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Happy Unity Anniversary

The Majority of the Yemeni People See "No Choice but Unity, & Dialog is the Way Out!"

Unity is Sacred:
The Majority of the Yemeni population insist that the country has no choice but to preserve a unified Yemen. All political parties concur. Citizens in the cities and the countryside lament the efforts to re-partition the country. Countries in the region and worldwide have announced their support for a unified Yemen.

"There seems to be a consensus on the sanctity and inviolability of Yemeni unity, although there are different visions regarding its framework. That is why there is widespread condemnation of secessionist efforts" observed a foreign journalist reporting on the on-going war from Sanaa.

Civilians Caught in the War:
There is a growing local and international outrage because urban and rural civilian population centers are targeted by military action. "Targeting the civilian population is both illegal and immoral," stressed a foreign diplomat in Sanaa.

Over the last month, Sanaa, Hodeidah, Taiz, Aden, Zinjubar, and other cities, as well as villages in Lahej, Abyan, Taiz and Ibb have been the targets of military action. The casualties of such action, and the general terror they created, especially the scud missiles that have been hitting Sanaa, have extracted an enormous toll.

Laws of Warring:
It is very clear from the way this war has been carried out that Yemeni fighters have yet to learn a lot about the norms and values that govern warfare. One aspect of this is how to deal with injured soldiers - whether comrades or adversaries. Many

wounded persons have perished because of improper/lack of care. The case is even worse regarding treatment of prisoners of war.

Another aspect is relations with the media. The armies and their commanders have yet to understand and appreciate the role of journalists. Politicians are even worse than commanders. They expect the journalists to sing in their chorus.

Finally interaction with the local civilian populations is a major bone of contention. In many cases, the war brought armies to various population centers. The interaction has been tense and often hostile.

Cost of War:
As the war drags on to almost one month to date, its cost is increasingly becoming unbearable to a poor economy like Yemen's. There are reports of the cost surpassing US \$10 billion.

Already, the burden being placed on the ordinary people is making their lives miserable. The cost of living has shot up.

The factories have all but stopped, and most of the activities that require imported raw material or intermediate goods are already feeling the pinch. In spite of the "willingness" of the people to put up with a certain level of hardship in order to preserve the unity of the nation, if the sacrifices rise, the attitude may change. This may happen sooner rather than later.

The Way Out:
As no side is able to eliminate the other side through a decisive military victory, the call for a negotiated settlement is louder. The Sultanate of Oman, which takes over as chair of the Security Council, is proposing

an immediate cease-fire, and to stop the flow of arms to Yemen. One important step this week is the acceptance of dialogue. All sides are already inclined to talk if certain assurances are given and conditions met.

Another step has been the issuance of a general amnesty by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Forgiveness and tolerance are great virtues which pave the way to a negotiated settlement. More such gestures are necessary to bridge the gap.

A UN Resolution:
The Sultanate of Oman has

presented to the Security Council a draft of a resolution which calls for:

- an immediate cessation of hostilities,
- resumption of talks on the crisis.
- a Security Council mission to visit Yemen and report on the situation.
- the Secretary-General of the UN to present a report on Yemen within one week.

The proposal was jointly drafted by Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Egypt.

The Security Council is going to discuss the proposal in its

meeting tomorrow, May 31st.

Position of Key Countries:
Most of the world supports the preservation of Yemeni unity. The USA, UK, France, China, Russia, Germany and many other countries have expressed support for a unified Yemen. The limited contact between certain leading members of the YSP and the government in Sanaa is being coordinated and encouraged by these countries. The next few days are going to be critical in the evolution of the crisis.

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Editor's Note:
The Yemen Times apologizes for not having come out last week. We hope our readers understand the reasons.

OUR VIEWPOINT

Normal Life Gradually Returns to Sanaa

The scud missiles that have been hitting Sanaa city have chased out a large proportion of its residents. "It is no joke to be the target of scud missiles," said one resident. Another put it this way. "Once you go to bed, you never know if you will wake up or not," with a clear indication to the night-timing of the missiles.

Simultaneously, the Al-Adha eid holiday, the most important religious occasion in the Islamic calendar, has served as another major push factor, thus further emptying the city. The festivities associated with the fourth unity anniversary (May 22nd) have further relieved employees of their work duties. Thus, during the second half of May, it is estimated that of the 1.2 million Sanaa residents, about one half were somewhere else but Sanaa.

But starting this week, more and more residents are returning. Officially, government businesses started on Saturday, May 28th. Even then, it is going to be at least a week more before government offices are adequately filled. "Life is almost back to normal, and there are no more queues," said a government official. A citizen was not so sure. "If only those cursed missiles would not come, it would have been very okay," he said.

The foreign residents of Sanaa who had left have not yet returned. The situation will have to be stabilized and a cease-fire declared before they will return. The majority of the dependents of the senior officials of this country have also been evacuated. They are not expected back soon.

The security situation in Sanaa is very adequate. Consumer goods, especially the basic commodities, are available in sufficient quantities. Electric and water supplies are back to normal. Even garbage collection is being attended to. Sanaa University has announced to its students that classes have been resumed.

But, the psychological aspects of a war situation can only be overcome only if a cease-fire is officially declared. That would return Sanaa to full normalcy.

The Publisher
S.S. Saeed

Sheikh Zindani Heads Popular Mobilization Committee

A committee was set up in Sanaa to mobilize the public in support for the war effort. Sheikh Abdul-Majeed Zindani, Member of the Presidential Council and spiritual leader of the Islah, was named to head this committee.

The main task is to promote moral and financial support for the war efforts. The mosque preachers have been asked to galvanize the public, while financial and business leaders have been asked to contribute to pay for the war costs.

New Presidential Appointments

Last week, President Ali Abdullah Saleh appointed governors to Shabwah and Lahej governorates, ambassadors to Addis Ababa and Khartoum, and a vice prime minister and a minister of oil and mineral resources.

Most of these appointments come in replacement of YSP officials who have broken up with Sanaa and have decided to set up a separate state in Aden.

President Saleh Receives Ambassadors of Permanent Members of the Security Council

In an effort to counter the Saudi moves to take the Yemeni crisis to the UN, President Ali Abdullah Saleh received the ambassadors of China, France, Russia, the UK and USA.

The president had one message - the present war in Yemen is an internal matter, and that it would be appreciated if the Security Council stayed out of it. The ambassadors, it was reported, concurred, and reaffirmed their nations' support for a unified Yemen.

Meanwhile, both Sanaa and Aden have been sending envoys to various Arab capitals to win them over to their point of view. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussain Al-Ahmar was in Abu Dhabi while Haidar Abubar Al-Attas was in Cairo, Damascus, Riyadh, Muscat, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. Other officials have also been on whirlwind missions in the region. As of now, most Arab capitals have left their options open by refusing to commit to either side in the hope of intermediating between them.

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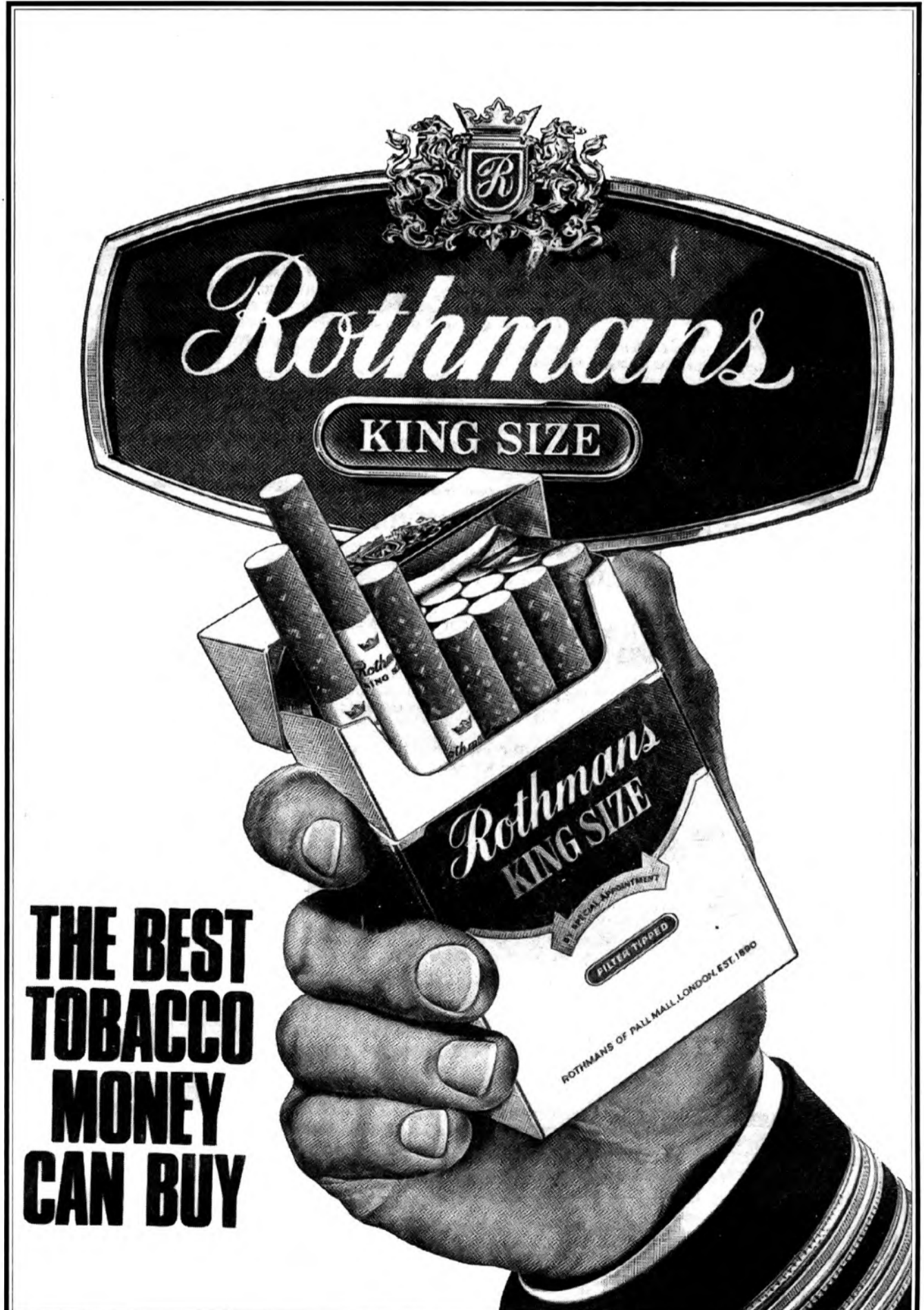
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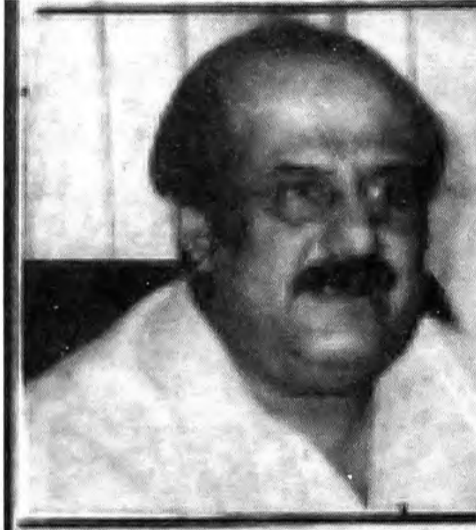
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Minister Al-Batani:

"Our job is to bring a certain level of equity in our socio-development effort."

Yemen is a nation whose old values and norms that revolved around tribal affiliation are shifting slowly. Social inequities and difficulties are increasingly smoothed by the state rather than by tribal links.

Under such conditions, the Ministry of Pensions and Social Affairs plays an important role. To shed light on this role, and the pace of transformation, Ismail Al-Ghabri spoke to Mr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Batani, Minister of Pensions and Social Affairs. Excerpts of the report follow:



We also have many other laws and regulations, like the family law, which have been enacted.

Q: Your Ministry is trying very hard to re-structure the male-females relations in society by helping enhance the status and role of women. What is involved and how far have you come?

A: In 1978, this ministry established a department to cater to the needs of women and children. The mechanism was to establish centers to help educate and train women with the objective of enabling them to earn income independently of their male relatives.

In 1990, this department was transformed into a directorate-general with extensive mandate and facilities. Thus, female leaders - not only in social life - but also in economic and political of life.

I am happy to announce that we a grass-roots level operation known as small projects program which aims to help female entrepreneurs contribute to GDP and at the same time, generate their own income.

Q: But is the legal framework for this envisioned new role for Yemen in place?

A: As you may be well aware, we have presented a new law to replace labor law number (5) of 1970 (of the former YAR), and law number (14) of 1978 (of the former PDRY).

This new law will give female workers equal pay for the same post (work). The law also made special allowances for pregnant and breast-feeding workers.

We also encourage large employers to provide child-care centers and services.

Q: In the past, families and tribal kins used to care for relatives who are unemployed, disabled, orphaned, etc. Your ministry was supposed to replace this effort. How far have you come?

A: Let me first stress two issues before I answer this question.

a) We still encourage voluntary assistance to not-so-unlucky relatives, friends, and colleagues. We don't envision replacing this effort, we are simply trying to augment it.

b) You will appreciate that providing financial support requires enormous resources. The government of Yemen is not exactly rich, and therefore, there is a limit as to how much we can provide.

Having said that, let me say that we have established orphanages, societies for the handicapped, women, disadvantaged groups, etc. These societies are supported by the Ministry, but they also receive contributions from members, philanthropists, and local and international NGOs.

Some friendly countries also provide some limited funding.

We also have programs to train and qualify handicapped persons so that they can help themselves and make a positive contribution to society.

Q: Given the high rate of un-employment, what have been your efforts in this regard?

A: Of course, you know that there are unemployment and pension benefits corporation affiliated to this ministry, although they operate independently of the ministry.

One corporation deals with government employees, while the other deals with employees in private and semi-private companies.

Still, I think that only a small proportion of the Yemeni labor force enjoys coverage of unemployment, sickness, disability, and old age. We have a long way to go, and it is our duty to encourage more companies and corporations to provide this coverage to their employees. I am sure it will happen, but it will take some time.

Q: There has been an extensive effort to mobilize popular participation in development and public life. Could you give us an idea of this?

A: Today, there are over 500 associations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These are associations directly elected by the members. The associations range from unions and professional groups to various self-help forums which aim to speed up the development process. In any case, I believe that these NGOs are an important pillar in constructing a civil society in the country.

Q: You mentioned foreign assistance whether through NGOs or governments. Could you give examples?

A: Our efforts are financed primarily through the government budget. We also obtain foreign assistance channelled through the Ministry of Planning and Development.

NGOs also benefit from the small-scale projects

funds in various ministries such as the Netherlands, Japan, etc.

Finally, considerable assistance is provided by international voluntary organizations such as Radda Barnen, CARE of Australia, the Baptist Hospital in Jibla, and many other similar organizations.

I do not want to forget the effective assistance we get from the UNDP and the international organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, WFP, etc. All in all, although the local NGOs are still in their infancy, they are growing fast.

Q: How much attention do children get in your efforts?

A: Children are awarded first priority by the government as a whole, and by our ministry in particular. You will remember that there is a Supreme Council for Children headed by the prime minister.

The ministry held many workshops and seminars to highlight the plight of children and to help them. We have children who are in prisons, children on the streets, working children, etc.

Q: In general, how would you characterize the mission of your ministry?

A: We have a mission of helping the weakest elements in society. Our job is to bring a certain level of equity in our socio-development effort.

There are three difficulties that we face at the moment:

1. The people we support are the least vocal and least influential in society. In deficit-conscious government that is bad. Our projects are the first to be axed.

2. Many people compare our effort with luxury consumption. They say that when able-bodied men are unable to find jobs, it is "ridiculous" to insist to train and find jobs for the handicapped and women.3. The traditional values help by minimizing the agony and burden of the people we support. But they do it out of pity, which in itself has negative effects.

In short, I think while there is a human dimension to what we do, there is an economic and legal aspect to it. We need the media to support our efforts and explain our views.

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CHINESE HERB REMEDY BEATS MULTIDRUG-RESISTANT MALARIA

Death rate reduced three-fold

A scientific study on the malaria treatment of multi-drug-resistant malaria in Thailand has shown that the drug being tested was so effective it reduced the death rate three fold when compared with quinine. And that Time, a related drug, has helped Viet Nam reduce malaria mortality by a factor of five since 1991.

The two-year trial, covering 97 patients with severe and complicated multi-drug resistant malaria on the of Thai/Cambodian border was conducted by Dr. Juntra Carbwang of the hospital for tropical diseases of the University of Bangkok, at the Chantaburi Provisional Hospital in eastern Thailand. The trial was supported by the Program for Reseach and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO).

When the results were analyzed last month, they proved that intramuscular injections of "artemether" - a derivative of extracts of the Chinese herb *Artemisia annua L.* - has saved the lives of 87% of patients with severe malaria, compared with intravenous quinine, the standard therapy for severe cases, which saved only 64%. With quinine, 18 of 50 patients died; with artemether, only 6 of 47 died.

"This is very encouraging news," said Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of the World Health Organization. "In many countries malaria is worsening. It kills some 1.5 to 3 million people a year. The scientific demonstration of the success of this drug, a derivative of a century-old Chinese medicine, in an area where malaria is so resistant to other drugs, is a dramatic step forward for health."

Although the promise of the herb against drug-resistant malaria - rampant in many parts of the developing countries - has long been clear, hard scientific data has been lacking to show its advantages over other drugs. But this trial finally clinches the case for the oil-soluble artemether derivative of artemisinin (the raw herb extract). "Dr Karbwang's study is of particular importance" said Dr. Tore Godal, Director of TDR "because it has been conducted in an area where the malaria parasite has become a monster, with

resistance to most of the commonly used drugs - including chloroquine, mefloquine, halofantrine, sulfadoxine/ pyrimethamine combinations, and now quinine. The trial shows that despite such resistance, the parasite can be controlled with artemether.

Quinine, however, is still useful where there is no resistance to it, but a gradual progression of resistance to the drug has

been recognized in South East Asia since 1985. Dr Karbwang's study confirms an earlier report of improved survival using artemisinin products in severe malaria patients in

South East Asia, by professor Tin Shwe of Myanmar, who in 1993 also demonstrated reduced mortality among cerebral malaria patients treated with artemether (14%) compared to quinine-treated patients (34%).

Up to the present time, clinical studies of artemether conducted in China and in other malarious countries have involved well over 5000 patients. Trials have been



completed or are in progress, in China, Viet Nam, Brazil and several African countries. The drug has been remarkably free of minor and major side-effects, and no fatal adverse drug reactions have been reported. In two-year trials to be completed this year in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and The Gambia, where quinine resistance is not a factor, preliminary evidence indicates equal survival rates under artemether as under quinine.

Artemether is produced by the Kunming Pharmaceutical Factory, China, and is to be marketed internationally by the French company Rhone-Poulenc Rorer Doma, France. Regulatory documentation will be filled in France shortly.

Other derivatives of artemisinin still under definitive trial include the related "arteether", under development by TDR. Research to synthesise the basic active component of the drug, and to develop a whole series of artemisinin-like compounds, is also supported by TDR.

Artemisinin, the raw material for the production of the more soluble and active derivatives, was identified as a potent antimalarial and analyzed in China in 1972, during an extensive survey of traditional Chinese medicines. Called "qinghaosu" in Chinese, it was first recorded in an apothecary's list dated 168 BC, titled "Prescriptions for 52 kinds of disease".

The Key Problem: protecting the drug from resistance

The artemisinin series of drugs, clears malaria parasitemia faster than any other compounds, including quinine, but the drugs suffer from one drawback: that unless treatment is maintained for seven days, well after fever has declined and the patient feels better, parasitemia can return again. Home treatments are not thought to last much longer than two or three days - long enough to get the patient back to work or to school. Thirty days after even a monitored, five-day treatment, in 15-20% of cases the parasites regrow or "recrudescence", and patient becomes malarious and ill again. After just two or three days treatment recrudescence can occur thirty days later in some 30% of cases.

Retreatment with the same drugs one or more times then generally eliminates the disease, so - thus far at least - recrudescence is not evidence of resistance to the drugs. But it complicates case management, and may eventually lead to the development of true drug resistance.

However, combinations of artemisinin with mefloquine in a three-day regime reduce recrudescence rates to a far more manageable 3%. In order to protect the whole artemisinin drug group from resistance, World Health Organization guidelines thus currently recommend that the use of artemisinin and its derivatives should be restricted to areas where there is multi-drug resistant malaria, and that if possible artemisinin

and its derivatives be combined with other drugs - preferably mefloquine, or other drugs such as tetracycline or doxycycline - to reduce recrudescence. Research currently underway will test whether the drugs have practical, operational and economic advantages in severe malaria in Africa.

All the artemisinin compound depend on one key element of the molecule, an unusual "peroxide" bridge of two linked oxygen atoms spanning a five-atom carbon ring. Release of the oxygen, damaging the parasite, is stimulated by the In South-East Asia, particularly in Thailand. *P. falciparum* has already developed a degree of resistance, from mild to complete, to all available drugs - except the artemisinin series. But resistance has been known to develop there within five years of a drug's widespread introduction. Such a fate for artemisinin or its derivatives would be catastrophic for malaria control worldwide.

For example, because so much of his success in saving lives can be attributed to artemisinin and its derivative, Dr. Nguyen Duy Sy, the Head of the Department of Experimental Biology and Parasitology of the Institute of Malariology in Hanoi, who has been conducting applied field research in Pho Reing Rubber plantation in Song Bee Province one of the most malaria infected areas in Viet Nam, is "very concerned" about the possible development of the resistance to these drugs. He would be "delighted" if everybody in his plantation could follow WHO guidelines and only use artemisinin in combination with mefloquine, but the foreign exchange cost of mefloquine - some US\$ 2.4 per treatment in Viet Nam are effectively prohibitive.

The Australian government provided two million tablets of mefloquine to Viet Nam in 1991, but more is still needed, particularly if the development of resistance is to be showed, generous foreign donations would be needed to help the artemisinin series of drugs for the future.

Field and laboratory research will also help. TDR is thereof hurrying forward scientific field trials to determine the best dosage and treatment schedules with artemisinin and its derivatives, the best means of encouraging patients in poor and remote regions to take complete courses of the drug, and on the need for combination with other drugs to further slow the possible development of resistance.

As proof of the practical effectiveness of this drug series, artemisinin or "qinghaosu" itself - the essential oil as extracted from the plant, without further chemical derivation has already Helped Viet Nam reduce death from malaria by a factor of five since 1991. Facing an enormous malaria problem in 1991 with little foreign exchange to buy drugs, the government decided to invest in cheap local cultivation of *artemisia Annuia L.* and simple extraction of artemisinin from leaves. by 1993, the country was making several tons of artemisinin powder a year, And distributing it in form of tablets, capsules and suppositories for children and nauseous or comatose patients, and as artisanate for injection.

Viet Nam represents a classic case of malaria in Asia, where the disease typically hits non-immune workers and families entering new development areas such as rubber plantations. In 1991, malaria mortality reached a historic levels, with over 40000 deaths.

In response, the Vietnamese government increased malaria control spending ten fold and with WHO advice and support, enacted a detailed malaria control plan, focused sharply on reducing mortality.

The result was a decrease in death from malaria by 44% in 1992 and a further 64% in 1993 compared with 1992. The program targets for 1994 continues to be ambitious - a reduction of the number of clinical cases of malaria by 20%, and mortality by a further 30%, and of epidemic by 50% compared with 1993.

Iron-containing "harem" group, which is the active center of haemoglobin in the blood. Haemoglobin in turn is the food of the malaria parasite. So when the parasite takes its meal, artemisinin pounces on the parasite and kills it.

Derivatives, and synthetic forms of the molecule - which are now emerging from the laboratory - all seem likely to depend on the same mechanism. So if the parasite finds a way around this attack, all the drugs in the series are likely to be affected. The great need now is thus to ensure that the artemisinin series of drugs is used in such a way as to prevent the development of drug-resistance in the malaria parasite, *Plasmodium flaciparum*, which causes most deaths from the disease.

The Chinese medicine is expected to make a dramatic impact in containing malaria during the later 1990s and early 21st century. Many of the infected regions, including Yemen, are waiting for its commercial distribution worldwide.



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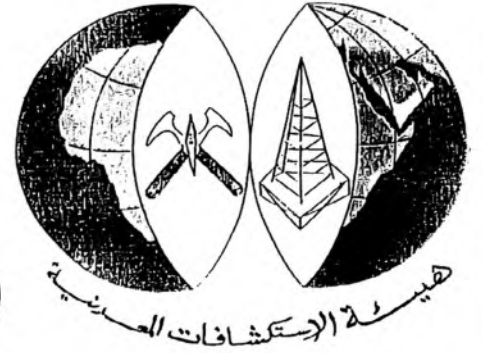
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Democracy's Hour: America as the Midwife to a New Age!

A decade has passed since former Russian President Michael Gorbachev unleashed his reforms in 1985, thus sending the world spinning in a whirlwind that has not yet stopped. The most visible aspect of the transformation is the demise of dictatorial systems - whether socialist, tribal, or military. The last ten years have witnessed the demise of repressive systems in spasms, with the USA serving as the busy midwife to the new age. But what exactly does this mean? Are the societies raised in authoritarian systems ready to make the leap forward? Are the rulers who have been ostensibly "reformed" able to cope with the change, or do they represent a force that holds back the evolution or even a force that wants to return to the old ways? How much is the USA committed to "helping" other nations make the transition successfully?

These questions are not ponderously theoretical or amusingly diverting. They are questions being asked daily by populations yearning for change, by rulers yearning for their old ways, and by intellectuals and human rights activists. The fates of many nations and experiments in democratization, perhaps even the fate of peace and the physical viability of the world, hang upon the working out of these questions in practice. It will also determine whether the "twenty first century will be the true American century" as Joshua Muravchik says in his now famous book EXPORTING DEMOCRACY: Fulfilling America's Destiny.

The prophecy is not inevitable, especially if the Americans fails to "tame-in" former dictators who want to revert to their old ways.

What Is Democracy?

Obviously democracy is not just elections, especially not those elections which bring no change to the political structure or do not achieve a peaceful transfer of authority. And democracy is not a blue-print or a set of results. Democracy is a principle about how disparate or conflicting human goals should be reconciled. Actually, democracy is an ethical system, in which the citizens (and especially those in power) "discipline themselves to the principle that it is better to decide things by the right means than to get their own way." Many politicians, especially in developing countries, have decided to adopt the shell or format or shape of democracy. A certain level of freedom of the press, elections, voluntary groupings or associations, etc. Deep down, these politicians are still dictatorial and resent the fact that they are forced to relinquish part of their authority.

In other words, while it is understandable that different versions of democratic systems could evolve to match the local circumstances, it would be ridiculous if hollow democracies come into existence and the world accepts them as democratic.

Putting a democratic system in place takes a long time. But the main issue for any democratizing country is to make sure that a real transformation is underway and that a socio-cultural evolution takes place.

The Growth of Democracies:

In 1800, there was only one full democracy in the world - the USA. In 1850, it was joined by Belgium and Switzerland. By 1900, the UK and France joined the league of democratic countries. Many other countries joined during the 20th century. Today, Eastern Europe and dozens of developing countries are working to democratize their systems. According to Freedom House findings, some 2,034,000,000 people live today in democratic countries. The population of not one Arab country is included in the list. Again according to Freedom House, 39% of the world's people live under forms of democracy.

A good 30% of the world's population lives in countries which are striving to transform their systems. The process is seen as long and precarious. It is here that the USA plays the role of a catalyst.

Why the US Role?

But why is the USA working to spread democracy? Intellectuals and scholars cite many reasons, and Georgie Anne Geyer sums them up in three points:

1. The first is "empathy with our fellow humans and their fate."
2. The second is that "the more democratic the world, the more friendly America's environment will be."

3. The third is that "the more democratic the world, the more peaceful it is likely to be." She stresses that a proliferation of democracies would lead to a diminution of armed conflict, hence the creation of a "real pax Americana." She points to cases where wars are waged and efforts towards peace and dialogue are refused by one person who involves his nation and many others in warfare.

Muravchik agrees. He fully believes that fostering the growth of democracy abroad "is the least expensive method of strengthening America's security. Success at this effort will make the world more peaceful and a safer place. Hence it will allow us to lessen our military investment and still be adequately defended."

A New Moment:

Political scientist Morton Kaplan of the University of Chicago wrote extensively about his concept of a new moment that demands a democratic transition for very specific historic reasons:

"The preconditions for democracy, if not yet universal, have reached a stage in which the transition process requires and can accommodate international assistance....

"Whether in country-to-country aid in democratizing or in one nation pointing to another nation's violations of human rights, there is a growing sentiment (and reality) that countries have the right to intervene in some instances in another country's internal behavior."

"The history of the 20th century has made unsustainable the old belief that internal arrangements of

states were matters of indifference. Too many tragedies that affect other countries have been produced by evil regimes and societies."

Too Much Emphasis on Elections:

In many examples of democratizing nations, holding one or two elections would generate the seal of approval from the patrons of democracy. The Yemeni example is a glaring case in point.

In many cases, unruly politicians and local chiefs played to the worst ethnic and nationalist tensions and the blackest of memories. What is happening in former Yugoslavia is a clear case in point. In other cases, the politicians manipulate the people through a combination of threats and "gifts" to make the voters choose a certain candidate.

In short, elections lead to a continuation of the current politicians, and often bring to power demagogues who promise so much and draw on the passions of the past. Our Muslim world witnesses an additional complication - the coming into play of religion. You can hear a daily play of a set of ready-made accusations. Adversaries are accused of being anti-God, anti-religion, communists, atheists, secularists, etc.

Therefore, it is important to assess the democratization of societies on a long-term process not simply one or two elections. Democracy, after all, is a behavior and a value-system.

Value System?

It is important to appreciate that for people to positively interact with the requirements of a democracy and to exercise their rights fully and properly, they must be prepared. It is neither racist nor exclusivist to say that democracy developed, organically, in a certain historical setting.

That historical setting in question is the Protestant West. However, we know today that this system also works other settings. It works in a Catholic setting. Even more, we know it works in Buddhist, Hindu and even Muslim settings.

The crux of the matter is that democracy is not a Protestant value, it is a universal value.

The Clarion Call:

The question we started with is still unanswered - Will the US heed the clarion call and make democratization as the cornerstone of its foreign policy? This process fits well with the American perception of itself as the moral world leader, because democracy is a moral and ethical value.

There are already signs of second thoughts among politicians and even societies regarding the democratization process. This is clear in the victories of politicians from the "past" in many countries, especially Eastern Europe. At least there is considerable wavering as the momentum seems to be faltering. That is why the US in particular, and the world democracies in general, need to re-affirm their commitment to democratization.

By: Yemen Times Staff



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