

Don't Let the British Turn Yemen into an Afghanistan!

by Hussein Askary

Jan. 7—Britain, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the IMF/World Bank have made Yemen almost a failed state. The Yemeni government is partly responsible for the situation too, because it has succumbed to the pressure and the advice coming from these parties on how to deal with its internal, sovereign, political and economic affairs. This is turning Yemen into a case similar to Afghanistan.

What do the two have in common? Both are former British colonies. Both are impoverished tribal societies where the British have first-hand knowledge of the tribal and ethnic disputes and rivalries that can be manipulated. Both are allegedly allies of a United States which lends its ears to the British enemy. The two countries have become fertile grounds for terrorist activities originating from Saudi Arabia and from Britain, where terrorists are trained, financed, and provided with British passports for free movement as subjects of the British Crown. However, Yemen's strategic location at the junction of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Horn of Africa, and the route to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean, constitute an even more serious threat to world peace and stability, if the country descends into the same abyss as Afghanistan has been forced to.

Yemen came under attack back in the early 1990s, when it was regarded, together with Sudan and Jordan, as allies of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, when the latter invaded Kuwait. Iraq had helped the two parts of what was then the divided Yemen—South Yemen and the northern Republic of Yemen—reunite in 1990, and was an important source of economic and military aid. A few months after the reunification of Yemen, the Gulf War (Kuwait war) broke out, and horrendous sanctions were imposed on Iraq to “send it back to the Stone Age.” Yemen, Sudan, and Jordan were punished for supporting Iraq politically.

Civil war broke out in Yemen in 1994, when south Yemen's Socialist Party leadership, supported by Arab

Gulf states and Saudi Arabia, demanded secession. Using the *modus operandi* of the British masters, Saudi Arabia supported all the fighting parties. Saudi Arabia also managed to persuade the desperate Yemeni leadership to use fanatic Islamists, the so-called mujahideen, to fight the “atheist communists” in the South. This was a copy of the Afghan mujahideen operation against the Soviet Union in the 1980s, which hatched al-Qaeda and other terror organizations under the auspices of the British MI6 and American CIA. The Pyrrhic victory by northern Yemen kept the country united, but made it hostage to Saudi aid and the loyalty of blackmailing tribal leaders. The Islamist militants, supported by the Saudi Wahhabi fundamentalist movement, secured a permanent foothold in the country, just as they did in Afghanistan, after the retreat of Soviet troops in 1989. The Republic's hard-won independence and sovereignty were being slowly lost.

Saudi Arabia also secured new land areas in disputed border regions, where the borders had been left unmarked since the 1936 war between the House of al-Saud and the Yemeni kingdom. In 1995, a memorandum of understanding was signed, but not finalized, by the two sides, on the demarcation of the borders. However in April 1998, Saudi Arabia occupied a number of small islands along the Red Sea coast, belonging to Yemen. In July 1998, the President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, charged that the Saudis had used armed force to take over Yemeni territory, killing numerous Yemeni coast guards and citizens. A new crisis broke out, managed by Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz. Saudi support to Yemen stopped, and tens of thousands of Yemenis, working in Saudi Arabia to help their families back home, were cut off.

Caught in the Trap

In that same year, the British Empire, represented by Islamist terrorists trained and financed in Londoni-



Yemen's capital city of Sanaa, showing the country's distinctive and beautiful architecture. A nation with a strong sense of its historic depth and mission, Yemen has been continuously undermined by foreign interventions and internal power struggles.

stan and by the International Monetary Fund/World Bank, descended upon Yemen in a pincer move.

The government of Yemen, cut off from all aid and left friendless, was forced to take loans with the usual IMF conditionalities tied to them, such as cutting the state budget for public services, removing government subsidies for food and fuel, and privatization of various state-owned industries and enterprises. Later that year, bread riots broke out in protest against the rise in food and fuel prices.

In December 1998, a group of terrorists, with British citizenship, was arrested in Aden, Yemen, for conspiring to commit terrorist actions against Western interests and tourists in Yemen. The group, called Ansraul-Sharia, were British Muslims working under

instructions of Sheikh Mustafa Kamel (a.k.a. Abu Hamaza al-Misri), the so-called Imam of Finsbury Park Mosque in London. Al-Misri, a veteran of the MI6-Afghan War school who had since moved to Britain, acquiring British citizenship and protection, was training Muslim youth in his London mosque right under the watching eyes of British intelligence.

In late December, a hostage-rescue operation by Yemeni security forces failed, leading to the death of one Australian and four British tourists. The leader of the terror group which killed them, Zain al-Abdin al-Mihdhar, was arrested and sentenced to death by Yemeni authorities. Al-Mihdhar, leader of the Abyan Army group, with connections to al-Qaeda, was collaborating with al-Misri's group. The Yemeni government launched a massive diplomatic campaign to force Britain to cooperate with Yemen to stop British-protected terrorists from carrying out operations against the country. To no avail.

The government of Yemen, then, kicked out the British Scotland Yard officers who had been invited to observe the investigations, and withdrew a previous application to join the British Commonwealth. In January 1999, Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh sent a message to then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, demanding that al-Masri be handed over for trial in Yemen, on charges of carrying out terrorist acts in Yemen. President Saleh also provided Blair with ample evidence of the British groups' activities.

But, as expected, Blair refused to cooperate and put an end to the Empire's very important assets, "Islamic terrorism." This meant that British-Saudi terrorism continued to plague Yemen.

The next major terrorist operation was the bombing of the U.S. Navy destroyer *USS Cole* in October 2000, in the Port of Aden. Instead of looking for the culprits in the Anglo-Saudi camp, the U.S. Administration, now under George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, was pointing the finger at Sudan. The terrorists' freedom of action and movement, made possible by the British, the Saudis, and their assets, made the 9/11 attacks possible a year later.

Deteriorating Domestic Situation

Yemen, unfortunately, became an "ally" of the United States in the Bush-Cheney so-called War on

Terrorism, making its government less and less popular internally, especially as its collaboration with the U.S. brought no economic advantages, but, on the contrary, more adherence to the killer policies of the IMF. As government subsidies for food and fuel were completely removed, food prices on the international markets skyrocketed in 2007-08, and bread riots broke out, more violently in April 2008. Reportedly about 100 citizens were killed, as the government deployed the Armed Forces, and even tanks, in some cities.

As the government entered armed conflict with the rebels, who were led by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi in the northwest region of Sa'da, starting in 2004, political protests were almost banned, and rage and frustration engulfed society. With the collapse of the economy and agriculture, youth from the rural areas have no way to make a living but to join religious and militant groups financed by foreign powers.

Once again today, the Saudis (who are Sunnis) are offering their assistance to the government of Yemen. Since al-Houthi is a follower of the Zaidi sect, a branch of Shi'ite Islam, a perfect context was created for expanding the sectarian Shi'a-Sunni conflict from Pakistan to Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, where the British and the Saudis are playing a new "divide and destroy" game, especially since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Iran Factor

The war in Sa'da, now that the Saudis are lending military support to the government of Yemen and are launching attacks inside Yemeni territories against the Houthis, could become a regional war. The greater goal is to draw Iran into the conflict, since Iran is formally Shi'ite and allegedly supports the Yazdis. This is not completely true, because the Shi'a clergy in Iran and Iraq do not really accept the authenticity of the Yazdi/Isma'ili sect as genuinely Shi'ite.

However, these seemingly small distinctions are not



an issue for the British Empire and those in the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia who want to wage a war against Iran. An additional danger in this situation has been the suspected role the government of Yemen, or at least influential factions within it, have been playing to stir up the propaganda against Iran. The government of Yemen and the Saudis have rejected various Iranian offers to help mediate in the conflict.

One interesting case, which revealed the intent to fabricate evidence implicating Iran in the conflict, was the seizure in October 2009, of an allegedly Iranian arms shipment in the Red Sea, on its way to the Houthi rebels. The Chinese ship, it was revealed later, had originated from Dubai, a British offshore arms and drug-money-laundering haven, and was registered for a Yemeni arms dealer by the name of Fares al-Manna. More revealing was that the shipment's official delivery papers were issued by the Yemeni Defense Ministry. This was revealed by Yemeni opposition Members of Parliament and opposition papers in November 2009. There are demands now that the government undertake

an official investigation into how the Defense Ministry was involved in this scam, and why the Coast Guard let the ship go, after the initial media storm about Iran's involvement. Obviously, certain elements within the government of Yemen were involved, attempting to implicate Iran in the conflict.

Arms dealer al-Manna is one person who should be investigated. He is the brother of the governor of Sa'da, and originates from a Zaidi tribe which was supported by the Saudis and the British when the royalists were fighting to regain control over the country from the republican officers who launched a coup in 1962 against Sultan Ahmed ben Yahya. Egyptian republican leader Gamal Abdel Nasser supported the republicans, and the U.S. Kennedy Administration was sympathetic to the cause of the Yemeni officers. The war between the royalists, supported by Saudi Arabia and the British, and the founders of the republic, lasted until 1970, at a great cost to the nation and also to the Egyptian Army.

Al-Manna, for some time in 2008-09, was playing the role of mediator between the government and the rebels. He enjoys strong relations with the Saudi royal family and frequently visits Saudi Arabia. He resides in Dubai. His multiple connections and arms trafficking, which stretch beyond Yemen to Somalia and large parts of East Africa, should be one crucial point for any serious investigation.

There are various similar cases, some of them with direct connections to the role of Britain, such as the case of Mohammad Ali Ahmad, who was given British citizenship in 2008 to protect him from Yemeni justice for involvement in arms smuggling, terrorism, and other criminal acts in the southern part of Yemen. The Yemeni government responded in April 2008 by sending a letter to Interpol demanding his arrest. He was a security official before the reunification of Yemen in 1989. He fled during the outbreak of civil war between the two parts in 2004, and is suspected of helping the southern separatist groups now. The main radio station for the separatist movement in south Yemen, www.soutalgnoub.com (Voice of the South), is located in London!

The tragedy in Yemen, as in Afghanistan, is that the United States is relying on the British for support and guidance. That was the crime of the Bush Administration and continues to the case with the Obama Administration. As for the Yemenis, their reliance on Saudi Arabia time and again is a source of problems for the republic. The usual excuse is that they are forced to col-

laborate with the Saudis, the tribes, and the Islamists, because they have no other friends. The government of Yemen has put itself in an impossible situation, where the only "friends" it has are, ironically, its own enemies.

Not Hopeless Yet!

Now, given the paradigm shift in the direction of Lyndon LaRouche's "Four-Power" agreement to establish a new world economic and political order, the door is open for many nations that want to defend their sovereignty from empire politics. Yemen is such a nation.

In December 2004, a delegation representing *EIR* and the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) were invited by the Yemeni General Student and Youth Union to a conference in Sanaa, the capital, to discuss LaRouche's proposals for economic development in the region and the world. The LaRouche delegation proposed that Yemen break with the IMF policy and support the concept of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, by building a bridge/tunnel to connect Asia with Africa across the Bab El-Mandab Strait. It was also suggested that Yemen start a program for nuclear power development for the desalination of seawater and creation of an industrial base in the country, benefitting from its proximity to raw materials and the transport corridors, both by sea and land. The government of Yemen has since taken some steps in that direction, but the political and economic situation, in addition to lack of international support, has undermined the implementation of these projects.

That option is still on the table, in spite of the more difficult circumstances engulfing the country. The government of Yemen should seek new allies and friends who are willing to become partners in economic development, such as China, India, and Russia.

Yemen has a very strong and conscious sense of its historic depth and mission. However, it has been undermined by foreign forces, and internal power struggles. The spirit of republicanism which was ignited in the optimistic 1960s is about to be extinguished. If that happens, then we will see a new Afghanistan in the crossroads connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, many times more fatal than what Afghanistan has represented for world politics. On the other hand, those patriots in the United States who really wish to rid their country of terrorism and endless wars in Asia, should realize who their real enemy is, which is not Yemen.