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The Red Paw in the Arab Tent

From an Article by Neal Stanford in The Christian Science Monitor

Washington—The United States is worried, genuinely worried, over Moscow's arms deal with Egypt. But not exclusively for the official reason given by Secy. of State John Foster Dulles. It is true, as Mr. Dulles says, that by selling arms to Egypt, the Czechs threaten to touch off an arms race in the Middle East that can explode into full-scale war between Israel and the Arab world. Mr. Dulles has personally remonstrated with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov over this prospect twice to date and will undoubtedly do so again at Geneva.

But there's a bigger worry bothering Mr. Dulles, stemming from this Czech-Egyptian arms deal, than even the prospect of Arab-Israeli hostilities. There's the danger, very real danger, that by this arms deal (and by others with other Arab countries) Moscow's influence can leap the barriers set up in Greece and Turkey by the Truman Doctrine designed specifically to contain Soviet power within its postwar borders.

Then the fat would be in the fire. Then the Kremlin which for centuries has been trying by hook or crook, by bluster or bargain, to reach the Mediterranean and break out into the Indian Ocean would have taken a long step toward its goal. Mr. Dulles' scheme to hold the Communist lines to their present borders would have been undermined.

WEDGE—Of course, merely a single arms deal, or even several arms deals, does not automatically make Moscow the protector of the Arab world. That is too crude a way to put it. But if Egypt, if Saudi Arabia, if Syria become dependent on—can be made dependent on—Moscow for weapons then the Kremlin has gone a long way toward becoming ideological adviser to all the sheikhs of Arabia. And it is too much to hope certainly too naive to expect, that once Moscow is supplying the Arab world with arms it is not going to see that ideological technicians move in with those weapons.

How do you bar the door to Communist penetration when the Commies come bearing gifts, not threatening destruction, offer-

ing arms, not pointing guns at you? This has Mr. Dulles in a quandary, and no pint-sized one, I can assure you.

It also has the other Mr. Dulles, Allen Dulles, Foster Dulles's brother and boss of CIA, struggling in this same quandary. Only Allen talks even less than his brother about his worries. But, as he knows full well, Moscow not only has good reason to make itself the arsenal of the Arab world but it has the arms to implement its interest.

SURPLUS—In fact the Soviets have arms, figuratively, running out of their ears. They have a stock of usable, salable, but not last-minute weapons that dwarfs most national arsenals. They have thousands of postwar tanks and jet fighter planes that are surplus by Soviet standards but in A-1 shape for Arab use. They have the MIG-15s not being expended in Korea, in Indochina, over Formosa—some four to six thousand of these planes that are no match for the newest Soviet jet fighters but would please any Arab pilot or defense chief.

From the Soviet standpoint the setup couldn't be better. The Arabs want these weapons; the Soviets have them by the thousands. The Arabs hold the gateways to the warm waters of the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean; the Soviets would give their eyeteeth for access to those waters. And now it develops all they may have to give is some used surplus weapons!

You can't blame them for smiling broadly and contentedly—and momentarily forgetting about Europe and NATO and other unpleasant subjects. This is that ideal setup that lets you eat your cake and have it too. The Soviets can get rid of a lot of surplus weapons and also extend their lines of influence and penetration.

Of course, the Arabs disagree with this estimate. They think they can fake the Soviet weapons and let the Communist influence go. They claim they can outsmart the Russian Bear; that they can take the arms without the coating of communism that goes with them. But can they?