

unscathed; Suez merely exposed the limitations of an imperial role that had existed since 1945. However, the Suez affair had bad consequences for the Conservative Party and negative impact on a generation of diplomats and others who were outraged by the actions and deceptions of their political leaders.

One does not normally expect a historical analysis to be a page-turner. However, this is an extremely readable book, and in fact one which is often hard to put down, so well written is it, so beautifully produced, and so coherent in its presentation of what in other hands might be a tedious subject. In sum this important and challenging book will be an excellent stimulus for students of the modern Middle Eastern history. More generally, it should be of great interest for all those concerned with this significant period of Middle Eastern history which at the same time provides the background for understanding the contemporary problems.

The reader finishes this substantial book with a firm grasp of the main tendencies of the historical development. The impressive part of it is its comprehensiveness. The author has put together a fascinating account of continuity and change and succeeded on every score.

*Eduard Gombár*

SORBY, Karol R.: *Arabský východ (1945 – 1958)*. (The Arab East). Bratislava, Slovak Academic Press 2005, 305 pp. ISBN 80-89104-77-0.

The political development in the Arab world attracts the attention of both the scholars and common people since several decades. Along with author's *Suez 1956. The Twilight of Traditional Colonialism in the Middle East*, this monograph is an especially welcome addition to the scholarly literature on the modern Middle East. There has been relatively little systematic, theory-relevant work in Central European historiography. Teachers of courses on modern Middle Eastern affairs until now have had slim pickings in the way of synthesizing texts, usually having to rely on narrative "current history" approaches, impressionistic essays, or military-strategic compendia.

This book is the best and most comprehensive yet produced in Slovakia in this field. It actually provides a synthetic survey of the post-war (1945 – 1958) history of eastern Arab countries and is arranged in five chapters. The first chapter "The Arab East between the two World Wars" represents a broad introduction in the post-war developments and contains the following themes: The Arab East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire; European power and the unequal treaties; The French mandate in Levant; The British mandate in Palestine; British supremacy in Iraq; Developments in the Arabian Peninsula; Arab unity and the League of Arab

states. The second chapter "Post-war revolutionary upheaval (1945 – 1949)" treats the themes: Syria and Lebanon after gaining the independence; The Palestine war; The continuing British control of Iraq; Developments in the Arabian Peninsula. The third chapter "The period of the Egyptian revolution (1950 – 1954)" deals with the themes: Military coups in Syria; Lebanon's policy; Jordan from 'Abdallāh to Ḥusayn; The "black regime" in Iraq; Developments in the Arabian Peninsula; The Baghdad Pact. The fourth chapter is entitled "Culmination of the national-liberation struggle (1955 – 1957)" contains the themes: The struggle for Syria; Lebanon – deepening of political conflicts; Ḥusayn's coup in Jordan; Twilight of the Iraqi monarchy; Developments in the Arabian Peninsula. The fifth chapter "The decisive year 1958" treats the themes: The United Arab Republic and the Arab Union; Civil war in Lebanon; Free Officers and the revolution in Iraq. It is worth mentioning that the post-war history of Egypt is dealt with in the author's two previous monographs: *The Egyptian Revolution of 1952* and *Suez 1956. The Twilight of Traditional Colonialism in the Middle East*.

The author has correctly shown that the British government after World War II was unwilling to reduce its strategic holdings in the region in response to nationalist pressure. But it was the impatient Zionists, who played a large part in wrecking the chances for keeping post-war Middle Eastern nationalism in a relatively moderate level. With disregard for the geographical context of their political aspirations, the Zionist's skilful combination of humanitarian appeal and political intrigue not only raised Palestine to fever pitch, but undermined the already shaken British prestige throughout the region.

Another interesting issue is the role of the Arab League. The author argues that because internal as well external factors, the Arab League turned into a regional organization that reflects Arab rivalries, contradictions, and the seemingly endless disputes among the Arab states. It is therefore clear that Egypt and its leader used the League to influence other states foreign policies'. President Jamal Abd al-Nasir successfully used Egypt's predominance in the regional machinery to solicit the League's members' support against rival Arab governments, as was the case in 1955 when Egypt succeeded in isolating Iraq from the Arab world as a result of the Baghdad pact (pp. 146 – 158).

Dr. Sorby touches on nearly all of the important questions that have confronted the Middle East, its leaders, its elites and its social and political structure. He marshals his arguments and data impressively, provides wise commentary, sagacious judgements and many insights into the Middle Eastern countries. The turbulent history of the region and the difficult challenges it and its people faced as it progressed in the space of more than a decade obviously created strong and different opinions regarding the best strategies to adopt and which policies would achieve greater progress, national security and social participation. Sorby does not shy from taking positions and making judgements with regard to the political and economic decisions taken by the Arab governments.

Although any analysis of complex Middle East politics will be subject to interpretation, Sorby's analysis remains focused and should evoke little

controversy. It is, on the whole, a thought-provoking work addressing a crucial piece of the Middle East political puzzle. It lays the groundwork for more rigorous research on the complex nature of inter Arab relations and global interests and will benefit students, scholars, and practitioners alike.

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