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NASSER AND THE GREAT POWERS

by

MCHAMMED ALI AL-SAAADI

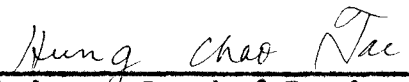
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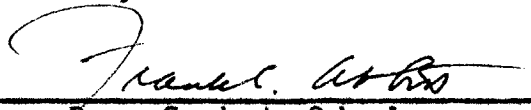
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PREFACE

The primary purpose of this paper is to discuss President Gamal Abdul Nasser's diplomatic and political relations with the Western world and the Soviet Union. Nasser's approach in his dealing with the great powers has made him one of the most controversial personalities of contemporary international politics. As an example, we see that much has been said in the American press about his foreign policies. In many cases, what has been said in the press here has been accompanied by basic misconceptions of what have been the truer and deeper motives behind the United Arab Republic leader's stands. Playing the role of a neutral political leader, he seems to vacillate between the opposing power blocs for some sort of dark, devious motives of his own. Some American press (such as, for example, the U.S. News and World Report) has branded him as a "Communist stooge" or a "fanatic Arab nationalist." In addition, his purchase of Communist arms to strengthen his army prompted Western newsmen to accuse him of opening Middle Eastern doors to Communist imperialism. These characterizations of Nasser's personality and policy, it seems, have resulted primarily from Western misunderstanding of Nasser's true intentions.

It is not intended in this thesis to criticize the United States Government, or any other Western government, in its dealings with the U.A.R. leader. Rather, this paper reflects the author's desire to straighten out misconceptions and to eliminate misunderstandings. It is hoped that a new, constructive Western policy toward the Middle East will finally emerge. Such a policy would stem out of deep understanding of Middle Eastern politics and would realize that Arab nationalism has a common destiny with the Western world, and that, if President Nasser as the leader of this dynamic

movement has been engaged in receiving military and economic assistance from the Communist world, he has done so not because of a voluntary desire but because he was unable to find any other recourse. In other words, he has been forced to deal on such an extensive scale with the Soviet bloc primarily because of certain Western moves, such as the refusal to provide his country with modern armaments to match Israeli ever-increasing military power or the withdrawal of the Western offer to finance the High Aswan Dam.

The advent of the Kennedy Administration in Washington, with its promises to follow a policy that reflects the hard realities of today's world, has given much hope for better future relations between the Western Powers or the United States, at least, and the Arab world. There is reason to believe that the United States, a freedom-loving nation, will play a dynamic role in the realization of the human aspirations in the Middle East.

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CHAPTER I

A GLANCE AT THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY EGYPT

In order to understand why Egypt, under the leadership of Gamal Abdul Nasser, has developed its unique position vis-a-vis the Great Powers contemporary international relations, which are characterized by persistent conflicts, a study of the history of modern Egypt prior to the army coup d'etat of July 23, 1952 is considered necessary.

Historians have generally agreed that the modern history of Egypt began with Napoleon's invasion of the country in 1798. Although a number of pretexts for the invasion were given, such as consolidating the position of the Egyptian government, it was believed that the real purpose behind the French expedition was Napoleon's grand plan to realize world domination. Napoleon was well aware that such a plan could not be achieved without securing the Near East.

While Napoleon extended French control over Egypt, Great Britain realized that her interests in India were in a great danger. Thus, an alliance was made between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire--which had established tutelage over Egypt since 1517--whereby forces of the two countries would seek the defeat of the French. In 1801 the allied troops succeeded in achieving this purpose, and the three-year rule of France over Egypt was ended.¹ However, Napoleon was able to sow the seed of French and Western influence in the country.²

¹ E.A. Speiser, The United States and the Near East (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 43-44.

² Irving Sedar and Harold Greenberg, Behind the Egyptian Sphinx (New York: Chilton Company, 1960), p. 15.

Mohamed Ali, an Albanian Moslem leader in the Turkish campaign against the French, led in 1802 a successful military mutiny in Egypt against the Turkish Governor, who was left helpless when British troops evacuated the country. In 1806 the Sultan of Turkey unwillingly confirmed Mohamed Ali as the Viceroy of Egypt.

During his reign of forty-three years, Mohamed Ali built with the help of foreign advisers and technicians a strong army and navy. He employed his efficient army almost continuously. He crushed the Wahabi revolt in Arabia. The Turkish Sultan refused to recognize him as the viceroy of Syria and the Morea,--a title which had been agreed upon between Mohamed Ali and the Sultan before the Egyptian fleet participated, together with its Turkish counterpart, in the Battle of Navarino (October 20, 1827) against the combined fleets of Britain, France, and Russia. As a result, Mohamed Ali marched over Syria and was stopped just short of the conquest of Turkey itself because of intervention by the great powers.³

Mohamed Ali, generally regarded as the founder of modern Egypt, introduced many needed reforms in economic, agricultural, and military affairs; but these reforms could not keep pace with a modern state and upon his death in 1849, the country once again lapsed into political turmoil. His rule was neither corrupt nor wasteful and was free from domination of the great powers. In contrast, all his successors, ending with King Farouk in 1952, were incompetent, corrupt, and under heavy foreign influence.⁴

His immediate successor, Sa'id, granted Ferdinand de Lesseps, an

³ Speiser, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

⁴ Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London: MacMillan and Co., 1958), pp. 722-25.

ambitious French engineer, the concession to build the Suez Canal in 1854. In 1863 Sa'id was succeeded by Ismail, who possessed a large number of shares in the Suez Canal Company . The Canal was completed and opened to traffic in 1869. Its construction cost £16 million, of which the Egyptian government paid about one-half. Soon Ismail's extravagant living made him sell his shares in the company to the British government, thus making Britain a major shareholder of the Suez Canal Company and a possessor of an important stake in Egyptian affairs. By 1879 the government's indebtedness had reached £100 million, money owed chiefly to British and French shareholders; the country was on the verge of bankruptcy. Fearing for their investments, European creditors urged the governments of Great Britain and France to take prompt action in order to secure payment of the debt. Consequently, the two governments forced the abdication of Ismail in favor of his son Tewfiq and thus began to assert control of Egyptian financial policy. The two governments immediately sponsored a program of reorganization of Egyptian finances. Because financial reform was slower in progress than was expected, the impatient French ceased to participate in it, leaving Egyptian affairs to Great Britain.⁵

The imposition of foreign control over Egyptian internal affairs led to the Ahmed Orabi affair in 1881. Orabi, a general in the Egyptian army, revolted against the government because it failed to rid itself of foreign influence and because it was corrupt. Orabi's forces occupied Alexandria and openly challenged Tewfiq. This brought an immediate protest and

⁵ The Royal Institute of International Affairs, (hereafter abbreviated as R.I.I.A.) The Middle East—a Political and Economic Survey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 183.

ultimatum from Great Britain. As Orabi refused to surrender to the government in Cairo, the British fleet, upon Tewfiq's consent, bombarded Alexandria and the British troops took possession of the city. Orabi's revolt ended in failure and British occupation of the country begun; and for the next seventy years Great Britain exercised strong influence over Egypt.⁶

* * *

The Sudan, a territory stretching from Uganda in the south to the borders of Egypt at Wadi Halfa in the north, had been an Egyptian province since the reign of Mohamed Ali. The British, who had exercised a dominating influence in the Egyptian government following the Orabi revolt, had maintained garrisons in the Sudan. A revolt led by the Mahdi, a fanatic Sudanese religious leader, defeated a force of Egyptian troops led by a British officer. In 1898 the Mahdi troops were defeated in the Battle of Omdurman by a combined force of British and Egyptian troops, and the entire Sudan was brought under the Anglo-Egyptian control.⁷

This control was formalized by the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1899. The convention created a joint British-Egyptian government in the Sudan under the form of a condominium, which Lord Cromer, British Agent and consul general in Egypt, described as a "hybrid form of government hitherto unknown to international jurisprudence."⁸

* * *

⁶ President Gamal Abdul Nasser, expressing his bitterness against Tewfiq's complicity with the British, stated: "The British had occupied Egypt with the tacit consent of Tewfiq following the patriotic revolt led by General Orabi...Tewfiq feigned acceptance of the reforms demanded by Orabi, while opening the doors to the British who sought a pretext to justify an occupation of Egypt." Gamal Abdul Nasser, "The Egyptian Revolution," Foreign Affairs, January, 1955, p. 199.

⁷ R.I.I.A., op. cit. pp. 419-20.

⁸ Ibid., p. 421.

At the outbreak of World War I, Egypt was declared a British Protectorate, a measure aimed at ending Turkey's nominal sovereignty over Egypt.

The British declaration stated:

His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gives notice that, in view of the state of war arising out of the action of Turkey, Egypt is placed under the protection of His Majesty and will henceforth constitute a British Protectorate.... His Majesty's Government will adopt all measures necessary for the defense of Egypt, and protect its inhabitants and interests.⁹

When the war ended in 1918, Egyptian nationalistic feeling, which had been repressed by the British, burst into active life under the leadership of Sa'ad Zaghloul. Zaghloul demanded complete and immediate independence of the country. In 1919 he went to the Paris Peace Conference and laid his country's demands before the Great Powers. Zaghloul's mission proved fruitless. However, under increased Egyptian national pressure, Great Britain agreed to end the Protectorate in 1922, with the condition that British forces remain in the country until 1936.

Many measures had been introduced to the country after 1922, such as the institution of a constitutional government, the establishment of a comprehensive state-supported education, and the sending of diplomatic missions abroad. But Egyptian nationalists did not drop their demand for full and unconditional independence. The Wafd, a party founded by Sa'ad Zaghloul, continued to campaign vigorously for the complete withdrawal of all British troops and the restoration of the Sudan to Egyptian rule. After a decade of continued struggle on the part of the Wafd, Great Britain and Egypt concluded a treaty on August 26, 1936, replacing the unilateral declaration of

⁹ Carol A. Fisher and Fred Krinsky, Middle East in Crisis--A Historical and Documentary Review (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1959), p. 75.

1922. The new treaty was designed to establish a more cordial relationship between the two countries.¹⁰

The 1936 treaty finally recognized Egypt's complete independence. Moreover, it provided for the removal of British forces from Cairo and Alexandria to the Suez Canal Zone, British sponsorship of Egyptian membership in the League of Nations, and the abandonment by Britain of the right to protect minorities on Egyptian territory. Great Britain, however, reserved the right to utilize Egyptian communication facilities and the right to defend Egypt externally, which included the use of Egyptian soil for this purpose. The future of the Sudan was a matter of further negotiations.¹¹

When the treaty was signed, many Egyptian patriots welcomed it as a step toward regaining complete national sovereignty. However, the outbreak of World War II proved to be something else. Egypt's desire to maintain a neutral position between the warring parties was handicapped by the existence of this treaty. More over, Egypt once again became a major base for British troops.¹²

During the war period, British involvement in Egyptian affairs went so far as to present King Farouk in February 1941 with an ultimatum requesting the dismissal of the existing government for showing pro-Italian tendencies

¹⁰ W.B. Fisher, The Middle East (London: Methuen & Co., 1956), p.150.

¹¹ J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East - A Documentary Record: 1914-1956 (London: Nostrand Co., 1956), pp. 203-11.

¹² Colonel Sadat, Nasser's partner in the Revolution of 1952, summed up his disgust at this situation by writings: "At the outbreak of hostilities, Egyptian policy had been defined....but in fact it seemed equivocal, because the idea of neutrality was precluded by Egypt's military obligations under the 1936 Treaty. How could Egypt remain neutral, when British troops occupied the whole country and controlled the bases, communications, ports, etc." Anwar El-Sadat, Revolt on the Nile (New York: John Day, 1957), p. 20.

and its replacement with a Wafdist government headed by Mustafa Nahas. The demand was granted, and Nahas cooperated with the British until 1944 when he was ousted by the King.¹³

Thus at the end of World War II, the 1936 treaty seemed but a veil under which foreign occupation of the country could be sanctioned. Egypt then renewed its demands for the immediate withdrawal of all British troops, including those stationed in the Suez Canal Zone, and for its union with the Sudan under the Egyptian Crown. Negotiation for the revision of the treaty began. However, Egyptian attempts to change the treaty in such a way as to obtain complete sovereignty and independence for the country met strong British resistance. On July 11, 1947, Egypt took the case to the Security Council of the United Nations, pleading that the presence of British troops on Egyptian soil was incompatible with the Charter and the spirit of the United Nations.¹⁴ No action was taken by the Council, and the matter was left for future negotiation between the two countries involved.

Unpromising negotiations between Great Britain and Egypt dragged on for three years. Finally, on October 15, 1951, Egypt unilaterally abrogated the treaty of 1936, and declared that it would no longer be bound by the treaty. It also denounced the Condominium Agreement on the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; the Egyptian parliament proclaimed the Sudan as a territory under the Egyptian Crown.¹⁵ Britain vigorously repudiated these measures and

¹³ Upon British advice, Egypt did not declare war on the Axis until April 1945. Because Prime Minister Ahmed Maher declared the war, he was assassinated the next day while attending a parliament session. R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁴ United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947-1948, pp. 356-62.

¹⁵ Anwar El-Sadat, op. cit., p. 118.

considered herself not bound by them. Although many Western observers had interpreted these actions by Egypt as being attempts by the government to divert public opinion from the defeat of Egyptian troops in the Palestine war, there is reason to believe that the main cause for these actions was an Egyptian aspiration to assert the right to be sovereign in its own country.¹⁶

Toward the end of 1951, the government allowed police and irregular guerilla forces to attack British military posts in the Canal Zone. The British forces retaliated by attacking an Egyptian police station in Ismailia and killed seventy policemen. On January 26, 1952 anti-British rioters demonstrated in the streets of Cairo, and soon turned into uncontrolled mobs burning many buildings and killing thirteen Britishers.¹⁷

King Farouk dismissed the Wafd government for inability to control the turbulent situation. In the following five months Cairo became a scene of changes of indecisive governments. Finally, on July 23, 1952, the "Free Officers", an organization of nationalist officers in the Egyptian army led by General Mohammed Naguib and Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser, put an end to the almost chaotic situation by overthrowing the regime of King Farouk.¹⁸ The new regime, headed by thirteen army officers known as the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), introduced many reforms in the social, economic, and political fields during its first few weeks in office.

* * *

¹⁶ John S. Badeau and R.H. Nolte, The Emergence of Modern Egypt (Headline Series, Number 98, April 1953), pp. 22-3.

¹⁷ The New York Times, January 27, 1952, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., July 24, 1952, p. 1.

Before turning to the revolutionary era, it is necessary to take a brief look at Egypt's relations with the United States and the Soviet Union prior to the Revolution.

Prior to World War II, the United States was little concerned with political events in the Middle East. Certain American groups, it is true, engaged in such activities as missionary, educational and commercial. The war brought out American strategic and political interest in the area. Almost on the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt declared that the defense of the Middle East was vital to American security. President Truman, in April 1946, observed that the Middle East, an area with vast natural resources and a strategic location, was composed of states that were "not strong enough individually or collectively to withstand powerful aggression."¹⁹ This was considered a confirmation of Roosevelt's declaration of the importance of the Middle East to the United States.

In general the post-war era was characterized by increasing American involvement in the affairs of the area. This emergence of U.S. interest in the area was related to two basic developments. The first was the presence of the Soviet threat in the Middle East exemplified by Soviet refusal to withdraw its troops from northern Iran and the Soviet pressure on Greece and Turkey in 1946. United States' promises to Greece and Turkey that it would assist them to deter Russian aggression by force if necessary helped to ease Russian pressure on them. Professor Robert Strausz-Hupe, stressing this development in bringing Washington to play a major role in the affairs of the Middle East, stated:

¹⁹ Ernest Jackh, Background of the Middle East (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952). p. 397.

Even without the Soviet challenge, the United States still might have been drawn into the affairs of the area. Yet American initiative would have been confined to a number of local and highly selective issues, and even in these the United States would have confined itself to its traditional roles of moderator, offering its good offices before the bar of world opinion and counselling the proper legal procedure; of trader, seeking markets and sound investments; and of generous mentor, endowing schools and spreading the blessings of universal, secular education. The United States can still play these roles and, indeed, does play them. It has been forced, however, into another unaccustomed and perilous part, that of the strategic ringmaster of the Middle East.²⁰

The second development was the decline of the power and prestige of Great Britain and France in the area after World War II. The dwindling of influence of the two European powers was demonstrated by the grant of independence to Syria and Lebanon by France, and by the conflict between Great Britain and Egypt over termination of the 1936 treaty; this development led the United States policy makers to seek ways to fill the "vacuum." The United States, being the leader of the Western bloc, realized that the position of the Middle East was the keystone to any effective Western defense plan against Communist expansion.²¹

Jack Winecour, a Middle Eastern affairs specialist, confirmed that it was the United States rivalry with the U.S.S.R. that brought American engagement in the area's affairs, but he also pointed out that there existed a British-American rivalry which resulted from British jealousy over United States expanding influence and British contracting power in an area where she used to be the unchallenged master. He explained that the latter rivalry was overshadowed by the overall conflict with the Soviet Union in

²⁰ Robert Strausz-Hupé, "The United States and the Middle East," Tensions in the Middle East edited by Philip W. Thayer (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1958), p. 4.

²¹ Ibid., p. 5.

which both Washington and London were engaged. He believed that this British-American rivalry contributed to the advent of an "independent American policy" toward the Middle East.²²

The United States' pursuance of an independent policy toward the Middle East was demonstrated in the question of Palestine. In 1947, the United States played a leading role in securing United Nations' approval of a resolution recommending partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. British preliminary resistance to enforce a decision was countered by a United States suggestion of an international trusteeship for Palestine. When the United States proposal failed of acceptance, President Truman recognized the new Jewish state upon its declaration of independence in 1948.

America's role in establishing the state of Israel and its strong support of that state since 1948 antagonized the Arab world and was bound to become one of the major obstacles to friendly relations between the United States and the Arab Middle East. This observation was particularly applicable to the relations between Egypt and the United States. The humiliations suffered by the Egyptian army in the Palestine war in 1948, as related by the Egyptians, was due to the enemy's superiority of modern weapons. The people of Egypt were convinced beyond any doubt that Western refusal to supply their army with modern arms was motivated by the American government's desire to preserve the existence of the state of Israel. The Egyptians were also indignant at the extensive United States economic aid to the Jewish State. The U.S. dollar was considered a major factor in saving the

²² Jack Winocour, "The United States and the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, August-September, 1954, p. 260.

Israeli economy from eventual bankruptcy.²³

When Egypt abrogated the treaty of 1936 with Great Britain on October 15, 1951, United States Secretary of State Dean Acheson criticized Egypt's action as contrary to international law.²⁴ This statement was interpreted by Egypt as further evidence of active American opposition to the country's national aspirations.

The success of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in containing Soviet power in Europe, followed by the communist aggression in Korea, led Washington to the conclusion that Western influence must be maintained in the Middle East. Since it was obvious that the "old exclusive semi-imperial treaty relationships were no longer tenable," the United States and Great Britain "conceived the idea of multilateral regional defense pacts as an alternative, with the Western bloc replacing the old imperial power."²⁵

On this basis the United States, together with Great Britain, France, and Turkey, presented the Egyptian government with a proposal to create a Middle East Defense Organization a few days after Egypt's abrogation of the treaty of 1936. Egypt was told that she could join the Organization as an equal partner with the other powers and that the British troops in the Canal Zone would be replaced by a combined force of the five countries i.e. the United States, France, Turkey, Great Britain and Egypt. Egypt's "resentment

²³ Between 1948 and 1958, Israel alone received half a billion dollars in economic aid from the United States as against \$300 million to all the Arab countries. A.J. Meyer, "Reflections on American Economic Policy in the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, June-July, 1959, p. 233.

²⁴ The New York Times, October 18, 1951, p. 1.

²⁵ B.J.S. Raleigh, "Middle East Politics--Past Ten Years," Middle Eastern Affairs, January 1959, p. 5.

at the position of the United States on Palestine²⁶ and American support to British policy in the present Anglo-Egyptian conflict caused the country to reject the proposal. The Egyptian government insisted on the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from the Canal Zone before it would even consider entering a pact with the West. The plan had to be held in abeyance.²⁷

* * *

Prior to the Second World War, the Soviet Union did little to remind the Egyptians of its existence. This, however, does not mean that the Soviet Union did not appreciate the importance of the strategic position of Egypt and the Arab world to the security of its territory. In 1926, the Soviet Union sent a Moslem delegation to the All-Moslem Congress in Mecca and supported King Ibn Saud in his claim to the Caliphate.²⁸ The measure was directed against King Fu'ad of Egypt, who also wanted to proclaim himself the Caliph of Islam. The Soviet action was motivated by the pro-British policy of the government in Cairo.

This was considered the only Russian activity in the Middle East until the outbreak of World War II. As for the activities of local Egyptian Communists, their first appearance was in 1919. The Communist group ceased to exist three years later, because of its attempt to revolutionize the

²⁶ Ralph Bunche, Introduction to The Near East and the Great Powers, edited by Richard N. Frye, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 1.

²⁷ Paul L. Hanna, "America in the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, May 1959, p. 182.

²⁸ Moshe Leshem, "Soviet Propaganda to the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, January, 1953, pp. 1-10.

government as well as political, social, and religious institutions and traditions in the country. Because of these intended radical changes, the Egyptian government suppressed their activities. During the 1930's the Communist party resumed its activities, but now it used the European Communist parties' tactics of infiltrating the national fronts. The Egyptian Communists now cooperated with the anti-colonial nationalist movement. The emergence of a strong working class during the war strengthened the Communists' position. The immediate post-war era with strong anti-West feelings in Egypt gave the Communists a new power.²⁹ This power, however, was eclipsed as a result of Russian support in the United Nations of the establishment of the Israeli state.

Diplomatic relations were established between Moscow and Cairo for the first time in 1946. This was followed by the creation of an Arabic program by radio Moscow. During the Anglo-Egyptian tension over the Suez Base in 1951, Soviet propaganda advocated the Egyptian cause. Great Britain was severely attacked for its attempts to illegitimately maintain her occupation of Egyptian soil. Radio Moscow intensified its attacks against the Western bloc in general when Egypt was presented with the proposal of creating a Middle East Treaty Organization. Turkey was accused of trying through this scheme to revive the Ottoman Empire at the expense of the Arab sovereignty. Turkey also was called the bridgehead for American imperialism in the Middle East. Even Israel, which had received so much support from the Communist bloc since its creation, was called an agent of American imperialism. This was an obvious attempt to arouse anti-American sentiments among the Arab

²⁹ Walter Laquer, "The Appeal of Communism in the Middle East," The Middle East Journal, Winter, 1955, pp. 17-27.

people. The Moscow radio, while pointing to Anglo-American rivalry in attempting to occupy and exploit the region, mentioned that both countries were pursuing a unified policy in trying to suppress national aspirations among the people.³⁰

³⁰ Leshem, op. cit. See also, Leonid I. Strakhovsky, "The Nature of Soviet Propaganda in the Near East," The Near East and the Great Powers, edited by Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 65-9.

CHAPTER II
FROM NAGUIB TO NASSER

The July 23, 1952 movement of the Egyptian army achieved much success. The speed with which the army was able to overthrow the government, seize the country, and force the abdication of the King amazed many people in and outside Egypt. However, to those who were well aware of the events that took place in the Egyptian political theater during the four years prior to the 1952 coup d'etat, the matter would seem rather simple. Repeated failures in political conflicts with Great Britain intensified the dissatisfaction of the masses with the rulers. These rulers were accused of collaborating with British imperialism in order to maintain their positions and to exploit the people. The disastrous defeat in the Palestine war confused the minds of the people and the army.¹ The defective arms with which the army was supplied to fight the Jewish state were revealed to the public. Many Egyptians believed that the Palace was directly connected with purchasing these imperfect arms. The six months that preceded the Revolution, as we have seen,² was an almost chaotic period. Spreading strikes, violent street demonstrations, and the existence of indecisive governments offered strong proof of the failings of the existing regime.

It was generally believed that the "Army was the only national institution in Egypt that could provide law and order, and the only dynamic element in a disrupted Egyptian state that could assume the role of political arbiter."³

¹Marcel Colombe, "Egypt from the Fall of Farouk to the February 1954 Crisis", Middle Eastern Affairs, June, 1954, p. 185.

² Supra, p. 8-9.

³ P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 71.

Taking their cue from some statements by Gamal Abdul Nasser that the army's role after the success of the coup d'etat was only to be "in the front for a few hours",⁴ most Western observers considered that the movement of July 23rd did not have a detailed plan to be carried out by stages. Here is how one of these observers described the general sentiment of the Free Officers immediately after the success of their revolt:

What is certain is that they were patriots, men of good will, animated by the desire to do good and for the welfare of the country. But soon they were faced with difficulties which convinced them that best intentions and good will were not enough to save Egypt from her problems.⁵

The above author believes that it is unknown whether the coup d'etat was one of the chain of events that kept the country in turmoil since World War II or if it was meant to be a revolution. What is certain is that the succeeding events of the first few months proved that a real revolution was in the process in Egypt. "Now it is plain that a new political force has taken control of Egypt, a force which represents a fresh point of view and program of drastic change."⁶

During the first two months of its existence, the new regime showed little concern with international affairs. It concentrated most of its efforts on the solution of Egypt's domestic problems. Great effort was made to consolidate the ruling regime by purging its actual or potential opponents.

⁴ Gamal Abdul Nasser, The Philosophy of the Revolution (Buffalo: Keynes and Marshall Publishers, 1959), p. 32. The book was first published in Arabic in Cairo, 1953.

⁵ Colombe, op. cit., p. 185.

⁶ John S. Badeau, "Where is Egypt Going?" Foreign Policy Bulletin, November 15, 1952. p. 1.

In the field of foreign relations, it was evident that the military regime was pro-Western and anti-Russian. The army's crackdown on local Communists within the first few weeks of the revolution strongly supports the anti-Communist tendencies of the new regime. On August 12, 1952, the leftist labor unions in Kafrud Dawar, a textile industrial center, staged a demonstration shouting "long live the Army's Revolution."⁷ Police and army troops battled with the rioters, killed nine of them and wounded many others. General Naguib condemned the event, branding it as "Communist-inspired strike."⁸ Leigh White, in supporting this belief (the new regime's pro-Western attitudes), has stated:

The Free Officer's anti-Communist trend is beyond any doubt....They would be even more anti-Russian and pro-American, I think, if the U.S. would be less cautious than it has been in assisting Naguib and the junta to attain their modest economic and political objectives.⁹

After a successful attempt to restore tranquility to the nation during the first two months of the Revolution, General Naguib began to seek solutions to the thorny problem of Anglo-Egyptian relations. Early in October 1952, the two governments opened negotiations on the future of the Sudan. General Naguib, and his representative in the Sudan "handled the situation admirably well."¹⁰ The old Egyptian practice of not conceding the right of self-determination to the Sudan was abandoned.

⁷ Keith Wheelock, Nasser's New Egypt (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1960), p. 14.

⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹ "The Blessed Revolution", Harpers, January, 1953, p. 87.

¹⁰ Mekki Shibeika, The Independent Sudan (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1959), p. 488.

The new government negotiated with both the separatists (those who advocated an independent Sudan) and the unionists (those who were in favor of an Egyptian-Sudanese union) Sudanese parties. In the past the governments of Egypt had declined to include the separatists in any negotiation concerning the future of the Sudan and branded them as British imperialist stooges. Thus, General Naguib's offer to discuss the issue with the separatists--who were considered a powerful group--brought to Egypt prestige from all political factions in the Sudan.

The negotiations with Britain ended with a historic event, the signing of an agreement concerning self-determination for the Sudan on January 12, 1953. The following is a summary of the main provisions of this agreement:

(1) an early election for an all Sudanese Parliament, supervised by a mixed Electoral Commission composed of seven members (three Sudanese, one British, one Egyptian, one American, and, as a chairman an Indian); (2) a transitional period of full self-government of not more than three years, in order to enable the Sudanese people to exercise their self-determination in a free and neutral atmosphere; (3) a special committee to complete the "Sudanization" of the Administration, the Police, the Sudan Defense Force, etc., within the three-year period; (4) election of a Constituent Assembly to decide the future status of the Sudan and to prepare a constitution; (5) a decision on the future of the Sudan (a) by the Constituent Assembly choosing to link the Sudan with Egypt in any form or (b) by the Constituent Assembly choosing complete independence.¹²

British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden cautioned the House of Commons on the day the agreement was signed, declaring: "I must emphasize....that

¹¹ Ibid., p. 489.

¹² "Development of U.S. Policy in the Middle East," U.S. State Department Bulletin, February 22, 1954, pp. 280-1.

this is not an ordinary instance of a dependent territory proceeding toward self-government....There are many complications arising from the peculiar status of the Sudan as a Condominium."¹³ It is interesting to contrast this statement with the more optimistic view of the U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who believed that the British, the Egyptian, and the Sudanese peoples should view the settlement "with equal satisfaction as appropriate to their respective interests, and as providing a solid foundation for friendly, mutually beneficial future relationships."¹⁴

It is convenient at this point to trace briefly the subsequent history of the relations between Egypt and the Sudan. In the autumn of 1953 a general election was held in the Sudan which resulted in a victory for the ashikk'a (Brothers Alliance), who campaigned for union with Egypt. Isma'il al-azhari, the leader of the ashikk'a, took office as the Prime Minister. This was considered a setback to the pro-British Umma (People's) Party. However, al-Azhari radically changed his pro-Egyptian policy when the conflict between Naguib and Nasser resulted in the expulsion of Naguib from his position as the Prime Minister as well as the President of Egypt.¹⁵ From this time on, the Sudan followed an independent policy in its relations with her neighbor on the Nile.

Next to the Sudanese question came the thorny problem of British

¹³ As quoted in J.C. Hurewitz, "Britain, Egypt, and the Sudan," Foreign Policy Bulletin, March 15, 1953, p. 1.

¹⁴ "Development of U.S. Policy in the Middle East," U.S. State Department Bulletin, February 22, 1954, pp. 280-1.

¹⁵ The Sudanese developed great affection for General Naguib for two reasons: (1) his unprecedented move to grant them the right of self-determination, and, (2) Naguib was born to a Sudanese mother and lived his childhood in the Sudan. P.J. Vatikiotis, op. cit., p. 92.

evacuation from the Canal Zone. Before the Sudan agreement was signed, Colonel Nasser, the second strongest man in the military regime, made it clear that Egypt would demand the unconditional evacuation of foreign troops from her soil. He stated this view to a British correspondent:

You claim that your army in the Canal Zone is there to keep the Russians out. I tell you its presence is the greatest single obstacle to the defense of the Middle East. We hate the British occupation and, if you don't go willingly, we shall fight.... We shall not sign any Defense Pact as a condition of your going. You must go.¹⁶

With this determination the Egyptian Government opened negotiations with the United Kingdom on the Canal Zone in Cairo on April 27, 1953. A quick settlement of the issue was hindered by the disagreement between the two parties as to whether the Sudan would be free to choose membership in the British Commonwealth.

Colonel Nasser publicly stated the Egyptian position in a press interview two weeks before the negotiations began. He pointed out that Egypt was willing to maintain the Suez Base, and that since Egypt by itself was unable to provide the necessary technicians, it was willing to allow British personnel to take the responsibility of providing technical aid for the maintenance of the base. Nasser, however, made it clear that this should not be interpreted by the British government as a veiled occupation. He then reiterated his previous declarations that Egypt would not join a defense treaty with the West as a price for the evacuation.¹⁷

The two delegations conducted extensive negotiations, but disagreements arose over the number of British technicians to be maintained in the

¹⁶ The New Statesman and Nation, January 17, 1953.

¹⁷ The New York Times, April 13, 1953, p. 6.

Canal Zone, the length of time for which technical aid would be needed, and British insistence on its right to re-enter the Zone in time of war. Egypt broke off the negotiations only ten days after they had started.¹⁸

However, contacts between Cairo and London concerning the Canal Zone problem were renewed on July 30, 1953. The joint communique issued at the outset of the conversations stated that "the possibilities of agreement will be further explored by this means before discussions are resumed."¹⁹ No concrete decisions were agreed upon, and on September 4, the British delegation left for London after holding six meetings with the Egyptian government.

Further negotiations were deadlocked until July 11, 1954. On this date, a British delegation reopened discussion with the Egyptian authorities on the future of the Suez Base. On July 27 an accord entitled "Heads of Agreement" was reached; it provided for the withdrawal of 83,000 British troops from the Suez Zone within twenty months; the base was to be maintained by the Egyptian government with the assistance of 4,000 British technicians wearing civilian clothes; and, in the event of an attack upon any signatory to the Arab Collective Security Pact or upon Turkey, British troops would have the right to put the Suez Base under their disposal. Britain and Egypt waived all financial claims on each other arising from the previous British occupation. The 1936 treaty was abrogated by Great Britain (Egypt had already abrogated it in 1951). Finally both parties affirmed their determination "to uphold the 1888 Constantinople Convention

¹⁸ Ibid., May 7, 1953, p. 1.

¹⁹ Middle East Journal, "Chronology," Autumn 1953, pp. 507-8.

guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal."²⁰

In London the accord was regarded by some with skepticism. The British government justified it on the grounds that the evacuation of British troops from Egyptian territory was motivated by the desire to maintain friendlier relations with Egypt in the future and that advanced military technique made the Canal Base less important than before.²¹

In Cairo, the Egyptian government hailed the agreement for having finally liberated Egyptian soil from "imperialism". There was less emphasis in Egypt than in Britain on the proposition that the agreement would bring better relations between the two nations. Nasser announced to a huge rally in Cairo that "One stage of our struggle has ended and a new stage is about to begin."²²

* * *

The conflict between General Naguib and Colonel Nasser, which reached its peak in early 1954, goes back to 1950. The Free Officers picked Naguib

²⁰ Ibid., Autumn 1954, p. 460. The Constantinople Convention, which was signed on October 29, 1888 by Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia and Turkey, composed of seventeen articles dealing with regulations to insure the free use of the Suez Canal for international navigation. The contracting parties agreed not in any way to interfere "with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace." According to Article 9 of the Convention, Egypt was authorized to "take the necessary measures for insuring the execution of the treaty." Article 10 granted Egypt the right to deny the passage through the Canal to any country at war with Egypt in order to secure "the defense of Egypt and the maintenance of public order." See Government of Egypt, White Paper on the Nationalization of the Suez Maritime Canal Company (Cairo Government Press, 1956), pp. 51-7.

²¹ The Manchester Guardian Weekly, August 5, 1954.

²² R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 197.

for their leadership because of his reputation as an honest general and his high rank. Nasser was then the organizer of the movement, and he himself made the plan for selecting the general. When the Revolution occurred, Naguib held the two highest titles in Egypt--President and Prime Minister. But Nasser was exercising control over the activities of the government through the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). The RCC was formed immediately after the success of the Revolution and was comprised of eleven Free Officers plus General Naguib. The RCC was the real power behind the government. Major government decisions had to be passed by majority vote of its members. Although Naguib possessed the top position in the government, he was but one of the members of the RCC with a single vote.

General Naguib, the man whom the Free Officers wanted to be the figure-head of the Revolutionary regime, became immensely popular among Egyptian masses. In October 1953 Nasser and his associates appointed three new ministers to the Cabinet without consulting the General.²³ Naguib protested the action. Confident of his over-riding value to the regime, Naguib demanded more authority to direct the affairs of the state than was delegated to him by the RCC. He requested a veto power over actions of the RCC rather than his single vote. When these demands were not met he resigned on February 25, 1954. The resignation was accepted, and Colonel Nasser, "the chief architect of the Revolution and the dominant personality in the RCC, and the man most clearheadedly devoted to what he has called 'the dream of an Egypt free and strong,' became leader in name as he had long been in fact."²⁴ Nasser, thus, ascended to the premiership with the

²³ Joachim Joesten, Nasser, the Rise to Power (London: Long Acre, 1960), pp. 102-3.

²⁴ Richard Nolte, "Egypt in Transition," Foreign Policy Bulletin, July 15, 1954, pp. 1-2.

presidency remaining vacant.

The government's announcement that Naguib was dismissed because he sought dictatorial power did not satisfy the masses in Cairo. Naguib was hailed as a martyr, and soon the students and the people demanded that their beloved leader be reinstated to the presidency. Similar hostility to Nasser was demonstrated by the Sudanese people. Even the army was split with one large faction demanding the return of Naguib.²⁵

Confronted with this critical situation, Nasser consented to the return of Naguib, four weeks after the latter's resignation. Naguib again became the President, the Prime Minister, and the Chairman of the ROC. Capitalizing on his popularity, he announced the end of the transition period and that Egypt was ready for parliamentary life. The press started its campaign for civil liberties, and Naguib promised to meet its demands.²⁶

Behind the scenes, Nasser was vigorously working to consolidate his position with the army, the police, and the trade unions. He obtained new support among some elements who feared that Naguib's appeal to the people, would make him the captive of extreme movements. These elements were also worried that Naguib's latest moves were designed to reinstate the old regime.²⁷ On April 15, 1954, Naguib was once more expelled, now for good, and put under house arrest. Nasser retained his previous position as the Prime Minister, and, in effect, ruler of Egypt.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Middle East Journal, Spring 1954, p. 186; see also P.J. Vatikiotis, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND

OF THE EGYPTIAN-COMMUNIST ARMS DEAL

The change of Administration in Washington in 1953 brought with it a new approach to the United States' policy toward the Middle East. The Truman Administration believed that the Suez Zone had to be maintained by the Western Powers if an effective defense for the Middle East was desired. For this reason the United States State Department had always supported London's position that British troops would not evacuate unless Egypt would become a member of a Western sponsored security pact in the Middle East.¹

John Foster Dulles, the author of the new approach, toured the Middle East in the spring of 1953 in order to get a direct view of the situation in the area.² He devised the "Northern Tier" concept to compensate for the inevitable surrender of the Canal Base to Egypt. The new Secretary of State was convinced that Cairo would never entertain the idea of joining an exclusively Western alliance as a price for British evacuation. The Northern Tier concept was a shift of emphasis from a Suez Base-centered defense system to a defense system of containment of probable Soviet expansion in the Middle East by grouping Middle Eastern states in a Western oriented alliance.³ The countries within this area were Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. After he reached Washington from his Middle Eastern tour, Dulles reported:

¹ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 208.

² Ibid., p. 214.

³ J.S. Raleigh, "The West and the Defense of the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, June-July 1955, p. 177.

A Middle East Defense Organization is a future rather than an immediate possibility. Many of the Arab countries are so engrossed with their quarrels that they pay little heed to the menace of Soviet Communism. However, there is more concern where the Soviet Union is near. In general, the "Northern Tier" of nations shows awareness of this danger.

There is a vague desire to have a collective security system. But no such system can be imposed from without. It should be designed and grow from within out of a sense of common destiny and common danger. While awaiting the formal creation, the United States can usefully help strengthen the interrelated defense of those countries which want strength, not as against each other or the West, but to resist the common threat to all free peoples.⁴

During his Middle Eastern tour, Secretary Dulles understood that Iraq would be the only Arab country to be initially included in the alliance. However, the United States would pursue its encouragement to other Arab states to join it.

Proceeding with the plan thus conceived, the Turkish-Pakistani Pact--the cornerstone for the more comprehensive alliance--was concluded in January 1954.⁵ Thus Washington has succeeded in laying the base for the Northern Tier. The United States reacted by providing massive military and economic aid to the two countries. In Iraq and Iran official statements were issued welcoming the new alliance. In Syria, although the government welcomed the accord between Turkey and Pakistan, it cautioned that the Pact was a non-Arab one and that the Arab states should refrain from taking any decision until the question of Arab participation was discussed in the Arab League Council. When the question of Arab states' participation was discussed in the Council, most member states expressed opposition, a

⁴ U.S. Department of State Bulletin, June 5, 1953, p. 835.

⁵ Jules Davids, "The U.S. and the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, May 1961, p. 130.

resolution was adopted declaring that the Arab states "would not accept any responsibility undermining their sovereignty and independence, or incompatible with their responsibilities as members of the Arab League."⁶ The resolution was considered a defeat for the pro-Western government of Nuri es-Said of Iraq which favored Arab participation in the new Pact.

Arab objection to joining the Turkish-Pakistani Pact--for that matter, any system of alliance with the West--was mainly instigated by Egypt. (It may be recalled that as early as 1951 Cairo rejected any military association with the West.)⁷ The new Egyptian regime regarded any move by an Arab state to seek membership in the new Pact a defection from the Arab solidarity and the Collective Security of the League. Egypt was also worried that unless the Arab world solidly supported her stand for unconditional withdrawal of the British from the Canal Zone, her bargaining power in negotiating a satisfactory settlement of this question would be much weakened.⁸

Until the signing of the Suez Agreement in July 1954, Dulles had achieved some success in convincing the Egyptian authorities that the new Administration in Washington had changed her policy to one more favorable toward the Arab world. During his visit to Egypt in the spring of 1953, Dulles promised the Egyptian government that the United States would persuade Great Britain to evacuate the Zone within a short period of time. On July 15, 1954, President Eisenhower declared that the United States would

⁶ The New York Times, April 2, 1954, p. 1.

⁷ See page 15

⁸ M. Perlman, "The Turkish-Arab Diplomatic Tangle," Middle Eastern Affairs, January 1955, pp. 13-17.

make "firm commitments" to Egypt with regard to military and economic assistance if Nasser would arrive at a satisfactory settlement with the British.⁹ When the Agreement was signed between Britain and Egypt, the American government expressed its gratification and hoped for better relations with Egypt.

In Egypt as well as in the other Arab states, a hope developed that the Eisenhower Administration would inaugurate a new American policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, a policy which would pay due regard to Arab interests and be characterized by "sympathetic and friendly impartiality."¹⁰ The Arabs hoped for some redress of what they regarded as past injustices.

But from the Arab viewpoint, little, if any, of these hopes materialized. While the United States was persuading Britain to evacuate her troops from the Egyptian soil, Dulles conducted certain activities that were considered as working against Egypt's ambitions. The encouragement by Dulles for Iraq's entering into a defense treaty with Turkey was a move in apparent conflict with the non-commitment policy advocated by Nasser.¹¹ When Iraq did sign the Baghdad Pact with Turkey in February 1955, and later was joined by Britain, Pakistan, and Iran, Egypt was furious.¹²

With respect to the Arab-Jewish conflict, Egypt believed that the Eisenhower Administration did not change the previous Administration's pro-Israeli policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel remained Washington's

⁹ The New York Times, July 15, 1954, p. 1.

¹⁰ "Our Stake in the Middle East," Current History, November 1957, p. 285.

¹¹ Harry B. Ellis, Challenge in the Middle East - Communist Influence and American Policy (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1960), p. 38.

¹² R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 200; see also Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 118.

"spoiled child" (attifilil mudellel).¹³ Her big share of American Foreign aid was not reduced. (Up to 1959, United States government gifts, loans and grants amounted to nearly \$500 million dollars, while all the Arab states combined received less than half this figure).¹⁴

Although the United States government signed in November 1954 a \$40-million economic agreement with Egypt to help the latter develop her industrial resources, an Egyptian request to purchase modern arms did not meet a favorable response from Washington.¹⁵ Meanwhile Israel was conducting regular raids on Arab villages. Several Israeli attacks on Egyptian military posts, especially the raid in Gaza on February 28, 1955, were conducted with superior military mobility that created fear of prospective Israeli expansionist aims.¹⁶

The consequences of all of these events--namely, the establishment of the Baghdad Pact, the unsympathetic American policy toward the Arabs in

13 The term was popularly used by the Arabs.

14 See footnote 23 on page 4 .

15 Harry B. Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-2.

16 Fayes A. Sayegh, The Arab-Israeli Conflict (New York: The Arab Information Center 1956), pp. 71-3. It would seem appropriate here to state that some Western authors accused Nasser of being responsible for creating the tense situation between the Arab states, especially Egypt, and Israel. Joachim Joesten presented this viewpoint as follows:

Commando raids conducted at night on Israeli villages had started in the spring of 1955 from the Gaza Strip, the slice of desert which had remained in Egyptian possession after the armistice in 1949. Soon, the raids were being conducted from Syrian and Jordanian territory as well. The nightly assaults on the civil population of Israel were matched by daily broadcasts from Cairo radio in which Egypt promised to grind Israel to dust.

See *op. cit.*, p. 153.

their conflict with Israel, and the withholding by the Western bloc of arms shipment to Egypt--were immediate and far-reaching. Egypt's powerful propaganda machine started beaming out "anti-imperialist" slogans designed to make Arab peoples throughout the Middle East oppose American policies toward the area. Nasser found immediate response from the Arab masses who considered him an Arab rather than merely an Egyptian leader.¹⁷

* * *

Immediately after the Gaza raid of February 1955, Nasser intensified his appeals to the American government to provide his army with military equipment. He wanted first the purchase of \$100 million worth of arms, but when he found no response he reduced his order to \$20 million worth of American weapons.¹⁸ His efforts were again ended with failure. Harry B. Ellis described the episode this way:

The American Embassy in Cairo, realizing that the amount of arms which could be bought for this sum [\$20 million] would not enable the Egyptian Army to defeat Israel, strongly favored the arms sale. The Embassy was convinced that Nasser wanted the arms primarily to improve the morale of his troops and to counter growing unrest in the Army. Negotiations dragged on through the spring and summer of 1955. Neither Nasser nor Ambassador Byroade could obtain a definite answer from Washington.

In July Byroade made a final appeal to the Department of State, urging that favorable action be taken on the Egyptian request. He suggested that, should Nasser not get this comparatively small amount of arms, he would be forced either to seek arms elsewhere or risk the disaffection of his officers. In the end, negotiations broke down on the minor point of whether Cairo would pay for the weapons

¹⁷ Harry B. Ellis, op. cit. p.39.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.42 .

in dollars or Egyptian pounds.¹⁹

Ellis continued on to say that when the negotiations ended, the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo offered arms to Egypt in huge quantities--about five times the amount Egypt wanted to purchase from America--and "without conditions." Although Nasser did not even inform most of his Cabinet members, he summoned the American Ambassador and told him of the offer. However, news of the Russian offer leaked to the Egyptian army and people who favored an immediate acceptance of the offer. Moreover, they came to the conclusion now that the United States was favoring Israel, and that the Russians were supporting the Arab cause. Nevertheless, Nasser stalled for two months before he decided to accept the Communist arms.

Finally, on September 27, 1955, Nasser announced to a huge rally in Cairo that he had concluded with Czechoslovakia a massive armaments agreement (later Nasser admitted that Czechoslovakia was a front for the Soviet Union).²⁰ It was a barter agreement whereby Egypt would pay for the arms with cotton. While the contents of the agreement were never revealed to the public, unconfirmed reports stated "the arms received would reach a total of about \$80 million, with the individual weapons priced at a fraction of their real value."²¹ The purchase would include 200 MIG jet fighters, 100 tanks, 6 submarines, and some artillery.²²

The Western Powers were shocked at this daring and unprecedented

¹⁹ Ibid., (emphasis added); see also U.S. News and World Report, November 4, 1955, pp. 48-54.

²⁰ The New York Times, September 28, 1955; and October 26, 1955.

²¹ The Middle Eastern Journal, "Chronology," Winter 1956, p. 65.

²² Ibid.

Egyptian move. The Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France expressed grave concern. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State George Allen arrived in Cairo on September 30 in a futile last-minute attempt to dissuade Nasser from conducting the arms deal.²³

Israel, the country most concerned about Egyptian armament from the Soviet bloc, regarded the new development as posing a serious threat to her existence. Premier Moshe Sharett protested to the Soviet and Czech governments against their selling arms to Egypt. He also asked the U.S. State Department to promise his country whatever arms needed to match Egypt's new military strength.²⁴ Similar notes were delivered to the British and French foreign ministries. On September 29, 1955, Premier Sharret expressed to the Soviet charge d'affaires his nation's grave concern at the deal and requested the Soviet representative to obtain clarification from his government of its Middle East policy.²⁵

Israel argued that while her request for supplying her army with modern arms was merely for defense purpose, Egypt's intention was for aggression. It seemed as though Israel's argument was a convenient rationalization, for Israel was much to blame for the new development. Before Israel began her regular raids of 1955, Premier Nasser was rightly described as a "moderate."²⁶ His main attention was devoted to secure complete sovereignty for his

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The New York Times, October 11, 1955, p. 4.

²⁵ Middle Eastern Affairs, "Chronology," October 1955, p. 331.

²⁶ R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 197. Even as late as early 1962 Nasser was described as having "never been fanatical about the Jews." Kingsley Martin, "Conversation with Nasser," The New Statesman and Nation, January 5, 1962, p. 6.

country and to concentrate on raising the Egyptian economy to a respectable level.

The first Israeli major attack that created fear throughout the Arab world in 1955 occurred in February when a regular Israeli army attacked the Gaza Strip, killing thirty-eight persons.²⁷ The United Nations Security Council condemned this "prearranged and planned attack ordered by Israeli authorities...against Egyptian army forces in Gaza."²⁸ Four more Israeli raids were conducted across the Egyptian truce lines, and on each occasion substantial losses were inflicted upon the Egyptian defenders.²⁹ Egypt, lacking effective retaliatory means, relied upon the paramilitary fedayeen (guerilla fighters) which infiltrated Israeli territory. While the fedayeen certainly disturbed Israel, their exploits were publicized in the West far out of proportion to their actual deeds.³⁰

Commander E.H. Hutchison, a member of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine, described the repercussions of the Israeli raids on the Egyptian political scene:

The Nasser government was in a precarious position. To take military action against Israel would be courting defeat and to take no action would cause the government to lose face, not only at home but in the other Arab countries as well.³¹

Thus Israel could be described as the primary element which brought about

²⁷ E.H. Hutchison, Violent Truce (New York: Devin-Adair Co. 1956), p. 117.

²⁸ United Nations Year Book 1955, p. 33.

²⁹ E.C. Hutchison, op. cit., pp. 111-23.

³⁰ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 233.

³¹ Op. cit., p. 119.

the new turn of events in the Middle East.

The Egyptian purchase of Communist arms was disturbing to the United States but had broader significance. It was for the purpose of pleasing Egypt and the Arab world that the State Department had worked so strenuously to secure the Suez Base agreement. Dulles had hoped that after British troops withdrew from the Canal Zone Egyptian relations with the West would be greatly improved and that Premier Nasser would entertain the idea of joining a defense pact with the West. The arms deal with the Communist bloc served a blow to all of these calculations. For two reasons Washington regarded the new development as a dangerous Russian offensive in the Middle East. First, the development would give the Soviet Union more influence in the affairs of the Middle East. Thus the Soviets would realize an age-old Russian dream of securing a dominating position in this sensitive area. Secondly, providing the Egyptian army with huge quantities of modern arms would produce an arms race between the Arab states and Israel. Thus, according to Washington belief, peace would then be extremely hard to maintain in the Middle East.

Soviet bloc promises to extend a massive military assistance to a non-Communist country--Egypt--reflected a new aspect of Soviet foreign policy in the post-Stalin era.³² The Soviets found in the Egyptian Premier's non-alignment policy the very objective they were persuading the Afro-Asian countries to adopt. The Stalinist regime's mere moral support of Egypt in her conflict with Britain was now changed to material one as well. In order to challenge the West in every possible way the Russians were "soft-

³² Wladyslaw W. Kulski, Peaceful Co-Existence - An Analysis of Soviet Foreign Policy (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), pp. 216-17.

pedaling" their "ideology and stressing the very thing which in the past has given an advantage to the West;" i.e., readiness to extend military assistance to the Arab countries, which are anxious to transform their patriotic aspirations into reality.³³

To Egypt, the Communist arms deal represented the inevitable move which would guarantee the country's safety against what the Egyptians considered the expansionist designs of Israel. Egypt was "purchasing arms and not ideologies," for culturally and religiously it would be impervious to Soviet doctrines.³⁴ Nasser was confident that his country "can take a Red gun without any dialectic wrappings, and fly a MIG plane without having to spout Marx or Lenin."³⁵

³³ Vera M. Dean, "Struggle for Middle East," Foreign Policy Bulletin, January 1, 1956, p. 60.

³⁴ Neal Stanford, "Can U.S. Stop Russia in the Middle East?" Foreign Policy Bulletin, November 15, 1955, p. 35.

³⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTROVERSIAL HIGH ASWAN DAM

(ES-SED EL-ALI)

The High Dam would be seventeen times greater than the Great Pyramids, which for thousands of years have been foremost among the marvels of the world, conferring immortality on the Pharaohs.

Gamal Abdul Nasser¹

Egypt's arms deal with the Communist world in September 1955, a then unprecedented move among the Arab states, aroused much apprehension in the United States and Britain. The Western bloc was concerned mostly with the possibility of Communist infiltration in Egypt through the Soviet bloc's technical and military assistance. As a countermove to the likely expansion of Soviet influence in Egypt, the governments of the United States and Britain informed Egyptian Premier Nasser in December 1955, of their willingness to extend financial aid to build the much publicized High Aswan Dam.²

The High Dam or es-Sed el-Ali was the cornerstone of the grandiose economic development plans formulated by the new Egyptian regime. But to finance the dam was a formidable problem. The total cost was estimated to be in excess of one billion dollars.³ Since Egypt herself was unable to provide the necessary funds, she approached the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom and the International Bank for Reconstruction

¹ Quoted in Joachim Joesten, op. cit., pp. 120-1.

² R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 202.

³ Harry N. Howard, "The Development of United States Policy in the Near East," U.S. Department of State Bulletin April 9, 1956, p. 12.

and Development (World Bank) in late 1953, seeking their support of the project.⁴

For two years after Egypt placed her application with the West for the financial support, no definite answer was given by the Western governments or the World Bank. Egypt, desperately waiting to start work on the dam site, felt that the Western financing offer was prolonged unnecessarily. On October 13, 1955, an official Egyptian spokesman declared that the Soviet Union had offered to finance es-Sed el-Ali.⁵ A few days later, the Egyptian ambassador in Washington informed the State Department that his government would prefer to have Western rather than Soviet help in constructing the dam.⁶ Though Premier Nasser confirmed that the Soviet Union had made the offer several times, he emphasized his preference for a Western offer.

Confronted with the possibility of a serious Soviet economic competition in the Middle East, the United States and the United Kingdom on December 17, 1955, offered to assist Egypt in the initial work connected with the building of the High Aswan Dam.⁷ Under the Western offer, a total of \$270 million would be raised in the following way: a loan of \$200 million from the World Bank at 4 per cent interest, a grant of \$56 million from the United States, and a grant of \$14 million from Britain.⁸ The governments of West Germany, France, and Italy also announced their readiness to

⁴ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 187.

⁵ The New York Times, October 14, 1955, p. 4.

⁶ Ibid., October 18, 1955, p. 3.

⁷ Middle East Journal, "Chronology," Spring 1956, p. 182.

⁸ Joachin Joesten, op. cit., p. 126.

contribute considerable amounts.⁹

Thus, Egypt's effort to seek financial assistance to build her giant project, which had aroused little interest in the Western world for two years, was now given full consideration.¹⁰ Despite Secretary Dulles' statement that "the interest of the U.S. and of the World Bank in this dam goes back two years and more and is not attributable at all to the Soviet proposal,"¹¹ It was evident that the Western offer was made only after the Soviet Union had announced her readiness to assist Egypt to build the High Dam. An informed observer stated that in the absence of its "fear of Moscow's economic penetration in Egypt", the West would probably have not seriously entertained the idea of financing the project.¹²

Negotiations between Egypt and the Western Powers to implement the United States-British-World Bank offer soon began. The World Bank required Egypt to follow a sound fiscal policy and to avoid inflation, which might impair Egypt's credit. The Bank also stipulated that Egypt must reach an agreement with the Sudan on the problem of adjusting water distribution after the dam has been constructed.¹³ The Egyptian government pledged that these conditions would be observed. When the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo remarked that the Soviet Union still intended to participate in financing the High Dam "unless there is something in Egypt's agreement with the West

9 Ibid.

10 V.M. Dean, "Struggle for Middle East," op. cit., p. 60.

11 U.S. Department of State Bulletin January 2, 1956, p. 12.

12 V.M. Dean "Aswan and Suez," op. cit., p. 6.

13 Keith Wheelock, op. cit., pp. 189.

which specifically excludes us," a U.S. official replied that Russian exclusion was implied in the Western offer.¹⁴

In June 1956, Soviet Foreign Minister Dimitri Shepilov visited Cairo. Al-Ahram, a Cairene daily, reported that the Soviet Foreign Minister had again pointed out his country's willingness to help Egypt finance es-Sed el-Ali. The paper added that he had promised Egypt a \$1.2 billion-dollar loan for the purpose. The loan was to carry two per cent interest and was to be repayable over a period of sixty years.¹⁵ President Nasser,¹⁶ however, made it clear that his country was still favoring the Anglo-American offer. He instructed the Egyptian ambassador in Washington to try to reach a final agreement with the American government.¹⁷ However, before the ambassador had a chance to carry out the Cairo instructions, he was summoned on July 17 to the State Department and was handed the following memorandum:

At the request of the government of Egypt, the United States joined in December, 1955, with the United Kingdom and with the World Bank in an offer to assist Egypt in the construction of the High Dam on the Nile at Aswan. This project is one of great magnitude. It would require an estimated twelve to sixteen years to complete, at a total cost estimated at some 1.3 billion dollars, of which over \$900 million represent local currency requirements. It involves not merely the rights and interests of Egypt, but of other states whose waters are contributory, including the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda. The December offer contemplated an extension by the United States and the United Kingdom to grant aid to

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The New York Times, June 23, 1956, p. 4.

¹⁶ In June 1956, Nasser, by a vote of 99 per cent of all Egyptian eligible voters, was elected President of the Egyptian Republic. See R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 203.

¹⁷ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 193.

help finance certain early phases of the work, the effects of which would be confined solely to Egypt, and with the understanding that accomplishment of the project as a whole would require a satisfactory resolution of the question of Nile water rights. Another important consideration bearing upon the feasibility of the undertaking and thus the practicability of American aid was Egyptian willingness and ability to concentrate its economic resources upon the vast reconstruction program.

Developments within the succeeding seven months have not been favorable to the success of the project, and the United States government has concluded that it is not feasible in present circumstances to participate in the project. Agreement by the riparian states has not been achieved, and the ability of Egypt to devote adequate resources to assure the project's success has become more uncertain than at the time the offer was made.

In the end, the note expressed United States' hopes that the withdrawal of the offer would not impair American-Egyptian friendly relations and promised American cooperation in aiding Egypt to improve the economic condition of its people.¹⁸

In line with the United States government's withdrawal of its offer, the British government announced the cancellation of her offer of \$14 million. The World Bank loan of \$200 million, which had been dependent on the proposed Anglo-American offer, was automatically withdrawn.¹⁹

* * *

It seems appropriate at this point to analyze the real causes behind Western withdrawal of the High Dam offer and the immediate repercussions of the withdrawal.

It was generally agreed that the reasons given by the American

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State Bulletin July 30, 1956, p. 188.

¹⁹ Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 129.

government for withholding aid to finance the Egyptian Dam were superficial ones. There were at least five other considerations that primarily motivated Washington's controversial decision. (1) Dulles was annoyed at Nasser's playing a game of "economic neutralism," by "pitting" Western offers against those of the Soviets.²⁰ Nasser never abandoned negotiations with the Soviet Union to finance the dam even after the West had committed itself to build the project. (2) President Nasser's recognition of Communist China in May 1956, caused much irritation to Washington. Secretary Dulles called the recognition "a regrettable action."²¹ (3) There was a powerful Zionist lobby pressing the U.S. Congress and the government to reconsider the extension of financial assistance to Egypt.²² (4) A cotton lobby, sympathetic by a large group of Southern Congressmen, opposed Washington's assistance to build the High Dam. Southern cotton planters were afraid that the dam would increase Egyptian cotton-producing area, thereby causing new competition for the United States.²³ (5) Perhaps most important of all was concerned with the reports received in Washington that the Russians were not in a position to assist Egypt to build the project. Only four days before his withdrawing of the offer Dulles announced that "it is impossible that the Soviets may move in."²⁴ This belief encouraged the State Department to decide that it was safe to risk the Egyptian leader's displeasure.

There were other forces at play that helped precipitate Washington's

²⁰ H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 192.

²¹ The Middle East Journal, "Chronology," Summer 1956, p. 283.

²² H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 192

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ As quoted in Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 1956, p. 3.

decision. First, the period since the Western offer was made evidenced a continued attack on Western influence in the Middle East by radio Cairo. Egypt never halted its moral and material support to the Algerian nationalist rebels in North Africa against France and the Omanese revolt in Southern Arabia against Britain.

Secondly, Egypt continued the ban on the passage of Israel-bound ships through the Suez Canal. Moreover, the arrival of large quantities of Soviet bloc arms to Egypt was regarded by the U.S. government as endangering the very existence of Israel. The Republican platform of August 1956, declared that the effort to secure peace between the Arab nations and the Jewish state "was upset by the Soviet bloc sale of arms to Arab countries."²⁵ On February 24, 1956, Secretary Dulles, addressing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, clarified the United States position vis-a-vis the state of Israel. He stated "the preservation of the state of Israel, as I said before, is what I regard as one of the essential goals of United States foreign policy."²⁶

Thirdly, the decision to cancel the Anglo-American offer was perhaps prompted by reports concerning increasing Communist influence on the Cairo regime. The Western offer which, according to these reports, intended to prevent Egypt from leaning toward the Soviet orbit did not achieve this aim. For example, Walter Z. Laqueur in the May 1956 issue of Commentary pointed out that the Communists were very influential in the army, government, and press in Egypt. He stated that Nasser "has each month swerved

²⁵ The New York Times, August 22, 1956, p. 15.

²⁶ Ibid., February 26, 1956.

further from his professed neutralism" to a pro-Soviet sentiment.²⁷

Finally, Nasser's uncompromising stand against foreign alignment, particularly his untiring campaign against any Arab states' involvement in the Baghdad Pact, was very antagonizing to Western statesmen. Therefore, some measures must be taken to stop Nasser from causing a future collapse to the Baghdad Pact. Withdrawing the offer to build the High Dam would perhaps help topple his regime, thus eliminating the most potential enemy to pro-Western alliance in the area.²⁸

* * *

Nasser received the news of the withdrawal of the Western offer while he was discussing the policy of non-alignment with Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Yugoslav President Tito on the island of Brioni, Yugoslavia. The news was a blow to Nasser's prestige, particularly the U.S. government charge that the Egyptian economy was not strong enough to sustain Egypt's share in constructing the giant project.²⁹

Nasser's first expressed reaction came on July 24, 1956, when he violently attacked the United States government of creating false rumors about weakness of the Egyptian economy. He was reported to have stated:

If rumors in Washington tries to make out that the

²⁷ See also Laquer's book, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East of 1956, of which the U.S. News and World Report, August 10, 1956, reprinted the passage dealing with the Soviet-Egyptian relations. See also Ray Alan, "Cairo-Soviet Gateway Into the Middle East," New Republic, November, 14, 1955, pp. 6-7.

²⁸ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., pp. 194-7.

²⁹ R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 204; see also H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 47.

Egyptian economy is not strong enough to warrant American aid I reply, choke with rage but you will never succeed in ordering us about or exercising your tyranny over us, because we know our path of freedom, of honour, or of dignity.... Publish your communiques in Washington and then consider this: if these communiques are sincere and due to misinformation on your part that is unfortunate, but if they are lies designed to mislead opinion then that is much greater misfortune for the world Power which has constituted itself the champion of liberty.³⁰

On the same day Soviet Ambassador to Cairo reaffirmed his country's readiness to finance the dam if the Egyptian leader asked for it.³¹ On July 26, Nasser announced to a rally at Alexandria the nationalization of the Universal Suez Canal Company. All profits accruing to Egypt from the Canal operations, Nasser said, would be used to finance the construction of es-Sed el-Ali.³²

The nationalization decree provided for compensation for the shareholders and holders of constituent shares. It declared that shareholders "will be compensated for the shares and bonds they possess at their value estimated at the closing rate on the Paris Bourse prior to the date on which this law entered into effect." The payment of the compensation would be made when the Egyptian government took over "all the funds and property of the nationalized company."³³

On July 27 Britain and the United States protested Egypt's nationali-

³⁰ Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 26, 1956, p. 2.

³¹ The Middle East Journal, "Chronology," August 1956, p. 408.

³² U.S. Department of State, The Suez Canal Problem, a Documentary Publication (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Press, 1956), p. 28.

³³ The Government of Egypt: White Paper on the Nationalization of the Suez Maritime Canal Company (Cairo, Government Press 1956), p. 4.

zation of the Canal. The British protest stated:

The Egyptian government has promulgated a law purporting to nationalize the Suez Canal Company as from yesterday, July 26, 1956. Her Majesty's government protest against this arbitrary action, which constitutes a serious threat of the freedom of navigation on a waterway of vital international importance. They reserve all their rights and those of United Kingdom nationals as sanctioned by the agreements in force. The responsibility for the consequence must rest entirely upon the Egyptian government.³⁴

The United States declared:

The announcement by the Egyptian government on July 26 with respect to the seizure of the installations of the Suez Canal Company carries far-reaching implications. It affects the nations whose economies depend upon the products which move through this international waterway and the maritime countries as well as the owners of the Company itself. The United States government is consulting urgently with other governments concerned.³⁵

French reaction was more violent. After an emergency meeting of the French Cabinet on July 27, a spokesman for the French government declared that his country would favor military occupation of the Suez Canal if Britain would join France. French Premier Mollet accused Nasser as a would-be Hitler.³⁶

On the other hand, the Soviet government announced on July 29 that Egypt's nationalization of the Canal Company was in conformity with international law. The government pledged full support to Egypt and appealed for moderation of Western reactions.³⁷

Varying reactions from other countries were reported. Indian Prime

³⁴ Middle Eastern Affairs, August-September, 1956, pp. 299-300.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The Middle East Journal, August 16, 1956, p. 397.

³⁷ The New York Times, July 30, 1956, p. 20.

Minister Nehru said that the nationalization came as a sign of the weakening of European domination of Asia and the Middle East. President Nasser received firm support from all Arab governments. President Tito of Yugoslavia informed Nasser that his country would stand with Egypt in the present conflict. Israel and most NATO members, however, condemned Egypt's act.³⁸

* * *

Before turning to the next phase of the Suez crisis, it is necessary to consider the feasibility of Washington's decision to withdraw the offer to help finance the Aswan Dam.

It was generally agreed the decision was hastily made and did not take into consideration a possible violent reaction from the Egyptian leader. The withdrawal, in fact, damaged Western, especially American, prestige and interest in the Middle East. Moreover, the timing and manner of the offer's withdrawal were particularly inadvisable. The New Statesman and Nation (August 4, 1956) commented that the publication by the State Department of the cancellation of the offer

coincided with the end of the Berioni talks....Nasser interpreted the decision as a deliberate personal rebuff, timed for a moment when its effects on his own position would be greatest. It was inevitable that he would attempt some sort of reponse.

Vera M. Dean expressed her dissatisfaction with the action of Washington as follows:

....Anyone familiar with the temper not only of the Egyptians but of other non-Westerners who have lived

³⁸ The Middle East Journal, August 1956, p. 397.

under Western rule could have predicted that the sudden withdrawal by the United States, which Britain seconded, of its offer to help build the High Aswan Dam would bring some kind of vigorous retort from Cairo.³⁹

Prime Minister Nehru of India voiced his disapproval of the United States government decision. He announced on August 8: "More than the decision, the way it was done hurt Egypt's pride and self-respect and disregarded the people's sentiment."⁴⁰

³⁹ Foreign Policy Bulletin, September 15, 1956, p. 6.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE CRISIS OF SUEZ

Today, citizens' rights have been restored to their owners. Our rights in the Suez Canal have been restored to us after 100 years. Today, we actually achieve true sovereignty, true dignity and true pride.

Gamal Abdul Nasser¹

It is believed that the violent reaction of the United Kingdom and France to the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company was prompted mainly by the anti-British activities of Nasser in the Arab world, and to his active assistance to the anti-French rebels in Algeria.² If Egypt had followed pre-Western policies, British and French reaction to the Suez Canal nationalization might not have been so strong.

In legal terms, the nationalization of the Canal was a procedural action, within the sovereign right of the state of Egypt. Britain recognized Egyptian sovereignty over the Suez Canal in the Anglo-Egyptian treaties of 1936 and 1954. Article 8 of the 1936 treaty stressed that the Suez Canal was "an integral part of Egypt,"³ and article 8 of the 1954 agreement repeated that "the Suez Maritime Canal...is an integral part of Egypt..."⁴ Not only was the Suez Canal exclusively Egyptian, but the nationalized

¹ An excerpt of Nasser's speech on the nationalization of Suez Canal Company. See the Department of State; The Suez Canal Problem - A Documentary Publication, pp. 28-9.

² Middle East Journal, Autumn 1956, p. 395.

³ For text of the treaty, see Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴ Ibid.

company was incorporated under the law of Egypt.⁵ Britain and France, however, "were in no mood for legalistic scruples, they recoiled at the thought of the Suez Canal coming under Egypt's unfettered control."⁶

The United States, Britain, and France reacted to the nationalization of the Suez Canal by freezing all Egyptian assets within their respective countries.⁷ Then on July 29, 1956, Britain and France urged the U.S. government to join them in devising a policy to put the nationalized Suez Canal under international jurisdiction. They also proposed that Egypt be guaranteed a special position in the administration of the canal and a substantial share in collecting revenues.⁸

On August 2, the three Western Powers announced their intention to call a conference for the Canal users in London in order to consider proposals for creating an international authority to be responsible for the operation of the Canal. On August 3, Secretary Dulles, in a radio-television address to the American people, called Nasser's "seizure" of the Canal as "an angry act of retaliation against fancied grievances." He warned that "to permit this to go unchallenged would be to encourage a breakdown of international fabric upon which the security and the well-being of all peoples depend." Dulles then expressed confidence that the forthcoming London conference would be able to set up a new machinery for an efficient and acceptable administration of the Canal.⁹

⁵ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 239.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Middle East Journal, August 1956, p. 397.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ U.S. News and World Report, August 10, 1956, pp. 58-9.

Twenty-four nations were invited to attend the London conference, which held its first meeting on August 16.¹⁰ Egypt and Greece refused to attend, but Ali Sabri, Nasser's foreign affairs adviser, attended the meetings as an observer.¹¹ Dulles introduced a proposal which called for the creation of a Suez Canal Board which would provide international supervision of the Canal operations. By a vote of eighteen in favor and four (India, the Soviet Union, Indonesia, and Ceylon) against, the proposal was adopted.¹² The conference then decided to send a mission composed of representatives of five member-states headed by Prime Minister Menzies of Australia to Egypt to present Nasser with the decision of the majority.¹³

Meanwhile, statements by British and French high authorities made it clear that the two nations were determined to prevent Egypt from executing its decrees of the nationalization of the canal. Prime Minister Eden of Britain declared, "the British Government is determined that our essential interests in this area must be safeguarded, if necessary by military action, and that the needful preparations must be made. Failure to keep the canal international would inevitably lead to the loss of one by one of our interests and assets in the Middle East, and even if Her Majesty's Government

¹⁰ The countries invited to attend the conference were: Pakistan, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Australia, Canada, the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ceylon, Egypt, Greece, West Germany, Japan, Denmark, Ethiopia, New Zealand, Turkey, Spain, and Italy. The London Times Weekly Review, August 13, 1956, p. 56.

¹¹ R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 205.

Greece refused to participate in the Conference because it was then on good terms with Egypt, which supported Greek claim to Cyprus.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Herbert Feis, "Suez Scenario: A Lamentable Tale," Foreign Affairs, July 1960, p. 602.

had to act alone they could not stop short of using force to protect their position."¹⁴ Pineau, French Foreign Minister, declared that France would not renounce the ultimate use of military actions if necessary to compel Nasser to abide by the London conference decision to put the canal under international control.¹⁵ In the meantime Anglo-French forces build-up in the Mediterranean area began, and France sent troops to Cyprus.

Nasser refused the London proposal, calling it a measure infringing Egyptian sovereignty. He reaffirmed Egypt's willingness to guarantee passage through the Canal without discrimination, develop the Canal for expanded future use, impose just and equitable tolls, and maintain technical efficiency.¹⁶ In a press conference on September 2, the Egyptian leader stated:

We will accept any solution that does not affect our sovereignty. International control would affect our sovereignty. It is a matter of interpretation, I know, but we interpret international control to be a form of collective colonialism. The Suez Canal is Egypt's and the company that runs it is Egyptian. We are willing to sign any agreement demanded by countries using the canal that would guarantee free navigation through the canal.¹⁷

The Western Big Three were annoyed by Egypt's refusal of the London proposal. But while the American position still favored peaceful settlement through negotiations, Britain and France were determined to impose international control of the Canal, by force if necessary. On September 11, British Prime Minister Eden and French Premier Mollet issued a joint communique in London which declaring:

14 Ibid., pp. 599-600.

15 Ibid., p. 601.

16 R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 205.

17 As quoted in Middle Eastern Affairs, November, 1956, p. 414.

...the refusal of President Nasser to negotiate on this basis the London conference proposal created a very grave situation.... The Ministers discussed the further measures to be taken and reached full agreement upon them.¹⁸

On September 12, the two heads of government, sent a letter to the United Nations Security Council declaring that Nasser's refusal to the eighteen-nation proposal for internationalization of the Suez Canal "is an aggravation of the situation, which, if allowed to continue, would constitute a manifest danger to peace and security."¹⁹ On the same day, Eden told the House of Commons that the Western Big Three had decided to set up a Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA) which would be authorized to act on behalf of the canal users. Egypt would receive payment for providing facilities to the new organization. Eden warned if Egypt refused to co-operate in implementing the new plan, his government and other members of the SCUA would be free to take any necessary measures.²⁰ Secretary Dulles, on September 13, hastened to announce that although his government strongly supported the new association, the United States was not prepared to "shoot its way" through the canal.²¹

Invitations were sent to the eighteen nations that supported the previous London conference proposal for a second London conference to be held on September 19. The purpose of the new conference was to put the SCUA proposal into action. On September 15, the U.S.S.R. government announced its opposition to the SCUA. It described the association as a "great

¹⁸ For the text of the communique, see ibid., pp. 396-7.

¹⁹ United Nations, Security Council. Official Records; Document S/3645.

²⁰ The New York Times, September 13, 1956, p. 1.

²¹ Ibid., September 14, 1956, p. 1.

provocation" against Egyptian sovereignty. It cautioned that any armed attack against Egypt to seize the canal would cause irreparable damage to the canal installations and would lead to the destruction of oil fields and pipelines in the Arab world.²²

Secretary Dulles was the first to address the 18-nation London conference on September 19. He outlined a six-point plan for the SCUA: (1) the present 18-nation association should continue; (2) the association should take the joint 18-nation proposal of the first conference as a basis for negotiation with Egypt; (3) it should have a small operating staff ready to assist ships through the canal; (4) it should have a small governing board to keep members informed of developments; (5) it should have "a modest working fund"; and (6) its membership would involve no obligation to take enforcement action against Egypt in case the latter refused to cooperate with the SCUA. All members, it was hoped, would "voluntarily take such action with respect to their ships and the payment of canal dues as would facilitate the work of the association and build up its prestige and authority, and consequently its ability to serve."²³

By not obligating members of the association to take a collective action in the event of Egypt's refusal of the new proposal--in other words, by leaving to the members the right to decide independently their respective policy--it was clear that the SCUA could not make much success. Moreover, Nasser refused to allow the proposed association to function in the canal area. After being convinced that Egypt was not ready to alter its

²² Ibid., September 16, 1956, p. 3.

²³ For the text of the statement, see Middle Eastern Affairs, November 1956, pp. 397-9.

determination to naturalize the canal, the British and France took another measure. They persuaded Western pilots serving the new Egyptian Suez Canal Authority to resign, hoping to impede traffic of the canal and thus to prove Egypt's management of total failure.²⁴ Egypt, however, proved her competence to run the canal despite the resignation of about a hundred non-Egyptian pilots. The U.S.S.R. immediately provided Egypt with fifteen pilots. Two hundred more applications were received by the Egyptian government from pilots of American, West German, and other nationalities seeking to replace those who resigned.²⁵

All these attempts against Egypt failed. The canal was under Egyptian control, and the new authority was operating efficiently. Confronted with this fact, Western Powers made new moves. Britain and France called for a meeting of the United Nations Security Council. With a unanimous vote of its members the Council on October 13, 1956 passed a resolution embodying the following principles: (1) free and open transit through the Suez Canal without discrimination, overt or covert -- be it political or technical; (2) respect for the sovereignty of Egypt; (3) the insulation of the operation of the canal from the politics of any country; (4) the allocation of a fair proportion of the dues to developing the canal; (5) the fixation of tolls and charges by agreement between Egypt and the users; and (6) disputes between the Suez Canal Company and the Egyptian government should be settled by arbitration.²⁶

The decision of the Security Council expressed the general belief that

²⁴ Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 156.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 150-1.

²⁶ United Nations, Security Council, Official Record, 743 meeting. Egypt, then not being a member of the Security Council, supported these six principles.

Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company did not affect the status of the canal as a vital international waterway. Traffic through the canal continued to operate normally.²⁷ Ships of all nationalities, even two of Israel's, passed without incident.²⁸ Egypt even allowed passage of ships which insisted on paying dues to the expropriated company in Paris.²⁹ The general belief was that the six principles of the Security Council were an expression of the conciliatory mood of the parties involved. President Eisenhower described the discussions of the Council as most gratifying.³⁰ Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohmoud Fawzi expressed his government's intention to comply with the new decisions of the Security Council.

The hope that a final peaceful solution to the Suez question seemed now within reach, if had not actually been achieved, was soon shattered by a succession of unfortunate events. The Security Council's quiet deliberation appeared to be the calmness preceding a hurricane.

British and French leaders suddenly announced their disapproval of the six principles endorsed by the United Nations.³¹ On October 16, the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary conferred with their French counterparts in Paris. Observers believed that at this meeting plans were drawn to invade Egypt.³² On October 16, Dulles again reaffirmed the United States' intention of seeking a peaceful settlement to the Suez issue. He announced

²⁷ H.E. Ellis, op. cit., p. 49; see also, R.I.I.A., op. cit., p. 206.

²⁸ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 240.

²⁹ R.I.I.A., op. cit.

³⁰ Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 152.

³¹ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., pp. 240-1.

³² Ibid.

his opposition to the resort to military action and pledged his country's support to victims of aggression.³³

In the meantime, on October 28, news of quiet Israeli army mobilization leaked to the outside world.³⁴ On the same day, President Eisenhower issued a statement referring to reports of Israel's "heavy mobilization of its armed forces." He said he had learned that "the Israeli mobilization has continued and has become almost complete, with consequent stoppage of many civil activities." The President added that he had sent two messages to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion urging him to exercise every possible precaution to avoid an outbreak of war there. Eisenhower also dispatched similar messages of concern to neighboring Arab states.³⁵ On October 29, Israel launched a general attack against Egyptian military positions along the Egyptian-Israeli frontier, and Israeli paratroopers landed deep in Egyptian territory. The first Israeli war communique stated that her invasion's object was to seize the Suez Canal.³⁶

Eden and Mollet, after a hurried meeting in London on October 29, issued a joint ultimatum calling on Egypt and Israel to halt fire within twelve hours and to withdraw their military forces to a distance of ten miles from the Suez Canal so that navigation through the Canal would not be obstructed. Egypt was called upon to permit Anglo-French forces to occupy Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez city. Egypt was warned that failure to accept the terms of the ultimatum would "necessitate Anglo-French

33 The New York Times, October 17, 1956, p. 8.

34 The Middle East Journal, Winter 1957, p. 79.

35 The New York Times, October 29, 1956, p. 1.

36 Ibid., October 30, 1956, p. 4.

intervention in such strength as necessary to secure compliance."³⁷ The U.S. government protested to Britain and France against their demand calling it "the most brutal ultimatum in modern history."³⁸ It declared that it was prepared to stop all economic aid to Israel until that state withdrew its troops from Egyptian soil.³⁹ The United States called for an immediate session of the Security Council and circulated to the Council members a letter accusing Israel of committing aggressive act against Egyptian territory.⁴⁰

The Security Council on October 30. Britain and France vetoed first an American draft resolution calling on Israel to withdraw her forces behind the truce line and on other states to refrain from using or threatening force in the area. Their second veto was exercised against a Soviet resolution of a similar purpose.⁴¹ On the second day Britain and France voted, again opposing the rest of the Council's members, against calling a special session of the General Assembly.⁴² Meanwhile when the 12-hour ultimatum expired with Egypt's refusal to allow Anglo-French occupation, British bombers attacked military targets in Egypt.⁴³

The special session of the General Assembly met on November 1; and on November 2, it called on Israel to withdraw behind the armistice lines, and

³⁷ Ibid., October 30, 1956, p. 4.

³⁸ Ibid., October 31, p. 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ U.N., Yearbook of the United Nations. 1956, p. 25.

⁴¹ The New York Times, October 31, p. 1.

⁴² Ibid., November 1, p. 1.

⁴³ The Middle East Journal, Winter 1957, p. 67.

on all parties to cease fire. The resolution did not brand any party as an aggressor.⁴⁴ When Britain and France refused to comply, the Assembly resolved on November 3: (1) that the Secretary-General should within forty-eight hours submit plans for an emergency United Nations police force; (2) that the cease-fire resolution should be complied with by all parties within twelve hours.⁴⁵

When the time limit expired, only Egypt had accepted the resolution. Israel had asked for further clarification from the Secretary-General on the resolution, an attempt to delay her compliance. Britain and France did not reply, but their parachutists were landing on Port Said early Monday, November 5.⁴⁶ While the Secretary-General was preparing for the United Nations police force on late Monday, he received Israel's agreement to a cease-fire. The note said nothing about its withdrawal to the armistice line or about the United Nations police force.⁴⁷ On November 6, the two Western Powers informed the Assembly of their decision to cease-fire at midnight.⁴⁸

Before Britain and France announced their decision to cease fire, Soviet Premier Bulganin issued a warning to the two countries and Israel that they should stop their "aggression" against Egypt's sovereignty within twelve hours. The Soviet ultimatum reminded the three countries that there

⁴⁴ U.N., Yearbook of the United Nations, 1956 resolution 997 (ES-I), p. 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid., resolution 999 (ES-I), p. 29.

⁴⁶ The Middle East Journal, Winter 1957, p. 68.

⁴⁷ United Nations Year Book - 1956, p. 30.

⁴⁸ The New York Times, November 7, 1956, p. 1.

were states "that possess all kinds of modern destructive weapons" which "could at the present time, instead of sending naval or air forces to the shores" of Britain, France, and Israel, "use other means such as rocket weapons."⁴⁹ Bulganin expressed Soviet determination "to crush the aggressors by the use of force and to restore peace."⁵⁰ The Soviet Union, in the meantime proposed on November 6, a joint action with the United States, with the United Nations sanction, to use armed forces of the two states if there was no cease-fire in Egypt within twelve hours.⁵¹ The United States rejected the Soviet proposal as "unthinkable."⁵²

Since the beginning of hostilities, the Arab world had shown strong solidarity with Egypt. The anti-invaders' reaction immediately after the war had begun dealing heavy blows at the Middle Eastern interests of Britain and France. The Iraq Petroleum Company's pipelines across Syria were blown up; disorders flamed up in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar (the latter two were Arab oil producing territories under British protection).⁵³ Saudi Arabia ordered the Arabia-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) not to provide Britain and France with oil.⁵⁴ The backing of the Arab world given to Egypt was described by Joachim Joesten as follows:

What had not been anticipated was that the entire Arab World, with rare unanimity, would leap

49 Ibid., November 6, 1956, p. 1.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 10.

52 Ibid., p. 1.

53 Joachim Joesten, op. cit., pp. 160-1.

54 The New York Times, November 4, 1956, p. 1.

to the defense of Egypt and, in doing so, would place in jeopardy three-fourths of Western Europe's crude oil needs.⁵⁵

The problem of oil shortage of Western Europe was compounded by the sinking of several ships (some of them were cement-laden) in the mouth of the Suez Canal and the southern end of the canal, thus effectively closing the canal to international shipping.⁵⁶

As a summary of the forces which compelled the Anglo-French cease-fire before their intended mission was completed, the following passage may be quoted:

When they realized the scope and gravity of the consequences engendered by their military intervention in Egypt, Britain and France backed down. Neither singly or together could the two countries afford to brave the ire of American public opinion; universal disapproval of their action, as expressed in the forum of the United Nations; a crippling oil shortage that could not be relieved without active help from the United States; the prospect of a long guerilla war that might spread from Egypt to the other Arab nations where British and French interests were at stake; the near-certainty that Soviet "volunteers" would be dispatched to the Middle East in force; and, top it all, the threat of a major war involving nuclear weapons.⁵⁷ There was only one way out of this dilemma--retreat.

The Egyptian government made it plain that it would not allow clearance of the canal until all invading forces had left the country. Anglo-French troops were then thirty miles south of Port Said when they ceased fire, and Israeli forces ten miles east of the canal. On November 9 Egypt

⁵⁵ Op. cit., p. 160.

⁵⁶ It was not possible to determine which side, the Egyptians or the Anglo-French, committed the act of sinking the ships in the canal. Each side accused the other of being responsible for it. See The Middle East Journal, Winter 1957, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Joachim Jeesten, op. cit., pp. 161-2.

agreed to the formation of a United Nations police force that would be stationed between Egyptian forces and the three invaders, who did not yet show any willingness to withdraw from Egypt. On November 10, the government of the U.S.S.R. issued another warning to Britain, France, and Israel that unless they accept the United Nations resolutions calling for their withdrawal from Egypt, thousands of Soviet "volunteers" would be permitted to go to Egypt to fight the "aggressors."⁵⁸ On November 24, the General Assembly by a vote of 63 to 5 called again on the three countries to withdraw from Egypt.⁵⁹ In late November troops of the three invading countries began their withdrawal. Anglo-French evacuation was completed on December 23; Israeli troops completed their withdrawal on March 4 the following year.⁶⁰

On April 10, 1957, the canal was declared officially open for traffic but it did not become completely usable until June, 1957. The United Nations, with the cooperation of Egypt, undertook the salvaging of the Suez Canal. The cost of clearing the Canal amounted to \$8,376,042.⁶¹

Before proceeding to discuss the consequences of the Suez adventure, it may be necessary to inquire what was the prime motive for the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. Was it to stop the fighting which Israel had started? Or was it to implement a scheme, conceived since the nationalization of the canal, for the seizure of the Suez Canal and the possible

⁵⁸ Middle East Journal, Winter 1957, p. 68.

⁵⁹ United Nations Year Book - 1956, resolution 1120 (XI) p. 40.

⁶⁰ The Middle East Journal, Spring 1957, p. 171.

⁶¹ United Nations, General Assembly, Clearance of the Suez Canal, Report of the Secretary-General (A/3719), p. 13.

overthrow of Nasser? By the issuance of their ultimatum of October 30, 1956, Britain and France presented Egypt with two alternatives; Egyptian consent to Anglo-French occupation of the Canal, or a forcible intervention of two Powers. France and Britain, however, did not demand the Israelis to go back to their own territory, but consented to the Israeli troops being stationed ten miles east of the canal. There is reason to believe that the invasion was premeditated by Israel, France, and the United Kingdom. This belief was shared by some U.S. press. On November 4, 1956 The New York Times stated "Much of the evidence that has been brought or hinted at the proof of Anglo-French-Israeli collusion derived from things seen and whispered in Tel Aviv in the early days of the campaign." Time (November 12, 1956) was more blunt in pointing out a possible prior arrangement among the three countries of the scheme to invade Egypt:

Israel's Foreign Ministry talked of "the unexpected intervention of Britain and France." Britain's Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd protested "There was no prior words between us." Despite their words, there was plenty of evidence to show that the two attacks were planned in collusion ("orchestration" was the French word for it). In this conspiracy, France was the instigator, Britain a belated partner, and Israel the willing trigger.

* * *

It was an unquestionable fact that the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt ended in dismal failure. On the domestic and international scenes, Nasser scored a political victory, which perhaps could never have been achieved without the tripartite intervention in Egypt. World opinion as expressed at the United Nations rostrum believed Egypt to be a victim of aggression and rallied strongly behind her. The invaders were condemned for their pursuance of the outdated "gun-boat diplomacy." Except for

Australia's and New Zealand's sympathetic stand, the three invading nations virtually stood alone in the United Nations in defending their viewpoints. The voting records of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly⁶² proved that Britain and France were deserted or at least not supported by their allies in NATO, SEATO, the Baghdad Pact, and most members of Commonwealth. President Eisenhower explicitly pointed out world's dissatisfaction with the "aggression" on Egypt when he stated:

We cannot and we will not condone armed aggression--no matter who the attacker [is] no matter who the victim [is]....We cannot--in the world, any more than in our own nation--subscribe to one law for the weak, another for the strong; one law for those opposing us, another for those allied with us....There can be only one law--or there shall be no peace.⁶³

In the Arab people's eyes, Nasser became the new Saladin.⁶⁴ He symbolized a heroic resistance to the joint forces of two mighty empires.

Joesten described Nasser's prestige after the Suez hostilities in this way:

...Nasser in all but the purely military sense had won a decisive victory--politically, economically, diplomatically. Above all, he had registered a tremendous gain of prestige throughout the Middle East, while Western influence in the area had declined correspondingly.⁶⁵

As far as the Israeli-Arab conflict is concerned, it can be stated that Israel, by apparently conniving with Britain and France, reaffirmed Arab beliefs that she would not hesitate to collude with colonial powers for its selfish gains at the expense of the Arab nations. Israel made all

⁶² See pp. 61

⁶³ The New York Times, November 2, 1956, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Saladin was the Arab leader who led Arab armies to victory over the Crusaders.

⁶⁵ Op. cit., p. 165.

the more impossible its acceptance by the Arab people, an imperative condition if a settlement to her conflict with the Arab world is to be achieved.

Perhaps no less grave consequence of the joint invasion was the impact it had on the mind of the Afro-Asian peoples. These peoples started to question Anglo-French assertions that colonialism was dead and that they had no intention of reviving it and of redempting their former colonies.

One important consequence of the invasion of Egypt was the halting of the flow of most Middle Eastern oil to Western Europe. Oil was rationed in Britain and France for the first time since World War II. Britain and France had experienced another economic strain. Traditionally strong economic and political ties of the two Western nations with the Arab states were totally severed or placed under the greatest strain experienced in the long history of European-Arab relations.

The United States government's prompt condemnation of aggression, regardless of who the aggressor was, won many friends for the United States in the Arab world. Many believed that the possibility of a United States-Egyptian rapprochement was very likely.⁶⁶ Recognizing that Britain and France had not informed the United States of their move on Egypt, Egyptian officials applauded United States' forceful action to bring about a cease-fire.⁶⁷ Indeed, Nasser's advisers were reported to believe that the United States prepared to make a new approach to her relations with the Arab world.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, however, the hopes of reconciliation were vanished

⁶⁶ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 249.

⁶⁷ U.S. News and World Report, November 22, 1957, p. 97.

⁶⁸ The New York Times, December 11, 1956.

when the United States in December 1956 refused to supply Egypt with American wheat and flour.⁶⁹

The Suez incident proved profitable for Soviet policy in the Middle East. The Arabs gave the Soviets much credit for the failure of the "Tripartite Aggression" (al-uchwan athulathi) against Egypt. The Soviet Union began to appear as a defender of Arab nationalism's cause and a friend who would not hesitate to use its military might to defend Arab rights not only against Britain and France but against Israel.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Further detail of American-Egyptian relations will be dealt with in next chapter.

⁷⁰ Chapter VII of this paper is devoted to the discussion of Soviet-Egyptian relations since Suez.

CHAPTER VI

EGYPTIAN-WESTERN RELATIONS SINCE SUEZ

I have been attacked in the press of Israel and the West. And I have been attacked just as bitterly by Communist papers, all the way from the Daily Worker in London to the Red Flag in Peking....Some in the West have called me a "Hitler of the Nile" or an "Arab imperialist." Sometimes my critics in the West assert that I am responsible for opening the Middle East to Communists. Now, to make the confusion complete, some people in the West have praised me as a fighter against Communists. Perhaps even Mr. Khrushchev agrees with that because he recently described me as a "hotheaded young man."

Gamal Abdul Nasser¹

British and French influence in the Middle East, already diminishing before the Suez incident, further dwindled as a consequence of the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt and of the two countries' association with Israel.² "Orchestration," no matter how vehemently denied by the two powers, was evident to the Egyptian and the rest of the Arab people. The two countries' intervention had so antagonized the people of the Arab world that they would be fortunate to "maintain a tenuous hold even on such special properties as Algeria" and the British protectorates in southern Arabia.³ The severance of diplomatic and economic relations between the United Kingdom

¹ Life, July 20, 1959; reprinted by Press Department of the Embassy of the United Arab Republic, 1959.

² U.S. News and World Report, December 14, 1956, p. 77.

³ John Scott, "A United States Policy for the Middle East," Christian Century, January 2, 1957, p. 8.

and France, on the one hand, and most of the Arab states,⁴ on the other, had caused the most serious political and economic crisis in Western Europe since World War II. On January 2, 1957, Egypt abrogated the Suez Canal Agreement of 1954, making the abrogation retroactive to October 31, 1956, the time of the first Anglo-French air raid on Port Said.⁵ The Egyptian move eliminated the last remnant of British influence in Egypt.

When the Canal was reopened, Britain and France, lacking any other recourse, permitted their ships to pay tolls to Egypt for the use of the canal. While diplomatic relations between Britain and Egypt were resumed in December 1959 after a settlement had been reached between Egypt and the nationalized Suez Canal Company earlier in the year, the Algerian struggle for independence prevented the return to normal relations between Egypt and France until the early part of the year 1962.

The elimination of Anglo-French influence in Egypt and much of the Middle East left the United States to play a larger role in the affairs of the area. However, the United States position was then much strengthened. Her uncompromising stand against Anglo-French-Israeli aggression and her unswerving adherence to United Nations' recommendation on Suez placed her in a "strong moral position" in the Arab mind.⁶ Moreover, America had never previously been involved in Middle East colonial activities. At the end of the Suez hostilities most people of the area had even forgotten that the United States' withdrawal of the High Aswan Dam offer was an event

⁴ Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen broke off relations with both Great Britain and France; Iraq and Jordan severed relations with France only.

⁵ Manchester Guardian Weekly, January 3, 1957, p. 3.

⁶ The New Statesman and Nation, January 5, 1957, p. 5.

leading to the Suez incident. In short, the United States' prestige in the Middle East was greatly enhanced.⁷

However, the hopes for better U.S.-Egyptian relations vanished as Egypt's request for American wheat was refused. Prior to the Suez crisis Egypt was a regular buyer of American wheat, with payment in Egyptian currency. As Egypt was suffering from shortage of food supply, Nasser considered the American refusal to sell wheat to his country another rebuff against him. In an interview with a correspondent of the Newsweek (November 25, 1957), he regretted American government's refusal. He said:

Both the Soviet Union and the United States opposed the aggression against Egypt. I expressed gratitude to both. We thought the United States had begun a new era. Then we had a shortage of wheat--only fifteen days reserve. We asked for help. You refused. Then you agreed if the payment were made in dollars, but you had frozen our dollars. We asked the Soviet Union. It had no reserves but sent wheat. It was the same story for medicine, petrol, etc.

A more important event that caused further deterioration to American-Egyptian relations took place January 5, 1957, when President Eisenhower submitted to Congress the "Eisenhower Doctrine."⁸ Approved by Congress on March 9, 1957, the doctrine was designed to fill the "dangerous vacuum" created in the Middle East by the removal of Anglo-French influence after the crisis of Suez.⁹ Speaking on the doctrine, Eisenhower stated:

It would first of all, authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development

⁷ John Scott, op. cit.

⁸ Joschim Joesten, op. cit., p. 172.

⁹ Ibid.

of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence.

It would, in the second place, authorize the Executive to undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid.

It would, in the third place, authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism....such authority would not be exercised except at the desire of the nation attacked.¹⁰

One-half billion dollars was designated to strengthen the area against the threat of Soviet "subversions," as distinct from the outright aggression which alone was to be covered under the Doctrine.¹¹

It was generally believed that the success of the Eisenhower Doctrine would to a great extent depend on the response of the countries of the Arab Middle East.¹² Egypt was the first country to refuse any association with it.¹³ Its press attacked it as being another Western attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of the Arab countries.¹⁴ As a result of Egypt's attitude toward the doctrine, all but three Arab governments--Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan--refused or at least did not announce their acceptance of it.¹⁵

¹⁰ Middle Eastern Affairs, February 1957, pp. 62-8.

¹¹ Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 172.

¹² John C. Campbell, "From Doctrine to Policy in the Middle East," Foreign Affairs, April 1957.

¹³ The Public Affairs Institute, Regional Development for Regional Peace (Washington, D.C., n.d.), p. 157.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

Egypt's refusal of the doctrine and Nasser's continued attacks upon Western nations caused Washington to follow a tougher policy toward Nasser's Egypt. First, the U.S. Government sought to isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab world. On March 12, 1957, James P. Richards, a high-ranking State Department official, was sent to the Middle East to interpret the Eisenhower Doctrine and to seek support.¹⁶ Visiting the Egyptian capital was not included in his mission.¹⁷ In February 1957, King Saud during his visit to America announced his support (but not acceptance) of the doctrine.¹⁸ Another move by the American government designed to show its disfavor toward Nasser was Washington's agreement to join the military committee of the Baghdad Pact.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the Eisenhower Doctrine was reinterpreted. The term, "armed aggression" was no longer to refer to only a direct attack of one nation by another, but also to attempts to overthrow pro-Western Arab governments through internal revolts with outside assistance. The term "any country controlled by international Communism" was now to mean a nation with strong ties with the U.S.S.R.,²⁰ in other words, Egypt and Syria.

The doctrine was applied for the first time in Jordan where King Husain's dismissal of the pro-Nasser Arab nationalist government of Premier

¹⁶ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The Middle East Journal, "Chronology," Spring 1957, p. 169.

¹⁹ In order not to antagonize Nasser, Washington has refrained from becoming a full member of the Baghdad Pact. Joining the military committee of the pact made the United States in all but in legal terms a full participant in the pact.

²⁰ John W. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 125.

Suleiman Nabulsi caused a general strike and large anti-Hussein and anti-American demonstrations in major Jordanian cities. King Hussein accused international Communism as being responsible for the crisis. On April 24, 1957, the United States expressed its concern for the situation and dispatched the Sixth Fleet to the Arab Mediterranean shores.²¹

Nasser accused the United States of being behind the move to oust an intensely nationalistic Jordanian government, of stimulating among Lebanese Christians hostility toward Egypt, and of attempting to overthrow the Syrian government.²² Nasser, however, appeared to understand the United States' concern over the Syrian regime and its possible falling into Communist hands. His objection to the U.S. stand on Syria was based on his conviction that only a policy supported by the Arab world could save Syria from her dilemma.

The American government seemed determined to isolate Nasser from the rest of the Arab world and also to exercise economic pressure on his regime. It continued its support to the anti-Nasser Arab governments of Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan.²³ The Egyptian leader expressed his opinion regarding United States' latest activities against him. He declared:

The interests of Egypt lie with good relations with the United States. But we are not ready if our sovereignty is affected....There is a pressure to change our line of policy and to tie it up to the United States. There are American activities to humiliate us. The U.S. is trying to isolate Egypt. It is applying economic pressures. Then there is

21 Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 176.

22 H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 51.

23 Ibid., pp. 50-3.

American propaganda.²⁴

The merger of Syria and Egypt under President Nasser's leadership in February 1958, did not introduce any basic change in the relations between the United States and the newly formed United Arab Republic,²⁵ Washington rather welcomed the move because it rescued Syria from a possible Communist coup. Dulles pointed out that the merger was a sign that the two countries were determined to avoid being taken over by international Communism.²⁶

In the summer of 1958, another crisis occurred in the Arab Middle East. On July 14, a group of nationalist officers, led by Brigadier General Abdul Karim Kasseem, overthrew the pro-Western Iraqi monarchical regime of King Feisal.²⁷ The new Iraqi regime did not immediately withdraw from the Baghdad Pact, but such a move was believed inevitable. The revolution in effect cancelled Iraq's membership in the alliance, thus the Arab member upon which the pact had pivoted was no longer a stabilizing force. The United Arab Republic hailed the revolution as a great victory for Arab

²⁴ The Newsweek, November 25, 1957, p. 57.

²⁵ Keith Wheelock described the merger of Egypt and Syria as follows: "In 1956, just before the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, planning for a close Egypto-Syrian political alliance had reached an advanced stage; although a series of crises intervened, by November, 1957, a joint session of the Egyptian and Syrian Parliaments had unanimously approved a federal union between the two countries. Two months later these plans approached fruition. But in January, 1958, the federation idea was dropped in favor of a more comprehensive merger. According to President Nasser, Syrian political leaders came to me saying everything was a mess. I met with all except the Communists. They told me, 'Only you can save us. Liquidate our parties and join us to Egypt.' Other reports suggested that the sudden decision for a full union was prompted by the alarming growth of Communist influence in Syria. These reports seemed to be borne out when, on February 1, Nasser established himself as absolute ruler over the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria) and provision was made for a single political party--the National Union." op. cit., p. 258.

²⁶ H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 53.

²⁷ The New York Times, July 15, 1958, p. 1.

nationalism and immediately recognized the new government of Iraq.²⁸

In the meantime, Lebanon was engaged in a serious civil strife. While Moslems favored union with the U.A.R., Christians preferred to keep Lebanon independent and to have their country follow a pro-Western foreign policy.²⁹ The Christian President Camille Chamoun championed the anti-U.A.R. movement and attempted to amend the Lebanese constitution to allow him to be elected for a second term. The Moslems resisted Chamoun's re-election by revolting against the government. The civil war started in early May 1958, and within three weeks spread throughout the country.³⁰ Chamoun's government charged pro-Nasser elements in the Syrian region of the U.A.R. of smuggling arms to the anti-government rebels. On June 6, 1958 Lebanon called upon the Security Council of the United Nations to take effective steps to halt the alleged arms smuggling. The Council voted on June 11 to send a 100-man observer team to the Syrian-Lebanese borders to investigate the Lebanese government charges.³¹ The situation took a more serious turn as a result of the overthrow of the Government of Iraq. Prior to the revolution, the deposed Iraqi regime had been giving moral support to President Chamoun's government of Lebanon to resist any pro-Nasser plot against his regime. The revolution in Baghdad came as a blow to President Chamoun; his regime was increasingly threatened by the internal revolt.³²

28 Middle Eastern Affairs, August-September 1958, p. 293.

29 W.R. Frye, "Lebanon: Story Behind the Headlines," Foreign Policy Bulletin, November 1, 1958, p. 25.

30 Ibid., p. 26.

31 United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1958, pp. 37-8.

32 W.R. Frye, op. cit.

In Jordan, too, the events in Iraq had a critical effect. Just a little less than five months before the Iraqi revolution, on February 17, 1958, the pro-Western government of King Hussein entered into a federation with Iraq.³³ This measure was designed to strengthen Hussein's position among his people, some of whom were pro-Nasser Palestinian Arab refugees. The situation after the Iraqi revolution was hardly happy for the young king.

On July 15, Lebanon invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine and asked the United States for military support, Jordan also requested British military aid.³⁴ The United States sent 14,000 troops into Lebanon. In Jordan, Britain immediately sent paratroops to protect King Hussein's regime.³⁵ In his message to Congress on July 15, Mr. Eisenhower pointed out that his decision to send American troops was an imperative step if the independence and integrity of Lebanon was to be preserved. The message stated that:

United States forces are being sent to Lebanon to protect American lives and by their presence to assist the Government of Lebanon in the preservation of Lebanon's territorial integrity and independence, which have been deemed vital to the United States national interests and world peace....We share with the Government of Lebanon the view that these events in Iraq demonstrate a ruthlessness of aggressive purpose which tiny Lebanon can not combat without further evidence of support from other friendly nations.³⁶

The American government called for emergency session of the Security Council. When the Council met on July 16, the American representative

³³ The New York Times, February 18, 1958, p. 1.

³⁴ Jules Davids, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁵ The New York Times, July 16, 1958, p. 1.

³⁶ For text of the message see Fisher and Krinsky, op. cit., p. 201.

offered a resolution which would have replaced the Marines with a United Nations force in Lebanon, but it was vetoed by the Soviet Union.³⁷ A Soviet resolution condemning the United States and Britain for committing aggressive act against the peoples of Lebanon and Jordan was defeated by a majority vote.³⁸ A Swedish resolution, critical of the United States, and calling for the withdrawal of the United Nations observer team as a protest to the U.S. move, was also defeated.³⁹ The U.S.S.R. vetoed a Japanese resolution calling upon the Security Council to enlarge the United Nations observer group.⁴⁰

Efforts to reach a solution to the Middle East's new crisis in the Security Council failed. Members of the Council voted on August 7 to call for an emergency session of the General Assembly.⁴¹ At the opening of the first session of the Assembly, President Eisenhower delivered a message in which he proposed that a United Nations monitor radio broadcasts to end subversive activity, and that steps be taken to prevent a new spiral of armament. He proposed that a Middle East Development Authority be established and promised American aid.⁴² The emergency session adjourned after a compromise was reached among Arab states' delegates. These states introduced a resolution instructing the Secretary-General to take such steps as might be necessary to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter

³⁷ Yearbook of the United Nations, 1958, p. 40.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 44-5.

in Lebanon and Jordan.⁴³

The proposals of President Eisenhower were coldly received by the Arab nations. They accepted the idea of a United Nations-supervised Development Authority but rejected both a United Nations peace force in the Middle East and United Nations' monitoring of broadcasts.⁴⁴

* * *

The landing of American Marines in Lebanon and the dispatch of British paratroopers to Jordan were motivated by Western desire to prevent the two Arab countries from being "absorbed" into President Nasser's United Arab Republic. The West believed that to block the expansion of the U.A.R. in the Middle East would effectively reduce the Soviet Union's role in the affairs of the area.⁴⁵ However, the U.S.-British intervention caused a blow to Western, particularly United States' prestige in the Arab world. In support of this view, it seems necessary to quote extensively from the broadcast by Howard K. Smith of the Columbia Broadcasting System on July 20, 1958:

...one of the things that makes the crisis so uncommonly ambiguous is that though we had to go in to keep from losing prestige, our act of going in is causing us to lose prestige. Two-thirds of the pro-Western parliament of Lebanon we went in to protect is said to be opposed to our coming, and probably 90 per cent of the Jordanian people oppose us for coming in.

Underlining ambiguity, our interest in the Middle

⁴³ For text of the resolution, see Middle Eastern Affairs, October 1958, p. 325.

⁴⁴ The Economist, August 16, 1958, pp. 507-8.

⁴⁵ Vera M. Dean, "Peace in the Middle East...Whose Job?" Foreign Policy Bulletin, February 1, 1959, p. 76.

East has always been to keep Russia and Communists out. Now in the supreme crisis, we march in, but there is not a single Russian soldier around. There is no real evidence of important Communist leadership. No, the champions of national independence, find ourselves on Arab soil confronting Arab nationalists.

We say that the countries we have gone in to protect were imperiled by foreign invasion. Our sources of information on this are not substantiated. A U.N. observer team there has a different version--there is infiltration,⁴⁶ but the difficulties are largely internal.

On the other hand, other Western observers voiced support for the Anglo-American intervention. The Economist (July 19, 1956, p. 184) expressed the following view.

...that the Americans and the British have done is evidently to decide that, after the collapse of Iraq and with western position crumbling, the situation could scarcely be worse; that the consequences of not intervening are now likely to be more harmful to their strategic, political, and economic interests than the consequences of intervening.

It would seem necessary to state that non-interference by the United States in Lebanon during the crisis would have once more reminded the Arab mind that America was guided only by the principles of the United Nations which she so vigorously defended in the Suez crisis of 1956. This would have been followed by increasing Arab nationalist's confidence in the United States policies. Thus the "strategic, political, and economic interests" of America would have been furthered rather than damaged.

Fortunately, however, the brief U.S. intervention from July to the end of October proved a peaceful mission. Not a single Lebanese had been killed by an American bullet. The Lebanese crisis ended as a result of the election

⁴⁶ Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 85th Congress, Second Session.

of a new Lebanese president (General Fu'ad Chehab) and of the speedy withdrawal of American troops in compliance with a request of the new government. The peaceful solution of the crisis put the United States in a better position than she would otherwise have found herself in.⁴⁷

The events of the ensuing few months produced a notable change in the American attitude toward President Nasser. The U.A.R. leader, who during the period 1955-1958 was regarded a foe of the West, a Communist stooge, or a threat to peace, became in American eyes an important factor for stability in the Middle East.⁴⁸ This realization came as a result of Nasser's vicious attacks on Arab Communists who were believed to be extremely influential in the new Iraqi regime.⁴⁹ The United States' policy to isolate the U.A.R. from the rest of the Arab world which had been adopted in early 1957 was now changed to that of cooperation with Nasser to block the spread of Communism in the Middle East.⁵⁰

In early March 1959, the United States granted President Nasser's U.A.R. \$7 million in economic and technical aid. The U.S. government also resumed technical assistance under the Technical Cooperation Agreement of 1951. Of more importance was the agreement between President Nasser and President Eugene Black of the World Bank, which provided for \$56 million loan to improve the Suez Canal. The U.A.R. President also succeeded in getting the Export-Import Bank and the Development Loan Fund to extend loans for the

⁴⁷ H.B. Ellis, op. cit., pp. 73-4.

⁴⁸ Vera M. Dean, "Peace in the Middle East...Whose Job?" op. cit.

⁴⁹ Jules Davids, op. cit., p. 139.

⁵⁰ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 173.

construction of several projects in his country.⁵¹

Another evidence of reconciliation in the Western-U.A.R. relations was the agreement of February 28, 1959 between the U.A.R. and Britain whereby claims and counterclaims arising out of the 1956 Suez war were settled.⁵² (A similar settlement was reached between the U.A.R. and France in August 1959.)⁵³ Normal diplomatic relations between London and Cairo were resumed on December 1, 1959.⁵⁴ Following the Franco-U.A.R. reparation agreement, the two countries signed a trade agreement on December 23, 1959.⁵⁵ In late 1961, however, a short-term strain in the Franco-U.A.R. relations was resulted from the U.A.R.'s accusation of nine Frenchmen of conducting espionage activities in Egypt and of trying to assassinate President Nasser. The group which was composed of four members of the official French Commission on French Interests in the U.A.R., two lawyers, and two journalists were to be brought to trial in Cairo.⁵⁶ The U.A.R. authorities announced the release of the nine Frenchmen before the trial was conducted. Their release manifested a desire on the part of the U.A.R. for complete Franco-U.A.R. rapprochement, after France recognized the right of self-determination for Algeria. On April 17, 1962 the United Arab Republic announced its plan to have the "United Arab Airlines" start a new line between Cairo and Paris when diplomatic relations between the two countries

⁵¹ Business Week, November 28, 1959, pp. 107-8; see also Jules Davids, "The United States and the Middle East: 1955-1960," Middle Eastern Affairs, May 1961, p. 139; and H.B. Ellis, op. cit., pp. 194-6.

⁵² The Middle East Journal, "Chronology," Spring 1959, p. 191.

⁵³ Middle Eastern Affairs, October 1958, p. 332.

⁵⁴ Jules Davids, "The United States and the Middle East: 1955-1960," op. cit., p. 139.

⁵⁵ Vera M. Dean, "Peace in the Middle East...Whose Job?" op. cit.

⁵⁶ Middle Eastern Affairs, January 1962, p. 32.

were resumed.⁵⁷

The rapprochement of United States-U.A.R. relations, which began in early 1959, and which produced the new American attitude toward Nasser, is continuing through early 1962. George MacArthur, the Associated Press Middle Eastern analyst reported in April, 1962, that President Nasser is negotiating for increased economic aid from the United States. The report added, "A stream of topflight visitors from Washington has included the roving envoy Chester Bowles; the food-for-peace expert, George S. McGovern, and an economic adviser, Edward Mason. All were quickly ushered into Nasser's office.⁵⁸ These visitors have indicated U.S. willingness to smooth out past differences with President Nasser. The U.A.R. authorities immediately responded by sending Economics Minister Abdel Moneim el-Kaissuni and a delegation of experts to Washington to confer with the International Monetary Fund and American aid officials.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The Missoulian, April 18, 1962, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid, April 13, 1962, p. 9.

⁵⁹ The Spokesman Review, April 17, 1962, p. 19.

CHAPTER VII

EGYPTIAN-U.S.S.R. RELATIONS

SINCE SUEZ

Many of those who once opposed communism have long been repudiated by the people and forgotten, and if they are remembered from time to time, it is as reactionaries who brought misfortune to their peoples. This is why I am convinced that Mr. Nasser will gain no laurels by playing the ungainly role of a fighter against communism, even if it may win him, for the time being, good graces of certain circles in the imperialist countries.

Nikita S. Khrushchev¹

The Arab people were impressed by the Soviet stand during the Suez crisis. They believed that the Russian ultimatum to Britain, France, and Israel to halt their aggression against Egypt played a major role in the unconditional withdrawal of Anglo-French-Israeli forces from Egyptian territory. Western observers' contention that the Soviet warning delivered to the three invading countries was meant only to frighten them, and that the Soviets never intended to unleash a nuclear war to defend Egypt's sovereignty,² did not much impress upon the Arab mind. The Arab people were concerned only with the Russian strong attack against the invaders and the Soviet expressed willingness to participate in the defense of Egypt. The Soviet tactics in gaining popularity in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world were successful.³ The Soviet Union began to appear as the undoubted defender

¹ Department of State, Soviet World Outlook, publication 6836 (Washington, July 1959), p. 218.

² For example, see W.W. Kulski, op. cit., p. 114.

³ Ibid.

of Middle Eastern rights not only against Britain and France but also against Israel as well.⁴

During 1957 the government of the U.S.S.R. intensified its psychological and political campaign to woo Arab nationalism and to discredit the Western Powers.⁵ Khrushchev explained his country's policy toward the Middle East in a manner definitely directed at gaining the support of Arab nationalists:

We sympathize with the movement for national liberation. It is the policy of the Soviet Union to help the countries of the Middle East to strengthen their independence, to help them achieve economic independence as well.⁶

Khrushchev's words were supported with actions allying Egypt's economic problems in times when a specific type of aid was desperately needed by Egypt. This was clearly exemplified by the Soviet purchase of Canadian wheat and sale of it to Egypt at a lower price.⁷ This transaction was made after the United States refused in early 1957 to provide Egypt with wheat. Parallel to the extension of Soviet aid, was a tremendous increase in trade between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. Before 1954, trade between the two countries was relatively insignificant. Since then, however, Soviet exports to Egypt rapidly increased by 1956, they had trebled, and continued to rise sharply in 1957 and 1958.⁸ In 1957 more than half of Egypt's export went

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ William M. Rountree, "The United States Interest in the Middle East," U.S. State Department Bulletin, p. 366.

⁶ Soviet World Outlook, p. 217.

⁷ U.S. News and World Report, November 27, 1957, p. 95.

⁸ Norman Greenwald, The Mideast in Focus (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1960), p. 82.

to Russia (and other Soviet satellites). In addition, Moscow extended credits at low interest rate (2½ per cent) to Egypt.⁹ The Soviet official survey of Soviet assistance to the Middle East (as reproduced by Middle Eastern Affairs, June-July 1960, pp. 203-6) gives an account of the projects that were to be constructed under a Soviet-Egyptian technical aid agreement:

...In the United Arab Republic, Soviet firms have been assisting in constructing and enlarging 100 projects, including six enterprises in the ferrous and non-ferrous metal industry, six machine-building plants, twelve enterprises in the oil and chemical industry (among them one coke-producing plant, two pharmaceutical enterprises and one plant for nitric fertilizers). They are also assisting in the construction of a shipyard, three food-processing plants, a railroad, of 650-km. length, and irrigation system, and are also carrying out geological prospecting, establishing a nuclear physics laboratory, and installing an atomic reactor.

* * *

President Nasser's strong opposition to the Eisenhower Doctrine-- for it conflicted with his drive for Arab leadership and Arab neutrality in the cold war--coincided with Moscow's objective to prevent the creation of a Western-inspired alliance in the Middle East. The doctrine was denounced by the Soviets as a plan of United States imperialistic domination of the Middle Eastern countries.¹⁰ On January 12, 1957, the U.S.S.R. issued a statement warning that the doctrine could lead to war in the area, for

⁹ Ibid., see also Jules Davids, "The United States and the Middle East: 1955-1960," op. cit., p. 133; and Thomas K. Finletter, Foreign Policy: The Next Phase (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 158.

¹⁰ Middle Eastern Affairs, March 1957, p. 107.

which the United States government would bear full responsibility. The statement which was broadcast from radio Moscow also charged that the American leaders were not interested in preserving peace and independence for the Arab states but to "utilize the weakening positions of Britain and France in the Middle East to take in its hands their own positions." The statement continued,

In this connection one cannot but point out that the Eisenhower Doctrine envisages direct interference by the United States in the affairs of the Near and Middle East, inclusive of the dispatch of American armed forces to these countries.

Such a policy on the part of the United States cannot but lead to a further intensification of the tension and distrust in the relations of the countries of this area.¹¹

The Russian campaign against the Eisenhower Doctrine continued through 1957.

While seeking to expand their influence in the Middle East, the Soviets made every effort to identify their policy with the nationalist aspirations of the area.

During 1957 and the first half of 1958 the opinion was widespread in Western circles that Egypt and Syria were lost to the West and that Soviet influence would soon spread space in the rest of the area.¹² The creation of the United Arab Republic, the disturbances in Lebanon, and the revolution in Iraq were all thought as victories for Communism. The official visit of President Nasser to the U.S.S.R. in May 1958 and the communique issued jointly at the end of the visit--which attacked Western "Imperialism"

¹¹ As quoted in Regional Development for Regional Peace, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹² T.K. Finletter, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-61; see also Fisher and Krinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 34-5.

In the Arab world---were regarded a new Egyptian policy committing "Nasser to a pro-Soviet position on virtually all East-West issues."¹³

However, objective study of President Nasser's relations with the Soviets during the same period would reveal something else. The Egyptian leader is not a Communist. In dealing with the Soviets he was guided only by his country's interests. Certain principles that are advocated by Nasser may coincide with those of the Kremlin. However, observers should be extremely cautious in determining the objectives sought by Cairo and distinguish them from those sought by Moscow. For instance, both worked strenuously to eliminate Western influence in the Arab world. But while Cairo desired to keep the Arab world for the Arabs and to deal with East and West without subordination to either, Moscow's undeclared ultimate aim was to fulfill an age-old Russian dream---a replacement for ousted Western domination of the Middle East with its own.

The Soviets seemed to recognize that it was too early to seek a foothold in the Arab world. For they are faced with the Nasser-led Arab nationalism which would fight any attempt to make the Middle East a Soviet sphere of influence. Khrushchev, while extending all kinds of assistance to Egypt, was aware of this reality. He stated in 1957: "Many Arabs, and I have in mind first and foremost the leaders of the Arab countries, are very remote from Communist ideas....In Egypt, for instance, many Communists are held in prison."¹⁴ And in an interview with a correspondent of The New York Times on October 7, 1957, the Russian leader said: "But to Nasser

¹³ Near East Report, June 1957-May 1959, p. 98.

¹⁴ Soviet World Outlook, 90. cit., p. 217.

a Communist? Certainly not. We do not want to turn him into a Communist and he does not want to turn us into nationalists."

Anyone familiar with Egypt's economic and political ambitions would recognize why President Nasser wanted to keep his suppression of local Communists separate and distinct from his friendly relations with the Soviet Union. After the Suez crisis, Egyptian trade relations with the Communist bloc became very strong. Egypt had lost most of her traditional Western markets for Egyptian cotton. She was relying now upon the Communist bloc to buy the cotton, which furnished her with 60 per cent of Egypt's exchange income.¹⁵ Furthermore, Nasser had to depend on the Soviets for armaments. The Soviet Union in June 1957, delivered to Egypt three submarines, the first submarines to be acquired by any Middle Eastern power.¹⁶ In general, Egypt was basically committed to receiving the Soviets military aid.¹⁷ Most important of all Khrushchev's announcement on October 23, 1958, that his government had agreed to provide Egypt with 400 million rubles (little over \$100 million dollars) in credits toward the construction of the much desired High Aswan Dam.¹⁸ Under this agreement, the loan would be repaid in twelve annual installments, bearing a 2½ per cent annual interest, the first installment to be paid in 1964. The money so paid would be spent on purchasing commodities from the United Arab Republic. The Soviet government would also provide technical assistance to the completion of the first stage of the dam on an agreed date.¹⁹

15 H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 17.

16 Regional Peace for Regional Development, op. cit., p. 138.

17 H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 169.

18 Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 204.

19 For the text of the agreement, see Middle Eastern Affairs, February 1959, p. 78.

Another reason for Nasser's willingness to promote friendly relations with the Soviets was Moscow's readiness to recognize President Nasser as the leader of the Arab world.²⁰ The Soviets supported Nasser's policies and manifested their readiness to cooperate with his brand of Arab nationalism.²¹

Thus, the U.A.R. leader believed that his country's interest required that he not be an outspoken against international Communism. As Mohammed Hussein Haykal, President Nasser's trusted aide and editor of Al-Ahram newspaper, said in Cairo in early January 1957, "Egypt's alliance with the Soviets was, from the Egyptian point of view, a defensive thing. Egypt had little choice but to turn to Moscow, since only the Soviets were willing to furnish what the U.A.R. felt it needed."²²

* * *

The events following the Iraqi Revolution of July 1958, brought striking developments in Nasser's relations with the Soviet Union. Iraqi Premier Abdul Karim Kassem, instead of bringing Iraq into a union with the United Arab Republic as Nasser had expected, followed an independent policy. Kassem declared in December 1958, that he would preserve Iraq's "independence and sovereignty, at the same time doing everything possible for the benefit of the Arab people."²³ The consequence of Kassem's move to preserve Iraq's independence was a split between Premier Kassem's followers and

²⁰ W.W. Kulski, op. cit., p. 568.

²¹ Ibid., p. 569.

²² As quoted in H.B. Ellis, op. cit., pp. 17-8.

²³ As quoted in Joachim Joesten, op. cit., pp 212-13.

pro-Nasser nationalists, who demanded immediate union with the U.A.R.

The Iraqi Communists--the best organized political force in the country--threw their support behind the Iraqi leader. On December 17, 1958, the Syrian Communist party leader Khalid Bakdash followed his colleagues' latest moves in Baghdad by issuing a manifesto demanding restoration of Syrian political party system, which was abolished immediately after the merger with Egypt, and federation with Egypt rather than union.²⁴

These developments antagonized President Nasser. He responded by delivering a major speech in Port Said on December 23, 1958, in which he denounced the Syrian Communists as working together with imperialism and Zionism to disrupt Arab unity.²⁵ He also warned the American government about the mounting danger of Communist influence on the Iraqi new regime. The second day he named a three-man committee to purge the Syrian region of Communist influence.²⁶

Premier Khrushchev reacted to President Nasser's Port Said's speech by declaring in his address before the Twenty-first Soviet Communist Party Congress that it was "naive" to put Communism on the same level as Zionism; he pointed out that even in Israel, Communists fight against Zionism. He warned against allowing ideological differences between the U.S.S.R. and the U.A.R. to strain the two nations' friendly relations and stressed the common fight against Western "imperialism." The Soviet Premier criticized the persecution of "progressive" forces in the guise of "spurious anti-Communism."²⁷

²⁴ Near East Report, January 1, 1959, p. 157.

²⁵ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 273.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Near East Report, February 2, 1959, p. 165.

U.A.R.-Soviet relations reached the lowest point following a pro-Nasser revolt on March 8, 1959, in northern Iraq against the central government of Premier Kassem.²⁸ The uprising was crushed by the Iraqi air force and the pro-Communist Iraqi militia. President Nasser reacted by denouncing Arab Communists as agents of "a foreign power."²⁹ This was the beginning of a war of words between Moscow and Cairo. On March 16, 1959, after signing a Soviet-Iraqi economic aid agreement, under which the U.S.S.R. pledged 550 million rubles worth of technical equipment and services, Khrushchev at a Kremlin reception for the Iraqi delegation accused President Nasser of "adopting the language of the imperialists" in condemning Arab Communists. He said that President Nasser being "a rather young man and rather hot-headed, took upon himself more than his stature permitted."³⁰ Challenging President Nasser's claim as the spokesman of all Arab peoples without regard to the interest of the separate Arab states, the Soviet Premier added:

It is said that Arab nationalism allegedly stands above the interests of separate Arab states, above the interests of different sections of the population in the Arab countries. There is no doubt that the majority of the Arabs have common interests in the struggle against colonial slavery. But after the country has rid itself of foreign domination, the interests of the people cannot be ignored. Indeed the interests of all Arabs cannot coincide. Therefore the attempts to ignore, under cover of nationalism, the interest of separate sections of the population, the interest of the working people, are untenable.³¹

President Nasser reacted to this statement by violently condemning

²⁸ U.S. News and World Report, March 30, 1959, pp. 37-9.

²⁹ Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 274.

³⁰ Soviet World Outlook, op. cit., p. 217.

³¹ Soviet World Outlook, op. cit., p. 217.

international Communism. In a speech delivered on March 30, 1959, he said:

We tried not to make the local activities of Arab Communists in Iraq or Syria a reason for any clash with Russia as long as Russia did not interfere in our affairs. We were trying to convince ourselves that the Communist Parties in our countries were independent of international Communism. We found that they were not, and that was why I called them Communist stooges. They carried out orders and instructions to liquidate patriotic and national elements in order to place our country inside the zones of Communist influence. We were suddenly faced by flagrant interference in our internal affairs by Russia. There was concrete evidence of an alliance between the Russian leaders and Communists working against us inside our country.³²

From these two speeches it could be concluded that Soviet-Arab relations have entered a new phase. The leaders of the Kremlin seemed to have given up the idea of dealing with President Nasser as the leader of the Arab world. The new phase was characterized by a Soviet desire to establish close and friendly relations with the individual Arab states, even though such relations might cause a reverse effect to Soviet-U.A.R. friendship. However, the Soviets have gone ahead with their plans and commitments for economic and technical assistance to the United Arab Republic. This was done despite the anti-Communist line maintained by President Nasser's government.

In April 1959 Premier Khrushchev took the initiative in bringing about a reconciliation in Soviet-U.A.R. relations. He wrote Nasser a personal letter in which he expressed his desire for a closer and more cordial relationship with the U.A.R.³³ In late May, 1959, Al-Ahram, commenting on Premier Khrushchev's statement to an Indian journalist that the people of U.A.R. had no more sincere and true friend than the Soviet Union, wrote:

³² As quoted in Keith Wheelock, op. cit., p. 275.

³³ Ibid.

We accept Khrushchev's words with their full meaning. We accept the friendship he reaffirms. And we sincerely forget everything that happened March 16, 1959 [the day Khrushchev accused President Nasser of using the language of the imperialists]. We hope that our relations will be back to normal now that the cloud has been dissipated by Khrushchev's friendly remarks.³⁴

In January 1960, Moscow announced that it was extending a credit of 100 million Egyptian pounds, or more than \$280 million, to finance the second stage of the High Dam. The new transaction put an end to speculations in the Western world that President Nasser might seek Western credits to help finance the second stage.³⁵ A few days before Moscow's announcement, President Eisenhower declared at a press conference on January 13, 1960, that the United States would be willing to support the financing of stage two through the World Bank.³⁶

During May and June 1961, another dispute arose between Moscow and Cairo, each side accusing the other's propaganda machine of deliberately trying to poison the relations. Pravda, the Soviet Communist Party's paper, protested the arrest and alleged mistreatment of Arab Communist leaders who were prisoners in Egypt and Syria.³⁷ Cairo press retorted by denying the charges of Moscow's "Biased newspapers." It asserted U.A.R.'s neutrality and independence from the Communist camp.³⁸ On May 17 Pravda published a long and indignant article against the U.A.R. journalists who had criticized

³⁴ H.B. Ellis, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁵ J.S. Raleigh, "The Middle East in 1960 - A Political Survey," Middle Eastern Affairs, February 1961, p. 40.

³⁶ Joachim Joesten, op. cit., p. 131.

³⁷ The New York Times, June 4, 1961, p. 22.

³⁸ Ibid., June 7, 1961, p. 4.

Soviet Communism and accused them of seeking favor with the United States.

Pravda concluded by declaring that the Soviet Union valued Soviet-Arab friendship and strove to strengthen it.³⁹

However, while being conducted through state-owned mass media by both sides, the dispute did not seem to have caused any visible strain on Soviet-U.A.R. relations.

On January 15, 1962, to reassert Soviet desire to maintain friendly relations with the U.A.R., Premier Khrushchev in a personal message to President Nasser expressed his confidence that the High Aswan Dam would be completed on schedule. The message, which was delivered by Soviet Minister of Electric Power Stations Ignati I. Navikov, assured the U.A.R. President of continued Soviet equipment and technical assistance for the complete construction of the Dam.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., June 18, 1961, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., January 17, 1962, p. 11.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

We must rethink all of our policies in the Middle East--the Baghdad Pact, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the refusal to go ahead with the Aswan Dam--all mistakes.

John F. Kennedy¹

It is perhaps correct to say that the maintenance of Western interests in the Middle East today is partially, at least, dependent upon the cooperation of President Gamal Abdul Nasser, the single most powerful leader of Arab nationalism.

Only a few decades ago, the two old Western colonial nations--Great Britain and France--were able to force many concessions from Asian or African governments by the employment of the "gunboat policy." Since the end of World War II, the radical changes in international relations, prompted partially by the blazing desire of the colonized peoples to be free from imperialist domination and partially by the East-West conflict, created a situation wherein these peoples are no longer awed by the Western Powers. These peoples have become determined to achieve the objectives they have set for themselves regardless of Western desires.

For some time, the Western Powers did not fully appreciate the nationalistic desires of the colonial peoples. Believing that they could still maintain their dominant position in Africa and Asia, these powers followed a somewhat fallacious, unrealistic policy.

¹ As quoted in Jules Davids, op. cit., p. 130. Mr. Kennedy made the statement during his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Nowhere has this policy manifested itself more vividly than in the Middle East. Here, the West has always proceeded on the assumption that if it exerted enough political, economic, and military pressure, and if it offered certain inducements--such as financial aid--it could make Arab governments sign treaties or enter alliances regardless of the consequences to the national interests of the Arab people.

The West has failed to see that the Arabs--like other people--are naturally inclined to place their own aspirations and interests above the aspirations and interests of either party to the East-West conflict. Indeed, part of the misunderstanding between the Arab people and the Western powers during the last decade might be attributed to the Western inclination of viewing Arab nationalism primarily from the angle of the cold war and of expecting Arab subordination to Western position on cold war issues.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union, while being ideologically at odds with Arab nationalism, has attempted to show that its relations with the Arab people were not dictated by Russian interest in the cold war.

The Soviets have proved by deeds their readiness to offer economic and military aid to any Arab country without demanding alliances and without forcing it into subordination. Moreover, by their recognition of, and assistance to, Arab nationalism, the Soviets won the friendship of the Arab people. The Soviets have also profited from their encouraging of the neutralist tendency in the Arab countries, since such a tendency would conceivably diminish the Western influence in these countries.

* * *

President Nasser's leading role in overthrowing the notorious Egyptian monarchy, his subsequent successes in dealing with the Great Powers, and his timely introduction of many needed social and economic reforms have captured the imagination of the Arab masses. These peoples had been desperately searching for a leader who would fulfill their hopes for a foothold in the Twentieth Century, for liberation from infamous oligarchies, for freeing Arab territories from European colonialism and for restoring Arab rights in Palestine. All these ambitions were suddenly symbolized in the new Egyptian leader.

In dealing with the Great Powers, President Nasser was indeed expressing the desires and aspirations not of the Egyptians alone but a large segment of the Arab people. Aware of this fact, President Nasser proceeded to defy the West by proclaiming his non-alignment policy, by receiving Communist weapons, and by cultivating commercial and cultural relations with the Communist bloc. His daring measures prompted highly unfavorable reaction from the West, which viewed his policies as unprecedented and pernicious, allowing the Soviet Union a foothold in the Middle East, an area which the Western Powers regarded as their own sphere of influence.

President Nasser, however, saw his policies in an entirely different perspective. He believed that he was merely pursuing an independent policy. He saw no advantage accruing to the Arab world by involvement in the cold war, and he did not want to be a party to it.

His actions in foreign affairs were only a manifestation of his policy of active neutralism vis-a-vis East and West. He sought to build the nations of Africa and Asia into a force capable of creating some accommodation between the East and West. He succeeded---together with Prime Minister

Nehru of India, President Sukarno of Indonesia, President Tito of Yugoslavia, and President Nkruma of Ghana---in making the concept "neutralism" respectable in Eastern and more recently in Western eyes.

He has proved to be no man's lackey. His reaction to the Kremlin's mild criticism of his policy toward Arab Communists was just as violent as his response to some Western moves which he believed to be detrimental to his country's interest. His acceptance of Russian money, arms, and friendship never made any difference to his policy of keeping all known Communists in his country in prison or of manifesting his desires to cooperate with the Western world provided that such cooperation should be based on full respect for the United Arab Republic's sovereignty.

* * *

It is of utmost importance to distinguish between the United States and the West. The latter term includes, in addition to the United States, two major European colonial powers with a history not reputable in the Arab world. The identification of America with these two powers---namely Britain and France---in the post-World War II era has weakened and hampered American effort for winning Arab support. For the Arabs, and perhaps for most Asians and Africans, the cold war is viewed less a clash between Western democracy and Communist totalitarianism than a power struggle between two blocs, one of which embraces Britain and France against whom the Arab world has been involved in a life and death struggle to the present time.

The United States must seek every possible means to convince the Middle Eastern people that while it is necessary for her to come to the assistance of her European allies in the conflict with Communism, in matters

concerning colonialism it should support the principle of self-determination. In the Middle East, the United States enjoys one natural advantage, i.e., it has never had any colonial activities in the area. She must show the Arab people her understanding and respect of their nationalistic aspirations and of their non-alignment policy.

Arab nationalism is far more incompatible with Communism than with Western interests. As a matter of fact, President Nasser is convinced that local Communist parties supported by the Soviet bloc are potentially the greatest threat to Arab unity under his leadership. Ideologically, Arab nationalism and Communism seem not likely to exist side by side. It is believed that Nasser would rather accept Western cooperation than Russian aid. Washington must realize this fact and should adopt a policy based on cooperation and understanding. This policy should be based on the recognition of a fact that if the West desires to keep the Middle East out of Communist influence, it cannot afford to lose the friendship and sympathy of the leader of an important country in the area, the United Arab Republic.

It seems that a new American approach toward President Nasser and the Arab nationalism movement which he champions should pay due regards to the following objectives: (1) The elimination of the remnants of Anglo-French colonial possessions in the Middle East. The existence of these possessions, such as, for example, Aden, and Bahrain, is a reminder to the Arab people of the past colonial activities of these two powers; (2) the support of Arab nationalism and Arab unity; (3) the adoption of more impartial approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the search for a solution according to United Nations decisions; (President Nasser has declared several times that if Israel accepts all the United Nations resolutions, he

would agree to drop his hostility toward that state.)² (4) the extension of aid to the Arab countries to carry much needed economic and social development; and (5) the full acceptance of the Arab desire to pursue its policy of non-alignment in the East-West conflict.

A hopeful look at some most recent Western moves toward President Nasser may suggest that a new phase in Western-Arab relations may be in the offing.

² The most important U.N. resolution concerning the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict was that 1947-1948 calling on Israel to relinquish about twenty per cent of her present territory to the Palestinian Arabs and also to admit those Arab refugees willing to go back to their old residences now under Israeli sovereignty. See, Mother Eliot, "Should the U.S. Sell Arms to Israel," Foreign Policy Bulletin, January 15, 1956, p. 3.

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