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Kuwait, Al-Qabbas Newspaper, issue No.1730, 15/3/1977

The Military History of Yemen Since Beginning of British Occupation *

The book is a pioneer in its subject, as well as the contents are more widened than its title. The recent reform movements in the south and north of Yemen were still in their developmental stage, although their progress was swift. And what has been written in Arabic language about these movements up to now was little and weak, in aspect of references which were written in foreign languages, especially English. In spite of all those several references, accuracy and integrity, they were written by westerns affected by their national inclinations and many of them had participated in serving the colonists who ruled Yemen for their favors and in the pay of the occupation, not for the interest of Yemen. Among those writers who wrote to defend themselves and justify their acts not to explain the facts as they should be.

As for this book, it is considered pioneer in Arabic point of view, and in Arabic language and the author is a real Yemeni who is Mr. Sultan Nagi, lecturer of Yemeni History in High College of Education in Aden. For many years, his book has been within his specialization, the domain that he loved. Before that, the author had many essays and researches in specialized academic reviews and journals, in addition to many books, the last one was "Selected and Annotated Bibliography on Yemen", published by University of Kuwait in 1973 in both languages English and Arabic.

Methodology

As it is known that Yemen, during the years (1839 – 1967) which the book explains its military history, was not one Yemen but two Yemens, North and South. The south was many Yemens or small countries(states), each one has its independent affairs from the other or rather they were subjected to the British rule. So, how did the author treat his subject in these small countries, the Yemens?

It is a general view for the author as it is one Yemen, and he divided these years into two periods, the first one started in 1839 (the beginning of the British occupation to Aden or southern Yemen, leaving it as petty countries and Sultanates) which ended at the end of World War I in 1918 (where Imam Yehia got rid of Turkish rule in North Yemen and got independence). In this period, the author designated the first three chapters of his book. The second period started after the World War I, after which both North and South Yemen proceeded in the way to get their independence to hold the rein of power and take over their responsibilities as much as possible among countries. In this period, the author designated the last six chapters of his book.

The division of Yemen in those two periods has imposed on the author to handle its parts separately, but he inevitably handled with them in paralleled steps. When he dealt with the military conditions of one of Yemeni districts during one of the stages, he presented its counterpart in the other parts of the stage itself. He presented these conditions in every part, contemporaneous and synchronous in a united view through each stage. Wherever the reader finishes reading the book, he will discern the military history (and non - military) of the whole Yemen, going on sticking together in one system. No doubt that this method which applied by the author is the best approach because this will help the reader

assimilate the subject in paralleled and coherent parts whenever he completes it, he will find that the whole subject is wholly comprehensible and easy. Hence, we consider the book is a pioneer in its method and in its subject.

History of National Consciousness in Yemen

The content of the book is wider than its title, that is, it is not a mere military history of Yemen, but also it presents the political development of Yemen in the recent era, or rather it presents the development of the "national consciousness" in recent Yemen, the local, Arabic and international reasons resulting in its origination. So Yemen had to perceive its affairs in order to achieve itself and keep step with the new civilization, looking back to its deep-rooted past, and its backward present, and looking forward to its hopeful future, passed on its local capability and efforts, even if it needs an aid from others to supplement its movements forward development as the other nations do.

If the author paid a great attention to the recent military history of Yemen, also he unwillingly or willingly concerned with the origin of the national consciousness, and the political affairs of Yemen, as he depicted the features of its social, economical and cultural conditions, and its affection with what is going around the Arab or international areas unwillingly or willingly. The Military History of Yemen was not but the most outstanding expressions of its national consciousness, while this consciousness did not appear as it appeared in its resistance at acquaintance or ignorance among its parts in the north and the south in order to break the shackles with which they were fettered by the rulers either national or foreigners. In their resistance, they had suffered and paid great sacrifices for over one century; finally they dethroned the Imam ruling in the north, and expelled the colonized ruling in the south and eradicated the Sultanates and petty countries and became two Yemens in place of many small countries, and could perk up aspiring to united Yemen in the end.

The author completed the military history of Yemen, he did not leave any military or paramilitary institutions but presented its origination, development, necessities, effects, weapons and resources generally or particularly. Also he presented all internal and external steps of conflict, and the outcomes of each step and what was going on during the wars between them and the colonialists. At the end, each North and South Yemens has its military forces comprised of its citizens, under their control, after it was mixed of them and the others, and most leaderships were under the foreign power.

Among the evidences of the author's success, he published many personal pictures and photocopies of the documents upon which he based or indicated in his book, that he distributed between the chapters, so that in the end of each chapter he could put its relevant personal photos and documents to complete its subject. Beside he was successful in collecting the references of his book in detail, and putting them off to the end of the book to be referred by the reader, as well as he did not burden the pages of the book with footnotes for which they are indicated, in order not to disperse the reader's mind. Thus, the author was an exemplar in the honesty that he was quoting anything literally, and referred it to its author. In his book, he indicated that the most of his quotations were (from sayings of rulers, governors, consultants and political and military officers), and had reasons that (they were a main party in the matter, whereas many of these quotations are considering confession of their defeats or condemnation for them, or acknowledge the correctness of the other party opposed to their policies). In investigation, this sound point of view that puts the reader face to face against the opponents themselves to participate in understating the conflicted issues, and delivers his judgment by himself depending not on the investigations of the author and his judgment. It is the right and duty of the reader to hold the responsibility for what he is reading and judging, and not to impose obligation

upon the author, where it is enough for the author to present the matter or matters with its available evidences. In this case, he will satisfy his right, whether agreed or disagreed with him.

As for the references of the books, amounted to one hundred and seventy books, mostly in English language, some of them, more than seventy books are written in Arabic or English, and about fifty reports or clandestine documents yet unpublished in books, and the rest of references, about forty are reports or secret documents recently published. All these reports and documents were in English, that they are easy to be understood by the author due to his proficiency in this language, since he was an alumnu in the American University in Beirut 1961 and also from a British University in 1964. Thus, he was qualified in understanding his subject for many reasons.

* For more details, see list of works and the home page

