

other, in the time horizon from ancient times to the present. It is possible to observe similarities and the differences between the regions. It presents a valuable opportunity to understand legends and mythological creatures, which can be very interesting for people doing cultural studies. Since it is written in Slovak, it is accessible both to the general public in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, where there has been considerable interest in mythology since the time of Vojtech Zamarovský. I believe that students from other disciplines will also find much useful and exciting information in this book that will broaden their horizons.

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SORBY, Karol R. *Arabský východ po druhej svetovej vojne, I. diel (1945 – 1958)* [The Arab East after World War II (1945 – 1958)]. Bratislava: Ústav orientalistiky, Slovenská akadémia vied, 2020, 872 pp. ISBN 978-80-89607-88-4

The publications of the Slovak historian and Arabist Prof. PhDr. Karol Sorby, DrSc. have been dedicated to the modern and contemporary history of the Middle East since the late 1990s. In 1981 he successfully defended his PhD dissertation in the Historical Institute of Slovak Academy of Sciences, which he later published first in Slovak and then in an English-language version. Colleague Sorby already belonged to the prominent Slovak Arabists. Prof. Sorby had all the preconditions for successful publication results, in addition to an excellent knowledge of Arabic and other major languages, he spent several years in Arab countries, especially in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. He spent five years in Iraq (1993 – 1997), where he served as Head of the Slovak diplomatic services. He took advantage of these visits to build a large heuristic base for his extensive scientific activity and established himself not only as a leading expert in the contemporary history of the Middle East, but also in the history of international relations.

I came into contact with his broad range of publications as a reviewer of his work, which includes extensive monographs, namely *Egyptská revolúcia 1952* [The Egyptian Revolution of 1952], 1998, *Egypt. The Period of Political Anarchy, 1801 – 1805*, 2003, *Suez 1956. Súmrak tradičného kolonializmu na Blízkom východe* [Suez 1956. The Twilight of Traditional Colonialism in the Middle East], 2003, *Arabský východ (1945 – 1958)* [The Arab East, 1945 – 1958], 2005, *Blízky východ v medzinárodnej politike (1918 – 1945)* [The Middle East in International Politics, 1918–1945], 2009, *Jun 1967. Šesť dní, ktoré zmenili Blízky východ*. [June 1967. Six Days that Changed the Middle East], 2010, *Blízky východ v medzinárodnej politike (1971 – 1990)* [The Middle East in International Politics, 1918–1945], 2011, *Arabský východ (1918 – 1945)* [The Arab East, 1918 – 1945], 2013, and *Arabský východ po druhej svetovej vojne, II. diel (1959 – 1970)* [The Arab East after World War II, 1959–1970], 2018. The monographs of

Professor Sorby are of a high scholarly and professional standard, they represent a methodical contribution, undoubtedly provide necessary and useful information to historians, politicians, diplomats, and people in business circles. His work is also a huge repository of specific information on various topics, providing not only accounts of factual events but also a thorough survey of the literature, biographies, and maps. Professor Sorby, who consistently works with Arabic sources, is a master of detail and a reliable source of accurate transcriptions of Arabic proper and geographical names and terms.

Political developments in the Arab world have attracted the attention of both scholars and the general public for several decades. Along with the author's *Suez 1956. The Twilight of Traditional Colonialism in the Middle East*, this monograph is an especially welcome addition to scholarly literature on the modern Middle East. There has been relatively little systematic, theory-relevant work in this field 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 one 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 Post-War Revolutionary Wave (1945 – 1948)" deals with the following topics: the worsening of the social crisis in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon after gaining their independence, the continuing British control of Iraq, developments in the Arabian Peninsula, and the Palestine war. The second chapter, called "Consequences of the Palestine war (1949 – 1952)", deals with the reaction of the great powers to developments in the Middle East, the revolutionary crisis in Egypt, the military coups in Syria, the balance of power in Lebanon, Jordan from 'Abdallāh to Ṭalāl. In the third chapter "The response of the Egyptian revolution (1952 – 1954)" the author deals with the following themes: the struggle for the future orientation of Egypt, the Shīshaklī dictatorship in Syria, the politics of Lebanon, Jordan from Ṭalāl to al-Ḥusain, Iraq under Faiṣal II, and developments in Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning that the post-war history of Egypt is dealt with in the author's previous monograph *Egyptian Revolution of 1952*.

The fourth chapter is entitled "The Victory of the Egyptian Revolution (1954 – 1955)" and discusses the topics of the Baghdad pact, the victory of the revolutionary-democratic wing in Egypt, political development in Syria and Lebanon, the "black regime" in Iraq, and Jordan under King al-Ḥusain. The theme of the fifth chapter, called "The Suez Crisis and the Tripartite Aggression 1956", is partly dealt with by the author in his detailed monograph *Suez 1956. The Twilight of Traditional Colonialism in the Middle East*. The chapter explores the topics of pan-Arabism in the Middle East, the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, diplomatic negotiations, and the military solution, the tripartite aggression on Egypt, and its consequences, and the twilight of the Iraqi monarchy. The last chapter "The Culmination of the revolutionary process (1955 – 1957)" deals with the following topics: the Eisenhower doctrine, the struggle for Syria and the United Arab Republic, the deepening of political conflicts and civil war in

Lebanon, Free Officers, and the revolution in Iraq, al-Ḥusain's coup in Jordan, developments in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

The author has rightly 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 at a relatively moderate level. With disregard for the geographical context of their political aspirations, the Zionists' skilful combination of humanitarian appeal and political intrigue not only raised Palestine to fever pitch but undermined the already weakened British prestige throughout the region.

Another interesting issue is the role of the Arab League. The author argues that because of internal as well as 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 Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir used the League to influence the foreign policies of other states. President Nāṣir successfully used Egypt's predominance in the regional machinery to solicit the support of the League's members 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.

Dr. Sorby touches on nearly all 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 differing opinions regarding the best strategies to adopt and which policies would ensure 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 arouse 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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