Washington Loses Grip
By JAMES RESTON Special to The New York Times.
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Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31—The United States has lost control of events in areas vital to its security.

This is the main conclusion of serious and well-informed men here tonight concerning the United States' role in the Middle Eastern crisis.

President Eisenhower talked to the nation tonight as head of the state, Commander in Chief of its armed forces and candidate for re-election, but for the first time he could no longer speak as keeper of the peace and leader of a unified Western alliance.

Within the short space of less than two weeks, both Washington and Moscow, which dominated world events for the first decade of the post-war era, have seen their wishes and policies defied by nations heretofore regarded as their most cooperative allies.

Thus, a wholly new situation now exists, with East Europe and the Middle East the scene of momentous events that may very well affect the future influence of Washington and Moscow and the balance of power in the world.

The picture is not without its hopeful aspects. The official attitude here is one of determina-

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How Mideast Crisis Grew, as Seen From 3 Western Capitals

WASHINGTON SEES PRESTIGE WANING

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tion to make the best of a bad situation.

There are many regrets and bitter recriminations, but there is conviction that a major war can be avoided, and hope that the Soviet Union can be persuaded to keep volunteer fliers and saboteurs away from the all-important oil pipelines and the Suez Canal.

Beyond that is a genuine belief that, with the satellites in revolt in East Europe, and the United States and the Soviet Union joined in opposition to the British-French intervention in Egypt, it might now be possible to reopen serious negotiations for the reunification of Germany and an all-European security pact, backed by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Remark by Dulles Cited

In this regard, one passage in Secretary of State Dulles' speech in Dallas, Tex., last week is especially important. This was discussed for two whole days in the State Department and finally approved by the President. It read as follows:

"The United States has no ulterior purpose in desiring the independence of the satellite countries. Our unadulterated wish is that these peoples, from whom so much of our own national life derives, should have sovereignty restored to them, and that they should have governments of their own free choosing. We do not look upon these nations as potential military allies. We see them as friends and as part of a new and friendly, and no longer divided Europe. We are confident that their independence, if promptly accorded, will contribute immensely to stabilize peace throughout all of Europe, West and East."

This can be a statement of immense significance. It is an invitation to the Soviet Union to take the new situation in Europe, not as a crisis justifying a return to Stalinist violence, but as an opportunity to make a new beginning on the all-European security pact originally discussed between President Eisenhower and Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin in Geneva.

The outlook in the Middle East, as seen from here, is gloomy, particularly because of fears that both the oil pipelines and the Suez Canal will be sabotaged in the battle, but the outlook in East Europe provides some opportunity for hopeful developments.

Meanwhile, the main question here is: How did it happen that this basic rift, with all its undertones of secret double-dealing, could have developed within the Western alliance?

The answer to this is immensely complicated and significant, and involves the psychological reaction in Britain and France to the decline of their power, the domestic political situation in Britain, France and the United States, and the personality and diplomacy of Secretary of State Dulles.

Nothing could have caused more dismay in Washington than the coordinated decision of London and Paris to resort to force in defiance of what the United States Government always has regarded as the main principles of British foreign policy in the post-war years.

Britain and France fought alongside the United States to create an international organization in 1945 at San Francisco for the specific purpose of persuading nations not to resort to the use of force to achieve national objectives, no matter how fundamental. Yet here were the British and French Governments taking action against Egypt not only in opposition to United States policy but in defiance of the principles of the United Nations.

For this reason there was general agreement here — and this was the point that dominated everything else — that President Eisenhower was right tonight in condemning the action of Britain and France as a violation of the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

Mideast Vital to Britain

The explanation of the rift between Washington and the other allies, however, goes back a long way. The British feel strongly that their national survival as a major power depends on the maintenance of their position and their oil receipts in the Middle East.

Their dollar earnings from the rubber and tin holdings in Southeast Asia have declined. Their empire has been steadily melting away. And just as France equates her authority as a world power with her territory in North Africa, so the British feel that the Middle East is essential to their security and their standard of living.

Whenever the rise of nationalism in this part of the world has threatened a serious rift between Britain and her former Middle East partners, the United States has come along with compromise proposals, and the British have tended to follow United States suggestions.

The United States urged the British to get their troops out of the Suez Canal Zone in the first place. Washington placed confidence first in King Farouk, then in Mohammed Naguib, and finally in President Gamal Abdel Nasser, long after the British had decided that President Nasser, especially, was anti-Western and determined to use any means, including Communist arms, to destroy British and French interests in the Arab world.

The stumbling block between the British and French on the one hand and the United States on the other, has been President Nasser rather than the Suez Canal. The United States wanted to bring him down by the slow policy of economic pressure.



Associated Press Radiophoto

PREPARING FOR BLACKOUT, residents of Tel Aviv wait in line to purchase material for darkening windows.

The British and French felt that, if they acquiesced in his seizure of the Universal Suez Canal Company, his influence would rise with time rather than fall, and they wanted to take action against him immediately after he nationalized the canal company.

It was at this point that the personal diplomacy of Mr. Dulles influenced the course of events. He talked them out of taking action. He proposed instead of military action, the formation of the Suez Canal Users Association. He represented this to the British and French as a "means of provoking a showdown" with President Nasser, and achieving the ends Britain and France wanted, only by peaceful means.

Dulles Plan Goes Amiss

On the strength of this, they abandoned their original plan to go into Suez. Then it developed that Mr. Dulles' "showdown" plan proved to be much less of a "showdown" than the British thought he had originally proposed. He wanted to pay more money from the users' association to President Nasser than they did. He did not want to force the issue with President Nasser and they insisted that only such a policy could prevent the Egyptian leader from organizing the Arab world against Britain and France.

This was only one of many such "misunderstandings" between the British and French and Mr. Dulles. The President cannot believe it, but the testimony here of well-informed men is almost unanimous that, starting back with Mr. Dulles' negotiation of the Japanese peace treaty, when the British assert that he promised not to put pressure on the Japanese to recognize Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and then did, there have been incidents of this sort that have slowly created a kind of crisis of confidence in Western Big Three diplomacy.

Well-informed reporters have been sending reams of copy out of here for many months about this decline of United States influence overseas, while the President has been proclaiming that Washington's influence was higher than ever before.

The plain truth is that the British and French, rightly or wrongly, came to the conclusion that Mr. Dulles' policy in the Middle East—his Suez compromise, his "northern tier of alliances," his handling of the Czechoslovak - Egyptian arms deal, his promise and then his withdrawal of the promise of aid to build the Aswan High Dam—has been a failure—well-meaning, peaceful, often idealistic, but a failure just the same.

Accordingly, no matter how much it is denied in Paris and London, the evidence is that the British and French decided to take the measures they thought were necessary to protect their interests without consulting the United States.

Just how much "connivance" there was with the Israelis is not particularly significant. What is clear is that London and Paris connived to keep the United States in darkness about their plans.

Blackout of Information

For weeks there has been almost a total blackout of information between Washington and the capitals of Britain and France, and the President, preoccupied with the campaign, apparently did not get into the picture until the Israelis were almost ready to move.

Meanwhile, it is strongly felt here that domestic political considerations in both Britain and France encouraged the break. Both the Mollet and Eden governments have been under powerful attack, and are now under pressure both to revive British and French authority to do so, if possible, without hurting the alliance.

Whatever the explanations of the swift turn of events—and the explanations are plentiful and contradictory—there is general agreement that the world is now greatly changed.

The North Atlantic alliance in the Western world has been weakened just at the time when Mr. Dulles was talking about making it a stronger instrument for consultation on world events everywhere, and the Warsaw alliance of the Communist world is likewise weakened by the revolts in East Europe.

For some time to come, therefore, the world will be in a new period of negotiation in an effort to restore old alignments or create new ones on a sounder basis.

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