SOVIET PACES TASK OF DECIDING ON AID
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New York Times (1857-Current file); Nov 1, 1956; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
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Khrushchev Promise of Help to Egypt in a War Over Suez Is Recalled

By HARRY SCHWARTZ

With the tide of fighting in Egypt rising, the Soviet Union faces the problem of whether it should, or can, make good on its earlier hints that it would help Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser if war resulted from the Suez Canal dispute.

Last Aug. 23, Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Soviet Communist party, said at a diplomatic reception in Moscow that "the Arabs will not stand alone" if war broke out.

A war in defense of Egypt's hold on the Suez Canal "would be a just war," Mr. Khrushchev added. But he was careful not to make an explicit pledge of Soviet military intervention, confining himself to the assertion that "volunteers" would come to help Egypt.

Soviet military intervention in the Egyptian fighting would be greatly simplified if it were done on the basis of a United Nations resolution such as the one that authorized military aid to South Korea against North Korea in 1950. But prior to or without such a resolution, Soviet military intervention on any large scale would seem to face serious political, logistic and strategic problems.

The political situation facing the Soviet Union now differs from the one it had envisaged. All earlier Soviet comment indicated Moscow believed that if war came over the Suez Canal it would be because of joint action by the United States, Britain and France.

Two Possibilities Seen

In facing the problem of possible intervention in the Middle East, the Soviet Union apparently had to weigh the possibility that such action against a united West might touch off a world war, against a belief that Soviet aid to Egypt against a united West would mean a tremendous political victory for the Soviet Union.

But the present situation is one in which the United States, the chief Western power, opposes the military action taken against Egypt. From Moscow's point of view this may well make it seem that Soviet military intervention in Egypt would not be as likely to lead to a world war as in the other possibility but would also be less politically fruitful in winning the Asian-African bloc over to an exclusively pro-Soviet orientation.

Logistically, the Soviet Union apparently faces a great difficulty in bringing to bear any substantial number of ground troops to help Egypt, whether these be regular troops or "volunteers."

Soviet access to the Mediterranean Sea is through the Dardanelles controlled by Turkey and would take time. A token force might be brought in by plane, but the supply situation for a large force seems insuperable for the time being.

If Soviet war planes entered the fray, there would be a difficult problem of supplying spare parts and ammunition.

With unrest in Eastern Europe persisting, any major Soviet involvement in the Middle East poses the danger of further revolts in satellite countries.

In addition, Soviet action in the Egyptian struggle without United Nations authorization, might provoke war with Britain and France. In that case the Soviet Union would be uncertain as to the United States position.

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