

BOOK REVIEWS

SORBY, K. R.: *Arabský Východ, al-mašriq al-ʿarabī (1945-1958)* (The Arab East). Bratislava, Slovak Academic Press 2005. 305 pp. ISBN 80-89104-77-0.

Sorby's monograph aims at providing a synthetic survey of the political history of the Arab East in the period following World War II (1945-1958). The most significant aspect of this period is the astonishing progress of the national-liberation movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Many countries in these parts of the globe, hitherto dominated by foreign rulers, gained the position of active players on the political scene. The Arab East did not remain unaffected by the radical changes that these post-war years had brought about.

In the global perspective, the post-war historical process displays several distinct stages. The first of them (1945-1949) is marked by the post-war revolutionary wave and its impact on several colonial and dependent countries. This interval is delimited by the victory of the Chinese revolution, the final progress of the struggle for independence in the South and South-East Asian countries, and the Palestine war.

The following interval (1950-1954) may be presented as a direct confrontation between the developing countries and colonial powers whose number has now increased by the presence of the USA. This interval witnessed the bloody war in Korea, the first stage of the struggle for independence in Vietnam and several other countries of Indochina, as well as one of the most significant events in the Near-Eastern history, the victory of the Egyptian revolution.

In the following years, from 1955 up to 1958, the progress of the national-liberation struggle reached its climax: the Bandung conference started the era of international co-operation between Asian and African countries, several independent countries emerged in Africa and other parts of the globe, and, in the Western Hemisphere, the Cuban revolution gained victory.

With regard to the Arab East, the historical process between the two World-Wars and after WW II, is examined in five distinct chronological intervals, arranged in chapters under the following headings:

- Chapter 1: The Arab East between the two World Wars (1918-1945):
 - The Arab East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire;
 - European power and underprivileged treaties;
 - The French mandate in Levant;
 - The British mandate in Palestine;
 - British supremacy in Iraq
 - Developments on the Arab Peninsula;
 - Arab unity and the League of Arab States.
- Notes – i

- Chapter 2: Post-war revolutionary agitation (1945-1949):
 Syria and Lebanon after the achievement of independence
 The Palestine war;
 Continuing British influence in Iraq
 Developments on the Arab Peninsula;
 Notes- ii.
- Chapter 3: The period of the Egyptian revolution (1950-1954):
 Military coups in Syria;
 Lebanon's policy- a way to prosperity?
 Jordan from 'Abdallāh to Husayn;
 Reinforcing the 'black regime' in Iraq;
 Developments on the Arab Peninsula;
 The Baghdad Pact;
 Notes – iii.
- Chapter 4: Culmination of the national-liberation struggle (1955-1957):
 The Struggle for Syria;
 Lebanon- intensifying of political dissensions;
 Husayn's coup in Jordan;
 Decline of the Iraqi monarchy;
 Developments on the Arab Peninsula;
 Notes – iv.
- Chapter 5: Breaking year 1958:
 The United Arab Republic and the Arab Union;
 Civil war in Lebanon;
 Free Officers and the revolution in Iraq;
 Notes – v.

The author's approach to the historical process in the post-war Arab East and his presentation of major events shaping the political and social scene in this vast area of the Arab world, is that of a scholar-historian and that of a direct observer, diplomat in pre-war Iraq. The corpus of sources evaluated is one of the most complete. Besides an amazing number of products of Western historiography, collections of official documents, diplomatic correspondence, published Arab League materials, the author evaluated an equally great number of the Arab scholarly sources and official documents, both in Arabic and Western languages.

The monograph offers a well-documented description of the historical scene in the Arab East and provides an expert analysis of the internal and external forces that were shaping it. Although designed for specialists, the monograph will be read with profit also by educated readers interested in the Arabs and their modern history.

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