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The Czech-Egypt Armament Deal 3

The deal through which Egypt is obtaining military equipment from Czechoslovakia not only has increased tension between Israel and Egypt and provoked incidents which might bring on another Israeli-Arab war—it also has set in motion a form of arms competition which threatens the military balance of the entire Middle East.

By bartering Czech war materials—and that means Soviet war materials—for Egyptian cotton on what is called a "purely commercial basis," the Soviet bloc has ended the monopoly on arms supply which the Western Powers held until recently.

And for the first time, the Communists have given Egypt and other comparatively weak nations the opportunity to reject aid from the West without losing their only source of military supplies.

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Reports that the Soviets are promoting armament deals with other countries come from widely scattered areas.

Syria and Saudi Arabia hint at the possibility that they will get Communist arms to implement their new defense pact with Egypt.

And Afghanistan, which occupies a strategic position in the northern tier of states between Pakistan and the Soviet Union, has been invited to send a military shopping mission to visit the munition factories of Czechoslovakia.

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The Egyptian-Czech deal is reported to provide for delivery—at "bargain prices"—of something like 80 million dollars worth of Soviet-type aircraft, tanks, artillery and submarines.

The quantities involved in the first shipments are comparatively small—and most of the equipment comes from surplus stocks of obsolete weapons.

By Middle East standards, both quality and quantity of arms reaching Egypt are impressive.

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To restore the military balance in that area, Israel has asked the United States for "significant quantities" of defensive weapons.

Since World War II Russia has supplied arms to its European satellites and to Red China—but the Kremlin's decision to permit the Czechs to sell munitions outside the Communist orbit is a departure from previous Soviet practice.

Czechoslovakia is especially qualified for the role of arms broker for the Communists.

Before the war, Czechoslovakia was the largest exporter of arms in continental Europe—and ranked second only to Great Britain in the world munition trade.

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Russia has an enormous amount of armament for sale.

The Soviets have been changing to new equipment and that makes it possible for the Russians to get rid of large stocks of obsolescent—but still useful—military equipment.

Allen Dulles, United States Director of Foreign Intelligence, declared not so long ago that the Soviets have 4,000 to 6,000 jet planes they would be glad to unload in connection with their program to cause as much trouble as possible throughout the world.

And, as usual, Russia seems to be well equipped—in the matter of arms and ammunition and in the matter of trickery and deceit—to carry on its deplorable business of causing trouble wherever possible.