⁸

In short, Khrushchev had pledged in two addresses, one to a journalist and one to the Supreme Soviet, that the USSR was unambiguously pledged to support the Republican Yemeni forces and their Egyptian sponsors.

It is interesting to note that Khrushchev had supported the late Imam with military aid for some seven years prior to the revolution and had met personally with al-Badr on occasions. In his memoir, Khrushchev would refer to his former client al-Badr as: "A liberal prince became a reactionary king. He turned out to be an extremely cruel leader, a literal slave driver."⁹ A rapid change for a leader in control for only seven days!

Khrushchev visited Nasser in May 1964 to take part in the dedication of the Aswan High Dam, the monument to Soviet-Egyptian relations, and the single largest Soviet-Third World project. On this

occasion, Nasser was declared a Hero of the Soviet Union and awarded the Order of Lenin. Thus, it came as a great shock to the Egyptians when a short five months later Khrushchev was dismissed.

Brezhnev, as spokesman for the new ruling troika (Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny) assured Egyptian leaders including Nasser at a meeting in Moscow that:

What happened (Khrushchev's dismissal) has absolutely nothing to do with you or our policy toward the Arab world. The party is not a matter of individuals but represents a collective will. Our relations with you are based on long-term decisions taken by the party, not by Khrushchev.¹⁰

It has long been speculated in the West that Khrushchev's removal was based on two primary causes: his failures in the domestic economy and the disruptions in the foreign policy arena, i.e., estrangement from China, over-reliance on Egypt and the Cuban Missile Crisis fiasco.

On 21 March 1964, Brezhnev confirmed continued Soviet recognition of the: "... full and absolute independence of the Yemen Arab Republic"¹¹ while signing a Five-Year Treaty of Friendship with Colonel Sallal.

In November 1964 an armistice was reached between Republican and Royalist forces, neither of whom was able to militarily overcome the other. The armistice, which failed to hold, was based on an Egyptian-Saudi Arabian withdrawal plan reached in August. The war had reached a

stalemate, with the chief backers (Egypt and Saudi Arabia) growing increasingly frustrated at the costs.

With the departure of Khrushchev from the scene, and the growing desire for disengagement in the front, the new Soviet leaders took an increasingly circumspect and pragmatic stand toward The Yemen. Aid was continued at a substantially increased level following the signing of the Friendship Treaty; indeed, direct aid prior to the end of the Intervention Period would surpass the 100 million dollar mark.¹² However, the Soviet leadership did not publically comment on, nor criticize their protege's attempt to extract himself from The Yemen.

Only the debacle of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War finally brought the remaining Egyptian troops home, bringing an end to the Intervention and the dissolution of the Pan-Arab dream. In response to the Egyptian withdrawal, Soviet support personnel levels in the Yemen increased. Soviet logistical personnel were placed in charge of key Yemeni logistical nodes to replace departing Egyptians, thus, showing a sustained Soviet commitment to Colonel Salall's Republican government.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF SOVIET GOALS

The process of rationally observing and objectively analyzing Soviet foreign policy formation and implementation is at best a difficult undertaking, one fraught with the pitfalls of self-delusion and self-entrapment.

It is far too easy to observe and analyze based upon personal prejudice and preconceived concepts of what Soviet policy ought to be (based on your own thoughts, schooled in the precepts of Western liberal democratic tradition), rather than adopting a "Sovietized" or "Greater Russian" viewpoint. I make the distinction between Soviet and Russian because even though many traditional Russian goals have been incorporated into modern Soviet policy, it is entirely too simplistic to equate today's Soviet Union to a modernized Czarist Russia. Many scholars who follow this path have simply replaced the Orthodox Church's role in traditional pre-revolution Russian life with the dynamics of communist ideology in modern Soviet society. Solzhenitsyn has constantly warned Westerners not to equate "Soviet" and "Russian" as equal terms. To him, Soviet implies a commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideology which carries far beyond the borders of traditional Russian nationalism. He views (from his distinctly slavophile stance) communism as an essentially "hostile alien ideology" imposed upon Russian life.¹³

There can be no one single determinate for the conduct of state foreign policy; rather a number of interrelated or interconnected factors, each vying for importance/emphasis. Identification of the factors in the appropriate order of importance is the key to projecting the future moves of that state.

In analyzing Soviet support to the Egyptian Intervention in the Yemeni Civil War, the basic issue which needs to be addressed is: What gains did the Soviet Union expect to achieve? It is axiomatic that no nation risks the threat of war without having vital national interests involved. Were these expected gains regional in scope, internationally important, or simply ideological; and indeed, were the Soviets particularly interested in Yemen, versus a continued/increased relationship with Egypt?

In addressing these issues I have divided Soviet policy objectives into these three areas: regional goals, international goals and ideological goals. These are the major determinates of Soviet Middle Eastern policy in the mid 50s.

Post Stalin Period

A fundamental change to Soviet foreign policy toward the Middle East, and indeed the entire Third World, had occurred with the death of Stalin. The paranoia of the Soviet regime, with its concentration on

the consolidation of power and quest for regional hegemony over Eastern Europe relaxed. Khrushchev, upon assuming the powers of General Secretary of the CPSU was able on the one hand, to benefit from Stalin's industrialization of the economy and modernization of the military, and on the other hand, to relax the rigidity of the political system in its dealings with non-communist states. His abandonment of Stalin's "Two Camps" in favor of a Third World "Zone of Peace" can be viewed as a return to the ideals of the Comintern's role in proletarian internationalism from the harsh requirements of Stalin's war related/oriented concepts.

The forces of peace have been considerably augmented by the emergence in the world arena of a group of peace-loving European and Asian states which have proclaimed nonparticipation in blocs as a principle of their foreign policy. The leading political circles of these states rightly hold that to participate in closed military imperialist alignments would merely increase the danger to their countries becoming involved in the aggressive forces' military gambles and being drawn into the ruinous maelstrom of the arms race.

As a result, a vast "peace zone," including both socialist and non-socialist peace-loving states in Europe and Asia, has emerged in the world arena¹⁴

Khrushchev's 1956 speech gave the directions of the new Soviet foreign policy - closer ties with the emerging nations of the Third World. This very much reflected the realization on the part of the Soviets that they had finally achieved Superpower status and were able to compete internationally with the West for trade and influence.

Soviet Regional Goals

Soviet goals when observing the Middle East as a distinct subsystem in the early 50s were, simply stated:

- (1) To undermine Western interests and influences in the region.
- (2) To promote of anti-Western movements and ideologies.
- (3) To further the development of links with "progressive" Arab regimes and the Soviet Union, and
- (4) To exclude of China (PRC) from the region.

The Soviet objectives in the Middle East could best be achieved by supporting Egypt as a client state. Egypt under Nasser was the leading regional power, head of the "progressive" United Arab Republic, and firmly committed to limiting non-Arab influences in the region. Nasser needed Soviet arms and money to fulfill his Pan-Arab mission. This did not mean that he enjoyed his dependence on the Soviets; rather, he distrusted both their sincerity and their ideology.¹⁵ The Soviet Union for its part was not entirely happy with this symbiotic relationship with the Egyptians either; however, their success in other Arab countries throughout the late 50s and early 60s were not as notable.

Therefore, in order to exert maximum anti-colonial/anti-imperialist influence in the Middle East, the Soviets had to use the Egyptian Pan-Arab movement as a vehicle for their own policy goals.

Nasser was a dedicated anti-colonialist. He sought to hasten the end of colonial states and to reduce the influence of the former colonial powers, Britain and France. From the Soviet standpoint, he was ideally suited to assist their goals in the region, except for two points: Nasser was anti-communist, and he was willing to accept Chinese aid as well as Soviet aid.

Quite clearly, the Soviets needed Nasser as an agent of their policies. Soviet support to the Egyptian intervention in the Yemen (detailed in appendix) could be viewed as both a price they had to pay to keep Nasser satisfied, and as a promotion of the Soviet regional anti-colonial goal. With Britain and Saudi Arabia backing a deposed Yemeni monarchy, the Soviets could play upon their oft heralded theme of support to "peoples' rights to self-determination."

Although the Soviet Union's first Treaty of Friendship in the Arab world (1928) had been signed with Yemen,¹⁶ it was Egypt that was to be the linchpin of Soviet policy in the Middle East, not tiny, though strategically placed, Yemen.

American support for the Republican Yemeni forces did cause regional difficulties within the framework of the Western oriented alliance structure. Britain, a member of the regional Baghdad Pact, was opposed to the Republican Yemeni cause. Britain was seeking to gracefully divest itself of its colonial holding in Southern Yemen, while establishing the foundations of a viable future government there. A "progressive" anti-colonial government in Northern Yemen was against the interests of the British. Indeed, events would prove the British case.

The Soviets, of course, were delighted to see the United States and Great Britain (with the Saudi Arabians) on opposite ends of the spectrum. This could only hurt the Western interests in the Middle East, particularly as the Suez Crisis has earlier shown that differences in the alliance were generally settled to American satisfaction. From the Soviet standpoint, a regional rift could be enough to destroy the mutual trust of the Western alliances' two strongest members.

The last Soviet goal, that of reducing Chinese influence in the Middle East, was never satisfactorily addressed. The role of China as a Middle Eastern power/influence has never been on the same scale as that of the Soviets or any of the Western powers. China has supplied aid, advice and, from time to time, economic credits, but her role has generally been both limited and very pragmatic. The Sino-Soviet rift gave rise to more Soviet fears of competition than the Chinese were able to actually undertake.

International Goals

In the international political arena, there were three goals which the Soviets sought to achieve through supporting the Egyptian-Yemeni Republican forces in the Civil War.

First, the very status of the Soviet Union as a world Superpower had been called into question during the Cuban Missile Crisis (just then completed). Khrushchev had been forced to back down in the face of superior American power. The Yemeni Civil War and the logistical support rendered by the Soviets showed the members of the Arab world and other Third World members that the Soviets could successfully project their military power outside their immediate border areas. It further showed the "progressive" Arab states that the Soviets would aid them in the face of Saudi and British opposition. This would be a key element contributing to the eventual eruption of the Arab-Israeli War of 1967.

Second, Soviet support to Egypt and Republican Yemeni forces was portrayed as anti-colonial/anti-imperial even though the United States supported the same side as the Soviets. This guaranteed the Soviets a "low risk-high return" situation. At no time was a significant threat of force employed against the Soviets; however, the Soviets, themselves, did employ such threats. On several occasions Khrushchev publically stated his intention to utilize Soviet forces should any outside force (referring to British or Saudi) be used against the Republican forces of

Colonel Sallal.⁶ These pronouncements in the face of virtually no threat may be viewed as simply an exercise in Third World public relations on the part of the Soviets, always intent on representing the "peace-loving" peoples of the world. Indeed, it is a practice used elsewhere in the Middle East during periods of crisis by the Soviets.

The third principal foreign policy objective on the international level which the Soviets sought from this situation is an exacerbation of the split in the Anglo-American alliance. Just as this has regional implications, it has major international level implications. Isolation of the United States, as the Soviet "Main Enemy," is a major policy goal to be exploited at any opportunity. The conflicting policies of the United States, Britain and France, particularly over the issues of empire dissolution, were political problems of some proportion during this period. Both Britain and France were committed to withdrawal from colonial holdings, but were trying to do so in such a manner as to prevent complete anarchy. The American penchant for immediacy, coupled with the constant cacophony of Soviet anti-colonial diatribes made life difficult for Western alliance members during this period.

Ideological Goals

Ideology must be considered an important segment of foreign policy

formation and implementation. The Soviets are dedicated ideologists, firmly committed to the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism. The role that ideology has come to play in the modern Soviet society is near ubiquitous in nature. Glorification of all things Russian (referring to all the peoples of the Soviet Union), and in the ultimate purity of Soviet aims is a distinct part of Soviet life. A firm belief in Marxism-Leninism is at the core of the leadership's perception of the world, and provides the basis for their rationalizations and actions in pursuance of "the ultimate victory of socialism, over capitalism."

So it is in viewing the Soviets' actions in this case that one can easily identify a number of ideological goals involved.

The Sino-Soviet split is key here. Mao was challenging Khrushchev and the Soviets on the fundamental point of who would lead the Third World socialist movement. The post World War II Soviets were to Mao a status quo nation no longer interested in the socialist revolution. This challenge to the Soviets' (CPSU) position as the "Vanguard of the Revolution" was a complete anathema, and marked the virtual destruction of relations between the two.

Soviet actions in the Middle East in support of "progressive" Arab states had much to do with the Soviets moving to counteract Chinese accusation on their loss of revolutionary zeal.

Domestic Soviet ideological concerns also forced actions upon the leadership. With the colonial empires of the British, French and Belgians crumbling throughout the world, power vacuums were created. The precepts of Marxist-Leninist doctrine virtually require actions be taken to "assist" the de-colonizing forces to achieve the utmost degree of socialism possible. Proletarian Internationalism, as advanced both by the Comintern and the short-lived post-war Cominform, has established links to nearly every nation/revolutionary group in the world. To be a "true believer" in socialism, actions were required to advance the cause.

Thus, the ideological requirements of leadership forced the Soviets to take part in the changes going on in the Arab world.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Following Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet foreign policy interests in the world grew to encompass areas previously ignored. Whether this reflected an increased optimistic view of Soviet capabilities on Khrushchev's part, or was a reaction to the Western alliances' containment policy growth, is subject to debate. One such area of expanded Soviet interest was the Middle East.

Primarily through Western policy errors (such as the Aswan High Dam funding dispute and above all, the 1955 Arms Agreement), the Soviets were able to gain entry and influence within the United Arab Republic, and with its charismatic leader, Nasser. To maintain this relationship, the Soviets invested billions of dollars in military and economic aid and supported Nasser through a series of disastrous military adventures including both the Yemeni Intervention and the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six Day War.

The Soviet-Egyptian relationship was never stable. Nasser was first and foremost an Arab nationalist, not at all interested in Soviet ideology. He was, in fact, anti-communist and had earlier crushed the Egyptian Communist Party. To the Soviets, he represented an opening to the Arab world, one which they had been unable to obtain elsewhere.

This then was the crux of the Soviet goal in supporting Egypt in the Yemeni Intervention period: to maintain their sponsor-client status with Nasser. The Yemen represented an expansion of anti-colonial, "progressive" government onto the Arabian Peninsula.

The country was of no real value to the Soviets, except as a symbol. Certainly nothing over which they would face war with the West.

The Soviet-Nasser relationship was based on mutual exploitation. Nasser was against both the former colonial powers and the expansion of any new outside influences. The Soviets were playing to a larger Third World audience, as head of the world anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement. Competition with China for this position played a major role in pursuing their policies at this time.

The Middle East has repeatedly been a disaster for both Soviet and American foreign policy efforts; both sides have had to support regimes lacking in legitimacy and capability in an effort to influence events in the region. The forces of traditional Arab society and of Islam are too great. The Soviets found it was impossible to subvert the Arabs away from both the economic strengths of the West and the forces of Arab nationalism. The West, for its part, has had to contend with the same forces and realize that regional solutions, not international, will eventually prevail within the Arab world.

APPENDIX

LEVELS AND TYPES OF SOVIET SUPPORT IN YEMENI INTERVENTION PERIOD

Two types of Soviet support need to be addressed in looking at this war: these are Soviet troops committed and logistical support (i.e., money, equipment, technical advisors, etc.).

Soviet Troop Commitment

There is no firm evidence of significant Soviet troop involvement in The Yemen at any time during the Intervention Period. To be sure, there were Soviet military personnel there, but mainly in non-combat supporting technical or advisory roles. Some five hundred Soviet technicians, for example, assisted in the construction of an advanced airfield at Rahaba.¹⁷ Some aircraft were piloted by mixed Egyptian and Soviet crews, but the brunt of the actual combat operations was handled strictly by the Egyptians and the Republican Yemeni military forces. As the Soviet Union (and the United States, for that matter) had recognized the Yemeni Republican Government, it was free to provide openly military and economic support to both Yemeni and Egyptian forces involved in the war. There was, however, at no time a necessity for the Soviets to employ their own troop units in combat operations.

Logistical Support

In the second area, that of logistical support to the Egyptian forces, there is no question that Nasser was able to sustain this protracted war only due to the massive Soviet aid program. Egypt was the single largest client state for the Soviet Union in the Middle East in terms of both money and personnel involved; some 2.7 billion dollars in military assistance alone was provided by the Soviets in the period 1946-1972. This constituted over one-half of the total Soviet military assistance provided to the entire Middle East and North Africa during this time frame.¹⁸ A more recent study on Soviet aid to the Third World estimates actual Soviet expenditures on Egypt from 1955-1973 as some 7.8 billion dollars.¹⁹ Direct aid to the Yemeni Republican forces amounted to an additional 7.3 million dollars.

This massive level of supply and technical assistance enabled the Egyptians to field an army of 50,000 to 60,000 troops (some estimates as high as 85,000)²⁰ in support of the Yemeni Republican forces. This Egyptian army was armed with Soviet weapons, transported in Soviet built trucks and aircraft, and backed with Soviet run repair and resupply facilities.

The degree to which the Soviets were committed to the Egyptian/Yemeni cause is reflected in the use of toxic chemical munitions of Soviet design by these forces on Yemeni Royalist controlled

areas.²¹ This use represented the first time such Soviet weaponry had ever been used in warfare since the First World War. In retrospect it can be viewed as both a sign of the depth of the Soviet support and as a harbinger of future Soviet use of toxic warfare agents in Third World areas.

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