

First National Conference of Yemen's Youth Union: Youth Are Key to Future

by Our Special Correspondent

Although Yemen is an ancient land, it is also a very young country, whose two parts, divided by foreign occupation, were unified only in 1990. The problems which the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh has faced, since unification, are many, and awesome.

Yemen today is a nation of over 20 million people, living on a land area of about 530,000 square kilometers, roughly twice the size of the state of Wyoming. The country is relatively poor, with an agricultural sector hindered by lack of adequate water resources. Transportation and energy infrastructure, which have been significantly developed over the recent period—with 10,000 km of new roads having been built since unification—still require upgrading and expansion, especially in rural areas. Oil production, which began in the 1990s, runs about 438,500 barrels per day. Unemployment is estimated at 35%, and the majority of those who are employed, work in agriculture and husbandry. About 25% of the labor force of 5.79 million, are engaged in the service sector, industry, and trade. An estimated 15.7% of the population live below the poverty level. The country has a foreign debt of \$6 billion, and has been subjected to International Monetary Fund “structural adjustment programs”—that is, budget-cutting and austerity.

Yemen's population is very young: Some 51% are under 18 years of age, and the median age is 16.5 years. Given a present population growth rate of 3.5%, this trend will be maintained.

Clearly, then, the key to developing Yemen is its youth. And the government has demonstrated a keen awareness of this fact, by focussing on providing institutional support for the younger generation. These youth are the grandsons and granddaughters of the revolutionaries of 1962, and are self-conscious of this fact.

LaRouche Representatives in Sana'a

A delegation of LaRouche representatives had the opportunity to experience these exciting developments during a visit to Yemen, from Nov. 27 to Dec. 4 (see box). The occasion was the first national conference of the Yemen Youth General Union, in the capital city, Sana'a. The YYGU was founded in January 2003, as the country's first unified youth movement. Before 1990, there had been two separate youth movements, attached to the leading parties of the two states, the Socialist

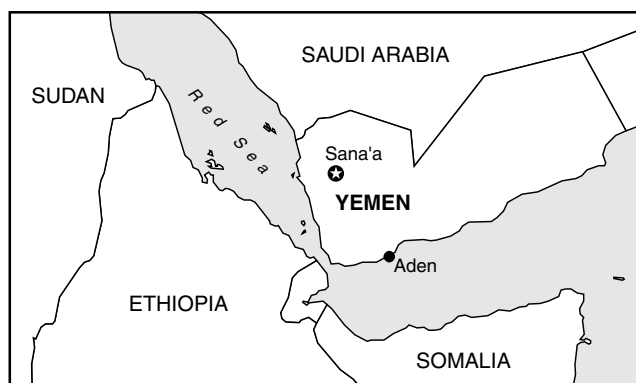
Party in the south and the General People's Congress Party in the north. Following participation in the 2001 world festival of youth in Algeria, a preparatory committee set about creating a unified, Yemen-wide youth movement, dedicated to solving the problems of youth in the country overall.

In setting up the organization, the founders encountered problems with Islamist parties, which were opposed to the idea of having women participate. The YYGU insisted that women be given equal opportunities, and make up 30% of the membership—a very high ratio for Yemen's extremely conservative society. The slogan of the organization calls for unity of intellectual thought and views, and for youth to act to help achieve comprehensive development for the entire country. Since its founding, branches have been established throughout the nation, and 400 delegates from these branches participated in the Sana'a conference.

The conference was sponsored at the highest level, by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who spoke at the opening session, and it was addressed in the following days by a number of ministers of the government. The priority placed on developing youth was shown in the method and level of organization of the conference.

President Saleh minced no words in his speech. Speaking on the anniversary of the final withdrawal of the British (Nov. 20, 1967), he hailed the achievements of the revolution, and of the recently consolidated national unity. He referred to forces opposed to unity as “some who are diseased,” and said they need to be “cured—cured by youth.”

The two main problems he addressed, were poverty and





The First National Conference of the Yemen Youth General Union took place in Sana'a, the capital city of Yemen, on Nov. 27 to Dec. 4. From left: Saleh al-Sanady, LaRouche Youth Movement member Daniel Buchmann, and translator.

terrorism, phenomena which he said were intimately linked. Referring to a trip he had recently made to Europe, Saleh reported that the governments of Germany and Italy had assessed Yemen's anti-terrorist campaign very positively, and similarly its progress in implementing true democracy. One important achievement he cited, was Yemen's universal suffrage for all citizens over the age of 18, including women, who also have the right to run for political office—a happy anomaly for the Arabian peninsula, and for many other Arab countries in the region.

The point the President drove home was that, without economic development, terrorism would find fertile soil in which to grow; therefore, he thanked those countries in Europe, and also the United States, for economic assistance, which has led to the construction of schools and hospitals. Lashing out against his critics, he said he had not gone abroad—as some had claimed—to get “money,” but “to bring back development.” In fact, during his visit to Germany, Saleh signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of a 680-megawatt power station in Sana'a, to be built, most likely, by Siemens. Furthermore, on the same trip, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Ahmad Mohammad Sofan signed an agreement for financial cooperation with German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Heidi Wieczorek-Zeul; under the agreement, Germany will grant Yemen 31 million euros, earmarked for urgently needed water projects.

The President underlined the crucial role which youth have to play in developing Yemen. First, he told them that they should extend the duration of their conference, from the planned three days, to five, in order to make the most of the opportunity to learn, and to discuss important matters. He

pledged that he would send more experts to the conference over succeeding days, to educate the group. He also put forward a challenge to youth, to serve the needs of their country. Polemicizing against those who want to go abroad, he said students should complete their studies in Yemen, unless they are pursuing studies in areas which are not offered in the country's educational institutions. Those who do study abroad, he said, should return to Yemen, to give the benefit of their education to the country's development. Joking about people who seek political favors to study abroad, he told his ministers (many of whom were present) that, were they to find an order authorized by the President for a student to go abroad, they should ignore it.

Yemen's Fight Against Terrorism

The themes introduced by President Saleh were elaborated by other government representatives. Interior Minister Dr. Rashad al-

Alimi addressed the role of youth in national security, and described the government's successes in dealing with the problem of terrorism. Yemen has been severely affected by terrorism, in two ways: International terrorist attacks on Yemeni national territory, like those against the American ship the *U.S.S. Cole* in 2000 and against the French tanker *Limburg* in 2002, scared off foreign investors in the port of Aden, and put Yemen on the list of countries harboring terrorists. “Yemen was considered number two after Afghanistan,” he noted. And an indigenous insurgency, led by the Islamist Hussein al-Houthi, had been involved in bloody confrontations with Yemeni troops over this past Summer. Al-Alimi explained to the students that the government's approach had been one of dialogue. Regarding elements linked to al-Qaeda, he distinguished between those Arabs and Muslims who had gone to Afghanistan in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to fight alongside the Afghan resistance, and those who became terrorist operatives in al-Qaeda. Of suspects arrested in Yemen, those with no relation to al-Qaeda, and those who had committed no crimes, have been released, whereas those involved in al-Qaeda were jailed.

As regards the al-Houthi insurgency, President Saleh had sent a delegation to the Islamist leader one week after fighting broke out, but “Houthi refused all mediation efforts by parliamentarians, Muslim scholars, and government officials to surrender peacefully,” al-Alimi reported at the time. The insurgency was therefore put down by force.

But the remaining followers and sympathizers of the insurgent had to be dealt with. The government organized a rehabilitation course for imams of 350 mosques in Yemen, attended by scholars from Yemen as well as Al-Azhar in Egypt. Yemeni preachers, several ministers, including al-

LaRouche Message to Yemen

A delegation representing the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo) in Germany and the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) visited Yemen Nov. 27-Dec. 4, on the invitation of the Yemen Youth General Union, which is the youth organization of the ruling General People's Congress Party. The delegation, led by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach of the EIR editorial board and BüSo, included LYM representative Daniel Buchmann and Saleh al-Sanady, a Yemeni student from Berlin working with the LYM.

The delegation was received for discussions by Prime Minister Dr. Abd al-Qadir Ba Jamal, Foreign Minister Abdul Karim al-Eryani, former Prime Minister and current political advisor of the President, Dr. A.A. el-Eryani, Secretary General Assistant for Political and Foreign Relations of the General People's Congress, Dr. Ahmed Mohamed al-Asbahi, and President of the Yemen Youth General Union, Moammar al-Eryani. All meetings and sessions of the conference were covered widely in the Yemeni press, and members of the delegation were interviewed by Yemeni radio and television, and press.

Mirak-Weissbach delivered a short message of greetings from Lyndon LaRouche and the LYM, to the first session of the Yemen Youth General Union's national conference, in the presence of the President of Yemen, H.E. Ali Abdullah Saleh, who opened the conference. The message read as follows:

Salamalaikum! Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Yemen Youth General Union:

It is a great honor to address this conference.

I want to bring you the greetings of Mr. Lyndon

LaRouche, from the United States, and the worldwide LaRouche Youth Movement.

We are living in a time of great historic upheavals. The dollar-based monetary system is collapsing. This can lead to a general breakdown of the world economy and the danger of new wars, as we have seen in recent years. Or, it can lead to the creation of a new system, based on equality of all nations, and economic cooperation and development, as the basis for world peace.

Whether or not the crisis will lead to tragedy, or to a new, just world economic order, will depend on the quality of political and moral leadership we have.

This is not just an economic crisis, but an existential crisis for all of mankind. It is a crisis which is the result of a moral-cultural crisis, especially in the West. Therefore, it is all the more urgent that we revive the best traditions, in the West, the Arab world, and other cultures, in a true dialogue of civilizations.

It is extremely important that your President, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdullah Saleh, has engaged actively on the international level, for such a cultural dialogue. In Yemen, which I am visiting for the first time, your President has displayed leadership, by confronting social and political challenges, with the method of dialogue and in the spirit of reconciliation. It is wonderful for me, and my delegation, to experience democracy in Yemen, and to learn about the exciting political direction of your homeland. Your President has devoted great attention to promoting the development of youth, as a driving force in social progress.

If the youth take up the responsibility for the dialogue of cultures, if they revive the greatest traditions of universal history, then the current crisis can be overcome, and a new moral culture can prevail.

I wish your important conference full success.

Shukran [Thank you].

Alimi, and President Saleh addressed the imams, urging them to shun extremism and protect youth from al-Houthi's ideology. Al-Alimi described the cultish practices of al-Houthi, who used to gather youths three times a week, in candlelit sessions, and tell them that he was the Mahdi, the Shi'ite imam of the Ninth Century A.D., who is expected to return. Al-Houthi also took his followers to cemeteries, apparently to communicate with the dead. Interior Minister al-Alimi said, without further specification, that al-Houthi had been financed from "outside the country."

Al-Alimi concluded by listing the security challenges still facing Yemen: the illegal weapons trade and the "culture of weapons" in the country; and the illegal drug-trafficking, both of which are connected to the difficulties of monitoring a

2,400-km coastline. In a lively discussion with the youth delegates, al-Alimi announced the establishment in Sana'a of a police school for young women, and invited participants to visit it.

The Economic Issue Is Primary

Foreign Minister Abdul Karim al-Eryani, in his remarks to the conference, stressed the importance of dialogue as a method to seek the truth. In this context, he welcomed the presence of the LaRouche representatives, and expressed the hope that future conferences would have guests from other Arab countries. He told the young people attending, that they should not think of what was being presented as "information," something they could get from the Internet, but should

think instead that, in the course of the dialogue process of the conference, they would change the way they thought. He challenged them to fight for the knowledge of what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong.

The other issue he presented was the economic crisis. Pointing to the dollar crisis, he elaborated on the negative effects the plunge of the dollar has had on world trade, and the impact it will have on the international financial system. In this context, he polemicized against those who examine such monetary developments from a strictly financial standpoint, without considering the effects on the real, physical economy. In solving problems, he declared, the economic issue is primary. Specifically, regarding Yemen, which is “looking for a new world system,” the priority is to work cooperatively with other nations in regionally defined development projects. “If you make your neighbor richer, you will become richer,” he said. This, he added, is also the only way, ultimately, to solve the problem of terrorism: “Economic development must be part of an international effort against terrorism,” since a security or military approach alone will not succeed. In this context, he emphasized that the solutions to the Palestinian and Iraqi crises can only be solved with this approach, and with the end of occupation.

Dialogue of Civilizations

An exciting dialogue unfolded in the conference, as members of the LaRouche delegation went to the podium, to give their views of the strategic situation, and the method used to change history. Daniel Buchmann, who was introduced by Saleh al-Sanady, represented the LaRouche Youth Movement, stating that its mission was to change politics. In the face of economic collapse and the consequent danger of war, he said, Lyndon LaRouche is pulling together the forces to build a new system, based on the precedents of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal program and Bretton Woods system. Otherwise, a new dark age threatens, he said.

Buchmann argued the need for a cultural paradigm-shift, away from the culture which brought this crisis on. Here he explained what the paradigm-shift had been in the West, something foreign to a Yemeni audience, which has not experienced the rock-drug-sex counterculture, the environmentalist insanity, deindustrialization propaganda, or the like. Thus, when the youth heard about how the culture of progress of the 1960s in Europe and the U.S., had been destroyed, and replaced by a culture of decadence, of bread and circuses, they were shocked.

Buchmann went on to explain how the LYM is fighting to reverse this cultural decadence: Sketching the history of the LYM, he emphasized that its primary task is to educate the population, to develop the human mind. He elaborated the idea that what is presented as American policy today, is actually a violation of the true American heritage, and illustrated this by reading from the Declaration of Independence. The noble ideas expressed therein elicited spontaneous ap-



LaRouche Youth Movement member Daniel Buchmann with Yemeni youth at the First National Conference of Yemen Youth General Union.

plause from the young delegates. He concluded by saying that, with such a cultural heritage, the LYM has the means and the right to tell the U.S. to stop its imperialist policies.

The following day, Dec. 1, in the morning session, which was attended by several political figures as well as the students, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach delivered a speech on the strategic situation following the U.S. Presidential election. She showed why the apparent re-election of Bush-Cheney had to be called into question, and explained how the U.S. electoral system works. Quoting LaRouche’s assessment that the situation would remain in flux until Jan. 20, she said that even if Bush-Cheney were to be inaugurated, they could end up like Nixon—disgraced and out of office—as a result of investigations into Cheney’s corrupt dealings, and charges of voter suppression.

Turning to the two crises facing the next President—the economic breakdown crisis, symptomized by the dollar crash, and the strategic crises around Iraq and Israel/Palestine—she outlined LaRouche’s New Bretton Woods approach, and the LaRouche Doctrine for Southwest Asia, as being the way out. Final remarks by Mirak-Weissbach on the dialogue of civilizations highlighted key moments in Islamic and Western Christian civilization, which must be revived for practice today, if Classical culture is to be saved, and morality returned to society.

A wide-ranging discussion followed, in which the Yemeni youth wanted to understand better the political process in the United States. One girl wanted to know why there is such an anti-Arab, anti-Islamic bias in America; another asked what the difference in the campaign was between Bush and John Kerry, since Kerry had not only pledged to continue the war on terrorism, but had actually singled out Yemen as a target. Another wanted to understand the Electoral College system better.

The response of the Yemeni youth showed once more that universal ideas can be grasped no matter what the cultural

setting, precisely because the human mind is universal. And the eagerness the youth displayed to learn more about the LaRouche movement, to read, discuss, and circulate these ideas in Yemen, is indicative of the dynamic of a true dialogue of civilizations.