

Jan Wanner: In the Shadow of Cold War. Middle East in years of Eisenhower's Doctrine, 1956–1960.

Prague, Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2011, 568 pages

Jan Wanner is one of the biggest Czech historians of last 30 years. His main interests are history of Middle East, Cold War of Foreign Policy of United States of America. In this publication he merged all these main subject of his interest and analysed foreign policy of superpowers in the Middle East. The book is divided to the two main parts of five chapters. The first main part is called „Stopping of Arab Nationalism“ and deals with the first steps of United States of America and Soviet Union in the region, where after restriction of involvement of traditional powers (Great Britain, France) had developed free space for expansion and both superpowers were too afraid to let the each other do its policy freely. The second part is called “Among Streams“ and contains analysis of internal development in states of Middle East region, which were not characterised before, and so uncovers further causes of change of foreign policy of both superpowers after closer insight to the problems of the region. The book contains also very useful appendix with maps and index.

Beginnings of American involvement in Middle East are connected with Crisis of Suez and Eisenhower's doctrine. Humiliation of Great Britain and France destroyed almost all remains of influence of those old powers in the region. USA knew that, they had to fulfil this power vacuum sooner than Soviet Union. American president Dwight Eisenhower tried to prevent Soviet expansion by declaring so called Eisenhower's doctrine. This doctrine promised that every country, which was targeted by unprovoked aggression of another state, and which would ask for help, would get American military and material help. The author describes development of ideas which led American government to the doctrine. He also presents mistakes in American thoughts, which came to the light almost immediately after doctrine's declaration. He gives certain space to reaction of Arab states after declaration of the doctrine and practical policy which is started, too.

Second chapter deals with position of Soviet Union in this power struggle, its progress in effort to gain support of the Egyptian president Gammal Abdel Nasser or its policy in Syria, before this country was incorporated to the United Arab Republic. Relations between Soviet Union and Egypt was characterised by constant mistrust and insecurity. Nasser was not willing to become a puppet in Soviet hands and to abandon his own policy. He was also afraid of final split with United States. The author shows to the reader a sinusoid of this relationship and presents period of the biggest Soviet influence and following aggravation, which came after Nasser's anti-

communist internal policy and culmination of these problems in the shape of undoubtedly anti-Soviet Egyptian propaganda.

Next three chapters subsequently deal with a crisis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq. For a long time, Jordan was under influence of Great Britain and it was the only country in the region, where this influence had still some power. Internal politics of Jordan was determined very much by annexation of the west bank of the Jordan River, which led to the situation that Jordan had almost one million Palestinians on its land. Young king Hussein got on throne in year 1953, after assassination of his grandfather. First steps and problems of the new monarch are the main topic of this part of the book. Nevertheless, Husain was very dynamic and was able to suppress revolution of some pan-Arabic generals and definitely joined anti-Soviet part of the region.

In the 50s of 20th century, Syria also did not avoid internal disturbances, but her steps went different way. Even since the start of the decade Syrian leaders courted with Soviet Union. These contacts grew stronger during this period of time and at the end of the decade they were very imminent, Soviet Union sent to Syria weapons and helped also with technology. In this chapter, Jan Wanner shows the causes of this direction of Syrian foreign policy. He deals with every subject of Syrian political scene so as he could acquaint the reader with conduct of neighbour countries and Superpowers relating Syrian crisis. The chapter ends with solving the problem in the way of creation of United Arab Republic.

Iraq was, as Jordan, under big influence of Great Britain. Iraq had a king from Hashemite dynasty. The last chapter of the first part of the book deals not only with change of Iraq from very conservative and pro-western country to the pro-communist and later pro-Nasser and neutral country, but also with another development in Jordan, with military engagement of Great Britain in this country and also with the situation in Lebanon. This small maritime republic was very stable for a long time. The reason for this tranquillity was very clever system of distribution of competences among confessional groups. The deal was easy: Maronite Christians had presidential office, Sunnite Muslims had office of Prime Minister and the head of the Parliament was Shia Muslim. However, at the middle of the 50s, this system started to lose functionality. Demographical parity in the country was in fact jeopardised by Palestinian immigrants, who radicalized not only the Muslims, but, in consequence, also the Christian Maronites. The author describes how escalation of internal disturbances led to American military intervention.

The second part of the book, called "Among Streams", starts with a chapter about the origin of the United Arab Republic. Abdel Nasser hoped that this project would lead to strengthening of both states and to increase

their prestige in the region. Nevertheless, the author proves very distinctively that it did not work not even close as well as Nasser expected. In addition, it created even more friction areas between Egypt and Soviet Union, which, in consequence, caused growing alienation of both countries. Jan Wanner follows this problem also in the second chapter of this part, where he analyse Soviet dilemma, if it shall still support Egypt or turn its favour on Iraq. This country in fact had new leader, general Qasim, and he was much more pro-Soviet than Hashemite dynasty and was showing signs of rapprochement with Eastern Bloc.

Next two chapters deal closer with policy of Turkey, Iran and Israel. The author very well connects so far gained information together by detailed analysis of internal situation in these states and by causes of their steps during the crisis in Syria, Jordan or Iraq. The position of Israel will be probably a little surprising for the current reader, because Israel in the 50s did not have military support from United States and had to get its weapons from France and time to time also from Britain. The author than presents gradual rapprochement between Israel and United States and also shows several unsuccessful tries of Israel government to initiate contacts with Soviet Union. He also don't hesitate to show the reader very interesting Israeli tries to create alternative anti-Nasser bloc, consisting close African countries and conservative Muslim states in the region. At the end of the chapter Jan Wanner gets even to the situation on Arabian Peninsula. He analyses local complicated and complex situation from the British point of view. Great Britain had long-termed interests in the area of current states of Yemen and Oman. He deals with paradoxical situation of British diplomacy, which tried to prepare these states to more independent status and create a federation here, but these steps led only to necessity of military intervention.

The book of Jan Wanner is complex, information-rich analysis of the development of international affairs in Middle East during years 1956-1960. It's admirable, how the author managed to put so complicated and labyrinthine problems in a form, which is accessible even to the reader, who is not very familiar with problems of the region. It is the fact, that unknowing reader will be a little confused for few first chapters, but with accumulation of pages the events in particular states connect together to the compact picture and every additional page add one peace to the mosaic of history of this undoubtedly very interesting region. The book have to be recommended and not only to the reader interested in history in general, but also to the reader, who wants to understand a problems of current international affairs, because a lot of sources of current tensions has its base exactly in the time, which Jan Wanner so skilfully describes.

JIRÍ KÁRNÍK

