

# Jeopardy in Yemen

It is ironical that the United States, having rushed in to recognize the Yemen Republic after the revolt of September 1962, is now being calumniated by the incredible charges against two American foreign-aid officials. These two civilians stand accused of making a bazooka attack on a Yemeni Army camp near Taiz on April 25.

In theory the men could be executed if found guilty. But irrational as this whole procedure has been, it is utterly beyond belief that the Sana government could go so far.

The situation of Yemen is concededly complicated, delicate and tense. Nasser's Egypt has an army of occupation in the southern two-thirds of the country helping the Republicans. Saudi Arabia is helping the Royalists, who control the northern third. Taiz is close to the border of the Federation of South Arabia, which President Nasser hopes and expects to bring under his control next year when Great Britain grants independence to the federation, including the port of Aden.

The two unfortunate American prisoners, Stephen Liapis and Harold Hartman, are like pawns caught in a chess game involving high stakes. The United States is in a difficult position. It must first, of course, wait to see what happens at the trial of the two men. It is disturbing that they have been treated as if the Yemeni authorities considered them guilty in advance.

If a guilty verdict is put into effect, either by execution or long prison sentences, the United States will face a grave dilemma. Yemen is a sovereign state and one with which Washington has diplomatic relations. The use of force would understandably bring charges—already familiar—that the United States considers itself to be policeman to the world. Any kind of physical reciprocity would mean descending to the same level of uncivilized behavior that the Yemenis would be displaying.

This brings up a pertinent question. What role is President Nasser playing in this affair? Egypt is a dominating force in the Republican part of Yemen. President Nasser in these last five years has bombed Yemeni villages to smithereens and perhaps even used poison gas. This, it seems, was all right since it was done in the name of Arab unity and socialism. Yet a few bazooka shots that could in some strange way be blamed on two Americans was too grievous to be borne.

Cairo has reportedly accepted a request from Washington to mediate for the release of the two Americans. In the meantime, it would be well for Yemen to realize that Americans expect a fair trial and a just verdict.

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