

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 969049By CM NARA Date 6-12-03

OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 17, 1973

SUBJECT: Internal Security in Yemen

1973-6-7, Iryani, Gekhman, Ambassador

PARTICIPANTS: Yahya Gekhman, Ambassador of the Yemen Arab Republic

Stephen W. Buck, Country Officer for Yemen

PLACE: Embassy of Yemen

DISTRIBUTION: NEA/ARP
INR/RES/SOV
INR/RNA/NEAmbassies SANAA
JIDDA

Mr. Buck called on the Ambassador, who had just moved his Embassy into a new Chancery. Almost immediately he launched into a long analysis of the internal security problem in Yemen, summarized as follows:

The assassination of Republican Council Member 'Uthman is only an acute example of the threat to the YAR posed by communist-backed subversion. This threat is continual and growing. The YAR needs military assistance, but weapons without training, organization, and an effective central government will only rust. The YAR needs time to develop institutions to meet subversion, but time it does not have. The YARG cannot long survive if it cannot offer its citizens at least minimal security. Yet subversion poses near insolvable dilemmas. PDRY's appeal and major activity are in the YAR's Shafi'i south. The people living there are farmers and tradesmen, not fighters. They deplore it when a PDRY sabotage team blows up the house of some notable. But this does not really affect them. What does are the excesses of Zaydi tribesmen sent to restore order, who, in so doing, live off the land. However, until the YAR has a modern and balanced army, which will take years, the central government has little recourse but to rely on these tribesmen, either in the army, or as levies. The result is that the YAR's remedy for PDRY subversion is often worse than, and only breeds, the disease.

(Drafting Office and Officer) NEA/ARP:SWBuck 6/11/73

FORM DS-1254
2-65

CONFIDENTIAL

POL 23 YEMEN

XR DEF 19 US-YEMEN

XR POL 5 YEMEN-YEMEN

4

DECLASSIFIED

TIAL

 Authority NND 969049
 By CM NARA Date 6-12-03

2

Geghman noted that there were some in the YAR who felt the only answer to be putting "some colonel" in power and a crash military build-up. However, this would upset the delicate tribal/central government/military balance and destroy the republican system. Moreover, even if the tribes acquiesced to a strongman in a time of crisis, they would soon come to oppose him and the army.

Then, what is the answer to subversion from PDRY? Geghman admitted that the "tail can wag the dog," but said there is no question but that the terrorists and assassins in the YAR benefit greatly from East German and Cuban training and assistance in PDRY. The Soviets, if not involved directly in these operations, could certainly act to curtail them if they wished. Ambassador Geghman said he understood that we are in a period of detente, not confrontation, with the USSR. But would this not be all the more reason for us to have a word with the Russians, or for that matter, even the East Germans, asking them to have their clients lay off?

If the Arabian Peninsula is not now vital to our national interests, Geghman continued, it certainly will be in a few years. By then it might be too late to save the YAR. The YAR, "with all its contradictions, tribalism, changes of government, and corruption, can survive, but only if it is left in peace. A word from the U.S. now to the Soviets could help buy time," Geghman concluded, "and time is what we need."

CONFIDENTIAL