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CPYRGHT

Near-East And The "Match"

War clouds hang low and dark and threatening over the Middle East. The "powder keg" between Egypt and Israel could explode at any time. Russia and her satellites, smiling and confident, seem to be holding the match.

The word trickles down through diplomatic channels that the government of a satellite nation has told Israel that Egypt will scrap her pact with the United Kingdom and bar Britain from the Suez if war starts. There was no indication that the communists informants were bluffing. A United States spokesman confirmed that such a report had been heard, even before Israel made it known.

The report that Egypt might renege on her 1954 pact with Great Britain is not to be taken lightly. The effect of this would be to deny Britain the use of her Suez Canal base, a central supply point in the area. Such a development would upset the balance of power in the Middle East. In shutting out Britain, it could leave Russia with the trump card if a "small war" should break out.

So it is no wonder that Foreign Minister Molotov is behaving like a jolly Volga boatman on a Saturday night as he patronizes the bar at the Geneva conference. He can smile and joke and try to charm the Western diplomats as much as he pleases. But the Western world rapidly is getting wise to Russia and her so-called "new attitude."

Sen. Russell, who has just returned from a two months' visit to Russia, said in a speech in Winder the other day that Russia hasn't changed one bit—that only the facial expression is different. Allen W. Dulles, chief of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, recently said virtually the same thing—that no lasting security is possible as long as the present Soviet system remains. These men speak with authority. They have had access to the latest and best information on Russia. Theirs is no soapbox opinion.

Sen. George, certainly one of the best informed men on international affairs, clings to the hope that firm action at Geneva can prevent a war in the Middle East. But he admits that the problem grows more critical daily, and that it will be difficult to confine this acute situation to a local dispute. Secretary of State Dulles has warned Molotov at Geneva that continued bargain sales of arms to the Egyptian government may touch off the explosion. A great deal depends on how well the Western diplomats can convince Russia that she should blow out the match.

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