Egyptian Attitude Queried
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Letters to The Times

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Is Said to Constitute Continuing Threat to Israel's Security

To the Editor of The New York Times:

The settlement of the Suez Canal dispute may be greeted as a welcome sign of change in the rigid situation that has prevailed between Great Britain and Egypt, in which the United States is implicated as an anxious friend of both parties. However, the general relief felt as a result of the establishment of this restricted sector of peaceful relations should not obscure the profound distrust that must arise as a result of the fact that Egypt continues its unflagging intentions of aggression against Israel, and that as an inducement for accepting England's evacuation of a military position held for seventy-five years Egypt is also being offered an extra bonus of free grants of arms from the United States.

Israel cannot be expected to stand by as a silent witness while the threat to its security is increasingly ramified and organized. The British evacuation of the Suez Canal will leave Egypt in possession of one of the great military bases in the world. Once in Egypt's hands the stores, the equipment and the vast military installations of the base will bring Egypt's greatly increased military strength right up to Israel's southern borders. Moreover, the value of American arms, which in this backward area is incalculable, is going to be still further enhanced by American military guidance and organization.

Thus, what Egypt is receiving is obviously quite substantial; what it is giving is dubious.

Violator of U. N. Decisions

In point of fact, Egypt is at present in the position of a self-confessed and unregenerate violator of United Nations decisions. It has not only made no modification of its intransigent position with respect to Israel; it has not only rejected all proposals to transform the armistice agreement with Israel into a treaty of peace; but on the eve of the recent preliminary Anglo-Egyptian agreement Salah Salem, Egypt's Minister of National Guidance, made the following public declaration on the radio during a visit to Beirut as though to lend a defiant emphasis to Egypt's unchanging vindictiveness:

"As for the problem of Palestine, that is a problem which can be solved only by force. That force will not be achieved until the Suez Canal is freed. The Egyptian Army is unable to fight as long as the British Army separates it from its bases."

The United States has paid no attention to these ominous threats, although they have not passed unnoticed in the British Parliament.

Furthermore, there is no let-up of the rigid blockade of the Suez Canal, which, although directed chiefly against Israel, in its very nature must be a thorn in the side of all those nations and private interests which are concerned in maintaining normality in commercial relations. At present Egypt subjects to its blacklist any ship trading with Israel for any purpose whatsoever. This includes any number of American and West European shippers, who have repeatedly protested against the illegal practices of Egypt.

This blockade will obviously continue to be a severe burden on Israel's economy, already overtaxed by the absorption of over 700,000 refugees. It is, however, primarily as an earnest of Egyptian malevolence that its gravity must be assessed.

Effort for Peace Needed

There can be no tranquillity in the Middle East and no economic or social regeneration until the Arab leaders, including the Egyptians, cease clinging to the chimera of a war with Israel instead of applying themselves to the genuine problems that confront the Middle East as a whole—the tragic debilitation of the diseased and impoverished peasantry, the neglect of natural resources and the frittering away of national energies in partisan politics.

The impending solution of the Suez Canal dispute affords an unprecedented opportunity to make a start on the foundations of peace between the Arab States and Israel.

Perhaps the most alarming element in the present attitude of the State Department is its apparent determination not to allow any "disagreeable" themes to impede the definitive signing of the agreements between Egypt, Great Britain and the United States. This curiously diffident American view of diplomatic "tact" is as naïve as it will be futile. If the Egyptian Government can secure all the benefits now being presented it in the wake of its policy of intransigence, why should it make any concessions after the agreements are all signed?

Surely the present American Administration, which was instrumental in furthering the understanding between Egypt and Great Britain, can take advantage of the breathing spell, vital to the new Egyptian regime, between the submission of the agreements and their final signing, in order to indicate to it where the course of true wisdom lies.

LOUIS LIPSKY,
Chairman, American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs.
Washington, Aug. 4, 1954.

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