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DICTATORS COOPERATE

The visit of President Nasser to the USSR will be made the occasion for numerous resounding declarations of Soviet-Arab solidarity and for further attempts to bury both the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine, which is described by Moscow's propaganda as "a blue-print for a far-flung American colonial empire, with the Arab East as its operational base" (see appendix I, p. 1 below). Khrushchev will no doubt encourage President Nasser in the latter's aspiration to become ruler of an Arab empire almost as far-flung as Khrushchev's own, and no mention will be made of the Kremlin's long-term policy for the Middle East, which seems to be based on the old and well-tried formula of "divide et impera." Certainly that is the impression given by a revealing sentence penned by K. Ivanov, the contributor of an article on the United Arab Republic which appeared in the March 1957 issue of International Affairs (Moscow). Ivanov said:

"Being Marxists, we are by no means inclined to make a fetish of Arab unity as such and to ignore the fact that the idea may, in certain circumstances, be used for some time also by the reactionaries, who seek to arrest the progressive development of the Arab peoples."

The first explanation of this apparent threat to Nasserism which springs to mind is that it amounts to no more than a routine warning by Moscow to the Federation of Iraq and Jordan. But this possibility seems to be discounted by the fact that two paragraphs later, K. Ivanov goes on to say:

"There is no reason to believe that the Federation, given certain conditions, may not play a positive part, since objectively it adds to the Arab urge for unity spearheaded against the colonialists and their henchmen in the Middle East..."

So Arab unity against "the colonialists" is to be stimulated; it is the possibility of Arab unity against Moscow which is not to be made "a fetish". A good recent example of the latter type of unity, perhaps, was the hasty suppression of the Syrian Communist Party, and the resultant flight of its leader, Khalid Bakdash, with his wife and family to Prague after the incorporation of Syria into the United Arab Republic. An example of the former is the constant war of attrition against the borders of Aden, where Yemeni tribesmen have been newly equipped with artillery, mortars, heavy machine guns¹ and even two Russian helicopters by courtesy of Khrushchev.

¹London Times 28 April 1958.

As regards democracy, Nasser and Khrushchev have much in common. Their views on the multi-party system are strikingly similar. On April 5, 1958, Nasser gave an interview to a Western correspondent in which he said:

"If we decide today to have complete democracy, what will be the result? The result will be three parties in the country: one party will ask to be in agreement or alliance with the West. Of course those will be the reactionaries and the Federalists. The other party will have adopted the policy of non-alignment and neutrality, and this will collect the Nationalists. The third party will ask for alliance with the USSR, with the East, and those will be the Communists. The country today is not really ready to engage in such a conflict."

Khrushchev phrases it rather differently, but his meaning is much the same. Speaking at Kiev on April 26th,² he said:-

"The fact that there is only one party in our country, the Communist Party, does not suit certain statesmen in the capitalist states. What do they care about the fact that for a long time there have been no mutually hostile, antagonistic classes in the USSR, and that for this reason there are no different parties? A party expresses the interests of a given class; workers, peasants and intellectuals in our country form a single united family...In our country the Party and the people form one entity."

In other respects as well, the two dictators are bound to feel that they understand each other: the inflated security services in each country, the excessive privileges of the two officer corps, the refusal to allow their citizens to travel abroad (Nasser blames it on "shortage of foreign currencies"), the censorship directed in both cases against "those abroad who seek to undermine the Government"; these words are Nasser's but they could equally have been spoken by Khrushchev.

From the point of view of economics, Nasser's head is now firmly in the noose. In the 1954-55 marketing season the Eastern bloc bought 30% of the Egyptian cotton crop. By mid-January 1958 the proportion had risen to 60%, and was believed to be still rising. But the high cost of the armament bought in such profusion by Nasser from the Communist countries has resulted in a balance of payments crisis, and this in turn has led to a decline in the Egyptian pound to about two-thirds of its former value. As the London Times put it, "for all the boldness of his political adventures, President Nasser has delivered the Egyptian economy far more into the hands of the East than it ever was in those of the West; and 1958 may see some predatory looking chickens coming home to roost."

Certainly Nasser has shown recent signs of finding that the chickens look somewhat like vultures. He removed Dr. Abu Nosseir,

²Radio Moscow, 28 April 1958.

the ex-minister of Commerce responsible for the trade agreements with Communist countries, to an insignificant post,³ and in early April the Cairo press, which reflects the policies of the Government as faithfully as Pravda in the USSR, suddenly began to soft-pedal its usual anti-Americanism.⁴ Then the Governor of the National Bank of Egypt unilaterally announced that an agreement had been reached between Egypt and the Suez Canal Company on compensation.⁵ Although the conclusion of such an agreement is not yet confirmed by the company, there is no reason to doubt that the Governor believes it to be near. If this is the case, it is potentially too important a step to have been taken merely for window-dressing purposes in an attempt to offset the adverse effects in the West of Nasser's visit to the USSR.

But these economic and political straws in the Western wind will prove of little account if the military ambitions of Nasser and Khrushchev get the better of them. The transfer of six Polish submarines to the United Arab Republic⁶ and the furtive construction by the Russians of a new naval base at Hodeida in the Yemen⁷ with gun emplacements overlooking both the entrance to the Red Sea and the British radio station on Perim Island, do not suggest the devotion to peace so frequently proclaimed in Khrushchev's speeches. It has been often said that Western influence in the Middle East historically began as a trading operation, and developed into the political and military fields. No doubt Khrushchev would like to carry out the same manoeuvre, but Nasser may yet prove to be his equal, in much the same way that Tito, another tried military dictator, proved to be the equal of Stalin and Khrushchev.

r.r.g.

³London Times, March 31st, 1958

⁴London Times, April 17th, 1958.

⁵Times, April 24, 1958.

⁶Times, 5 April 1958.

⁷Times, 17 April 1958.

WASHINGTON AND THE ARAB WORLD

New Times

No. 15, April 1958

by George Mirsky

Things have been moving fast in the Middle East. The Baghdad powers met for a conference in Ankara towards the end of January and Dulles tried to induce them to accept rocket bases. His speechifying was soon eclipsed by a much more important event, one that might well prove the opening chapter of a new era in Arab history - the integration of Egypt and Syria into a single state. A few days later came press reports that Iraq and Jordan were contemplating a federation of their own, under Hashimite rule.

These developments overshadowed the first anniversary of the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine. It got scant coverage in the news, though only six months earlier American papers were extolling it as a decisive factor in the Middle East, a "bold new program" that would reverse the trend of events "in favor of the West." Now little is being said or written about the doctrine. The Manchester Guardian discusses it in an article eloquently headlined: "Eisenhower Doctrine: Post Mortem."

The fate of the doctrine is significant and deserves to be analyzed. For what we have is the failure of a determined attempt by Washington to reshape policy in the Arab East and bring the area under its tutelage.

The object was not only to strengthen Washington's position and prevent Arab friendship and economic cooperation with the USSR. The chief purpose was to undermine the movement for national liberation.

U.S. diplomacy has worked indefatigably to undermine the Arab forces that have consistently and vigorously opposed imperialism and supported Bandung and positive neutrality. Its guns had been trained on Egypt and Syria, the centres of Arab nationalism. One of its immediate objectives was to overthrow the patriotic regime in Syria and force Egypt, by economic pressure, to change her foreign policy.

That, Washington hoped, would clear the way to the achievement of more ambitious goals. The New York Times (Jan. 7, 1957) intimated that the doctrine would be extended to Tunisia, Morocco, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanganyika, even the Belgian Congo. A very ambitious plan, to be sure, one that encompassed not only Arab oil, but Moroccan phosphates, Congo uranium, and the riches lying dormant beneath the Sahara sands.

It was, essentially, a blueprint for a far-flung American colonial empire, with the Arab East as the operational base.

The State Department machinery was put into motion - evidently it was to be a blitz campaign.

Record of Failure

It started with Operation Hospitality in the early part of last year. Washington played host to King Saud, Crown Prince Illah of Iraq and Lebanese Foreign Minister Malik, chosen as salesmen for the doctrine.

To that crew was added King Hussein of Jordan, who announced that the doctrine appealed to him, but not to his government and people. It was then that the doctrine was applied in practice: the US Embassy in Amman engineered a coup d'état, and the U.S. Sixth Fleet landed Marines near Beyrouth - they would "take the situation in Jordan in hand." In April 1957, Hussein, with American support, imposed a dictatorial regime on the country. The U.S. News and World Report, that State Department mouthpiece, was quick to announce that the Middle East position had been radically changed and Egypt and Syria isolated.

That fanfare was premature, for in the summer an American plot was disclosed in Syria and attempts to build up a coalition for an armed attack on Syria met with no success.

The proclamation of the United Arab Republic was a smashing blow to Washington policy. For two peaceable Arab states, Egypt and Syria, united for joint struggle against imperialism and its twin vehicles, the Baghdad pact and the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine, and the Yemen joined them as a federated affiliate of the Republic. Washington thus failed to prevent consolidation of the Middle East anti-colonialist forces, which now represent an insurmountable barrier to American expansion.

But Washington still banked on Saudi Arabia and the pro-West orientation of its ruler, King Saud. Its attempts to set Saudi Arabia and the United Republic at loggerheads failed too: at the end of March King Saud transferred direction of home and foreign policy to his brother, Crown Prince Faisal. That came as a very unpleasant surprise to Washington, since Faisal is an avowed supporter of Arab unity and an opponent of the Baghdad pact and the Eisenhower doctrine.

The Alsop brothers said in their New York Herald Tribune column (March 26) that during the Eisenhower-Macmillan talks in the Bermudas early in 1957, Dulles described King Saud as the "anchor" of US Middle East policy. But now, the Alsops remark, "America's whole policy in the Middle East is due to go on the rocks, because the anchor has slipped".

And it was precisely in this period that Arab countries came into close cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist lands. Suffice it to mention the Soviet-Egyptian and Soviet-Syrian economic agreements.

The Cairo Afro-Asian Conference condemned the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine.

Washington had not achieved any of its goals; it has neither destroyed the chief sources of Arab nationalism nor isolated the Arab countries from the socialist camp.

Summing up the Eisenhower doctrine stage in American Middle East policy, Sulzberger of the New York Times (April 5) says the tide of the national-liberation movement "now moves more rapidly than anyone had foreseen. The Eisenhower doctrine, presumably devised to check it, has proved a failure. It is mentioned rarely and in muted tones."

New Doctrines?

Now that the failure of the Eisenhower doctrine is obvious there have been reports of plans for new doctrines.

The Cairo Al-Masa (Jan. 4) carried a report from its Lebanese correspondent about American plans for a "compromise pact", a military organization of both adherents and non-adherents of the Eisenhower doctrine. Evidently, the aim is to bring a maximum number of countries into direct association with the doctrine.

There are also plans for economic subordination of independent Arab states. Here is one of them, reported in the Arab press: the United States will defer West-European payments on the Marshall plan debt, and the money will go into a Middle East aid fund. Needless to say, it will be controlled by Washington, but the official fund partners will be West-European nations.

And still another plan - an industrial development corporation sponsored by a group of American and West-European financiers. Ostensibly, it is to be a private company with headquarters in Luxemburg, financed by private banks and firms, and with a very innocent object-promotion of private investments in Arab countries. The suspicious thing, however, is that the sponsors include such top American corporations as the Bank of America, and the First Boston Corporation.

Judging by reports in the Western press, Eugene Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development has a hand in the scheme. In the Middle East Black is known as an agent of the American monopolies.

The idea, then, is to provide a respectable signboard - a private organization with philanthropic leanings - for the old capitalist plans of economic enslavement of the Middle East.

So far these are only projects. The only practical conclusion drawn from the failure of the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine is that the Baghdad pact must be strengthened. The Ankara council meeting made it pretty clear that the pact is still regarded as the chief weapon of American policy in this part of the world.

Miscalculation

The doctrine has not earned America any profit. What it has earned her is the animosity of millions of Arabs, to many of whom it revealed the colonialist essence of American policy. Even President Eisenhower, in his message to Congress on March 5, the first anniversary of the doctrine, was obliged to admit that it was not popular in the Middle East.

The Arabs were affronted by the so-called vacuum theory, on which the doctrine is built: America must step into the breach,

fill the "vacuum" left by the British and French. This theory is rejected even by those Arab leaders who were at first inclined to accept the doctrine at face value.

"With a nod to the United Nations, the United States appears as the self-appointed policeman and patron of the Middle East", the US Foreign Affairs magazine wrote last April. But the Arabs, a proud people anxious to regain their erstwhile glory and might, want neither foreign patrons nor foreign policemen. Both smack of colonialism.

Washington underestimates the urge for Arab unity, the dominating factor in the Middle East political scene, and the strength and scope of the unity movement. The Arabs reject both the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine and the Baghdad pact as weapons of division.

But the chief reason for the failure of the doctrine must be sought in the intrinsic fallacy of Washington's political strategy. It is a strategy designed to achieve the predatory colonialist aims of US monopoly capital and wholly disregards the interests of the Afro-Asian peoples.

The framers of the doctrine - and the chief framer was none other than John Foster Dulles - could not, of course, openly proclaim their colonialist program. That would have caused widespread indignation in America too. Hence the attempt to clothe it in terms of "anti-communism."

The January issue of Foreign Affairs contains this revealing admission: "We have clothed our objective in terms of defending people from communism...We recognize, of course, the subterfuge in this."

This is recognized not only by the editors of Foreign Affairs but by millions throughout the Middle East, the millions the doctrine would reduce to near-slavery.

For what benefits would it bring them? Economic aid? But the facts show that this is no more than a demagogic slogan.

American "aid" to the Middle East in the first half of 1957 amounted to \$174 million. The annual net profit of one American company, Aramco, amounts to \$300 million, and the total profit made by all the American oil companies in the past years probably amounts to several thousand million dollars. The two hundred million dollars allocated for "aid" under the Eisenhower doctrine is only a tiny fraction of the thousands of millions U.S. monopolies make by exploiting Middle East oil.

But even the modest aid funds are not used for industrial development. The most ardent supporters of the Dulles-Eisenhower doctrine will have to admit that not a single factory has so far been built on American aid money.

This is what Walter Lippmann wrote of American aid:

"What we call foreign aid is the annual upkeep of the system of military alliances." Sometimes, in order to make a better impression abroad, what is really military aid is presented as civilian aid, and Lippmann cites the following figures:

"In the current (1957) fiscal year Congress has appropriated \$3,700 million of which all but \$600 million - about 16 per cent - is military in purpose...What is more, a large proportion of the non-military aid is used for strategic and political purposes."

National independence, cooperation and friendship, peace and economic development are the ideas that predominate in Middle East thinking today. Washington policy is based on entirely different ideas - subjection, discord, rearmament and cold war. This is a policy that the Arab world rejects.