

Karol R. Sorby, *Jún 1967. Šest dní, ktore zmenili Blízky východ* (June 1967. The Six Days that Changed the Middle East), Bratislava 2010, ISBN 978-80-8095-065-1, pp. 519.

The June War of 1967 (also called the Six-Day War because of its duration) was one of the most important military conflicts in the history of the contemporary Middle East. It was crucial for the regional and global politics not only in terms of military but also and above all because of its political significance. The consequences of the June War still influence the political situation in the Middle Eastern region, and reflect on the relations between Israel, Arab states and the Palestinians. That is why this problem is still in the area of interest of numerous researches all over the world.

A number of books have been devoted to explore the causes and consequences of the June War. Among the recent publications examining the 1967 War we may find a book by Karol R. Sorby from Slovakia. Sorby is one of the best-known Central European specialists in the sphere of Middle Eastern politics. He is a professor at the Faculty of International Studies at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia. Sorby is an Arabist and historian. He also served at diplomatic post in the Slovak Embassy in Iraq between 1993 and 1997. As a researcher, he is the author of books that are connected with the history of the Middle East in the second part of the 20th century. He specializes in the field of inter-Arab relations and international politics of the Middle Eastern region.

As it was stated above, the new book by Sorby is dedicated to the June War of 1967. The main aims of the Author are to show the broad perspective of the events that caused the outbreak of the hostilities, to characterize the most critical phases of the conflict, and finally to show how it changed the shape of the regional politics of the Middle East. The book is divided into six chapters arranging the events in chronological order. The starting point of the analysis is the regional situation of the Middle East after the end of the 1956 Suez War. The book ends with the events of October 1967, when the United Nations Security Council passed the Resolution 242 that called the sides of the conflict to overcome the consequences of the June War. The book also consists of the Preface, Introduction, Summary, Bibliography, Maps and Photographs.

The first chapter is devoted to the international situation that was created in the Middle East because of the 1956 Suez Canal War. The Author depicts the general image of the international relations in the region between two military conflicts. This chapter focuses mainly on the policy of the great powers – the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia). The Author shows that the Cold War inter-powers competition was the main context of the inter-regional relations. He stresses that the regional states were able to turn the American-Russian rivalry to their own advantage. As a result, the Arab states, especially Egypt, were able to preserve a great amount of freedom in their foreign policy. The chapter also deals with the analysis of the change that occurred in the American position at the beginning of the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson. The White House again treated Egypt, as the Eisenhower's administration did in 1955–1956, as a pro-Soviet state in the Middle East. According to Sorby, that was one of the most important factors that

induced the LBJ administration to take a more pro-Israeli posture in June 1967, unlike Ike before and during the Suez War.

The second chapter is connected with the inter-Arab relations in the post-Suez War period. The Author claims that after the end of the 1956 War the main question that influenced the political situation in the region was not the Arab-Israeli conflict but inter-Arab political rivalry. In the second part of the 50s the political offensive of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the Arab World took place. This situation, as well as the scope of political changes in the Arab states, such as the Iraq Revolution of 1958 and conflict in Yemen, caused the upheaval in the region. The political offensive, aimed at creating Egypt the dominant Arab power, caused a lot of conflict with the other Arab states. Egypt was able to improve its position by creation of the union with Syria (United Arab Republic) in 1958, but the new political entity was short-lived and ended with Syrian secession in 1961. The Nasser's policy lost its impetus in the first half of the 60s and he was subjected to a great amount of criticism from the other Arab states.

According to Sorby, the new phase of growing tensions between the Arab states and Israel in the middle of the 60s, which is the main theme of the third chapter, was an important indicator that must be taken into the consideration as a significant factor that inclined Egypt to take an open anti-Israeli position after 1964. This year seems to be a turning point in the sequence of the events that finally led to the Arab-Israeli military confrontation in 1967. It was when the Arab League summit in Cairo claimed the need of the unified Arab policy toward Israel and also revived the Palestinian question at the inter-Arab forum by the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. In the third chapter the Author shows how the growing Syrian-Israeli crisis, caused by the quarrel about Jordan river water resources, infected the situation in the region, which exploded with the clashes on the Syrian-Israeli border in April of 1967. This situation caused Nasser to take anti-Israel posture in May of 1967.

The fourth chapter focuses on the event that directly caused the Six-Day War. The Author takes into consideration Nasser's decision to back the Syrians by demanding withdrawal of the UN Emergency Forces from Sinai Peninsula and then to close the Strait of Tiran for the Israeli shipping. According to Sorby, Nasser's real aim was not to destroy Israel, but rather to create the atmosphere of global crisis that could force the great powers to engage in the situation and to stress Israel to postpone any attack against the bordering Arab states. He wrongly assumed that he would be able to manage the situation despite the danger of a direct Israeli attack in response to closing the Strait of Tiran. In this point there is some lack of consequence in Sorby's analysis. He claims that Nasser was sure that in the last resort he would be able to resist any Israeli attack against the Egyptian territory by dint of the strength of his army. Nevertheless, Sorby in the last part of his book states that the Egyptian leader from the beginning of the crisis he created was aware that his army would not win a war with Israel.

The final chapters of the book cover the situation after the outbreak of warfare. The Author takes into consideration the military aspect of the war, presenting the situation on all fronts. Sorby shows the lack of military preparation of the Egyptian army, competency

deficit displayed by its leaders, and of course the preparedness of the Israeli side that caused the humiliating victory of the Israeli Defense Forces after six days of fights. The last chapter is focused on the diplomatic efforts to manage the consequences of the war. Sorby concentrates his attention on such questions as the post-war strategy of the belligerents, the position and reaction of the great powers during that period, or works of the UN to create the conditions to end the state of war between Israel and the Arab states. The main point of attention in this chapter is to show that the overwhelming Israeli victory did not bring the whole Middle Eastern conflict to an end, as the Israelis assumed. In contradiction, the President of Egypt, and also the heads of other Arab states, stressed in the next months that the occupation of the Arab territories might not be treated as a bargaining counter to force them to make a peace with Israel and to recognize its existence in the Middle East. In such circumstances, the end of the war meant the beginning of the next phase of crisis situation in the region. In that context Sorby claims that the June War changed the pattern of regional politics. He stresses that before the war the main problem of regional international relations was the inter-Arab political rivalry. After the end of the June War the Arab-Israeli conflict became the main source of regional instability. Sorby also claims that the war caused a strict polarization of the regional states due to the Cold War rules. For him Egypt had no choice but to accept the closer relation with the Soviet Union. The price was the loss of political flexibility and specific dependence from Russia, since Moscow became the main political and military partner of Cairo. Nevertheless, the June War resulted in the region getting more involved in the Cold War rivalry and the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict became one of the central points in the American-Russian relations.

The book by Karol Sorby is an interesting and solid study of one of the most important phases in the Arab-Israeli conflict – the June War of 1967. The book differs from many other publications that take into consideration the third Arab-Israeli war. Sorby does not elaborate thoroughly on the well-known issues that capture the attention of many other researchers, e.g. the role of the great powers in provoking or stopping the war, aspects of the pre-war American-Israeli relations, position of the United Nations. Of course he does not evade raising above-mentioned questions, the most valuable feature of the book, however, is the vital change of the perspective. Sorby managed to use a lot of publications in the Arabic language and, what is even more important, a plenty of source materials. It is worth to mention that he analyzes the numerous diaries of the Arab politicians and military persons engaged in the conflict, while at the same time being aware of the fact that this material must be treated cautiously. Sorby stresses that a lot of these memoirs were written mainly to wriggle out of the responsibility for Arab failure in the war. Despite this fact the material, thanks to the Author's critical approach, allows to show how the Arab side acted. By dint of this, Sorby's analysis of the Six-Day War is one of the most interesting books exploring this conflict. It gives a valuable insight into the Arab politics of that time and enables to understand what considerations and actions on their side created the crisis that changed the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the book by Karol

Sorby must be regarded as one of these publications on the Middle Eastern conflict that any researcher and person interested in the regional politics should not miss.

Radostaw Bania

Im Dialog bleiben. Sprache und Denken in den Kulturen des Vorderen Orients. Festschrift für Raif Georges Khoury, herausgegeben von Frederek Musall und Abdulbary Al-Mudarris / البقاء في الحوار. اللغة والفكر في حضارات الشرق الأدنى. كتاب تذكاري لرئيس جوج / Hurrasovitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2011, XV + 428 + ٦٣ pp.

Raif Georges Khoury, born 1936, is one of the most outstanding European Arabists and Islamists of Arabic descent. He was born in Lebanon, and, as a son of a diplomat, grew up between Lebanon and France, later on he continued his education in several lands of Europe. From this point of view the title of his Festschrift – “To Stay in Dialogue. Language and Thought in the Cultures of the Middle East” is fully justifiable. Prof. Khoury, as a Man and a Scholar is, so to speak, a personalization of Dialogue and a “Grenzgänger” (“border crosser”).

As it was already mentioned, in his early years he was bound with France. After studying Roman philology, in the years 1963–1966 he was studying Arabic philology at Sorbonne University in Paris and at the same time he was working in France and in Germany (Saarbrücken und Heidelberg). In 1966 he received his Ph.D., defending the dissertation *Les traductions à partir des langues européennes vers l’arabe au 19e siècle au Liban*. R.G. Khoury was a pupil of the renowned French arabist Régis Blachère. After four years he received his post-doctoral degree (Habilitation) on the ground of the book *Vie et œuvre de Wahb Ibn Munabbih (655–728 J.C.)*, edited by Hurrasovitz Verlag in Wiesbaden in 1972. Next, in 1973 he was engaged at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg, where he worked until his retirement in 2003.

All this, and much more information about the scientific output of the Jubilate we find in the *Vorwort* (“Preface”) to the book written by Abdulbary Al-Mudarris and Frederek Musall (pp. XI-XV). The Authors show R.G. Khoury not only as a scholar, but also as a teacher and friend. In somewhat different way the same authors present R.G. Khoury in the Arabic “Preface” (المقدمة pp. ٧–٩). Especially fitting is the sentence in the Arabic “Preface”, saying that Professor Khoury is Lebanese of origin, French in his education and mind, and German in his scientific accuracy.

Unfortunately, the book does not contain a full bibliography of the Jubilate. The Editors mention only few most important of his books (some of them with exact bibliographical data) in the footnotes of German “Preface”, and some only in Arabic translation in the Arabic “Preface”. Only in the last part we can find the information that Prof. R.G. Khoury is an author of 25 books, 120 articles and of unnamed number of encyclopedic entries