

Archive: Counter-Revolution in Yemen

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The September 1962 revolution in the Yemen transformed it from an isolated and archaic survival from the Middle Ages which even imperialism was content to let slumber, into the fulcrum of the liberation struggle in the Arabian peninsula throughout the ensuing decade. The embattled Yemeni Republic became the testing ground of Arab nationalism and the supply base for liberation in the South. The final conclusion of a cease-fire agreement between royalists and republicans in May 1970 brought this period to a close. Saudi Arabia and Britain now recognized the Republic they had fought so bitterly to destroy. The Economist hailed it as 'the best news to come out of the Arab world for many a month'. The perspective of a workers' and peasants' revolution in the Yemen, which had been placed on the agenda by the civil war, has been extinguished by the cease-fire, if only temporarily. The port workers of Hodeida, the Yemen's largest port, went on strike in opposition to it, and three of them were killed in the repression which followed. But though the Republic survives only in name, the revolutionary process which its proclamation in 1962 inaugurated continues to advance in Dhofar. In an attempt to contain this revolt the British government sponsored a coup d'état in July 1970 in its semi-colony, the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. The Yemeni revolution demands close study if the causes of its ambiguous outcome are to be understood. It provides eloquent evidence of the hopeless inadequacy of Nasserism to the present tasks of the Arab revolution as well as an indication that the possibility of a revolutionary alternative to Nasserism now exists.

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