CRISNO 195

YEMEN WAR I

Background:

The four actors in the first phase of the long Yemen War were Jordan, Sa'udi Arabia, Egypt, and Yemen. This crisis lasted from 26 September 1962 to 15 April 1963.

Summary:

The coup in Yemen on 26 September triggered a crisis for Jordan and Sa'udi Arabia. Both feared the possibility that the fall of the monarchy in Yemen would spread to their own kingdoms. They responded on 1 October with a delivery of arms to the Royalists led by the former imam. This triggered a crisis for Egypt and the YAR. On 4 October the Republican regime ordered general mobilization. Egypt, after sending a team to observe the situation on 13 October, decided to dispatch several thousand troops to Yemen by mid-November.

Civil war broke out between the Republicans, aided by Egypt, and the Royalists, aided by arms and men from Jordan and Sa'udi Arabia. On 4 November Mecca Radio announced that Egyptian aircraft had attacked five Sa'udi villages. That day, too, a military alliance between Jordan and Sa'udi Arabia was made known. On the l0th a Joint Defense Pact between Yemen and Egypt was signed. Following the Egyptian raids on Sa'udi Arabia, a Sa'udi decision was made to carry out reprisal raids against the YAR. When the Republican government got word of this (via Jordanian officers who fled to Egypt), they warned of air attacks on the two countries.

The U.S. reacted by sending a warship to Jiddah as a warning against further Yemeni or Egyptian attacks on Sa'udi Arabia. Word was also given to Yemen that, in the event of an attack by the two states, all U.S. military aircraft would be withdrawn and the United States would adopt a neutral attitude. President Kennedy offered his good offices to bring about a peaceful solution and announced U.S. recognition of the Republican government on 19 December. Further Egyptian bombing of Sa'udi Arabia resulted in a Sa'udi call for general mobilization.

Ralph Bunche, UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, visited Yemen from 1 to 4 March on a fact-finding mission on behalf of Secretary-General U Thant. Bunche’s mission proved important because the primary mediator for this crisis, former U.S. Ambassador to India Ellsworth T. Bunker, was not allowed in Yemen. Bunker presented a proposal for agreement on disengagement between Saudi Arabia and Egypt on 10 April 1963 and, through shuttle diplomacy, secured the agreement.

On 15 April 1963 Jordan recognized the YAR and withdrew from the war. A cease-fire and disengagement agreement signed that day marked the end of this crisis and the first phase of the Yemen War.

The USSR provided economic assistance to the YAR and, indirectly, through Egypt, military aid.

References:

Dawisha 1975; Gause 1990; Hassouna 1975; Heikal 1975; von Horn 1966; Ismael 1970; Kerr 1970; Kimche 1966; Little 1968; Mahjub 1974; MEJ Chronology 1962, 1963; O'Ballance 1971; Porter 1984; Sadat 1978; Safran 1988; Schmidt 1968; Stookey 1982; Wenner 1967.

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