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# Dulles's Record in the Middle East: Some Signal Successes, More Failures

## Debits: Arms and Cotton Deals, Aswan Dam and British - French - Israeli Invasion of Egypt

By MARQUIS W. CHILDS

A Washington Correspondent of the Post-Dispatch.

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WASHINGTON, March 9.

JUST past his sixty-ninth birthday, in his fifth year in the self-defeating office of Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles has been for many months trying to clamp the lid on a volcano.

That volcano is the Middle East, where the dark and brooding passions—religious, economic, political—of the Arab-Israeli dispute have produced several limited wars and threaten constantly to generate a large war. It is the area where for reasons complex far beyond the complexity of Dulles's personality, American policy has suffered the greatest reverses of the past four years.

What may now be in prospect in the Middle East, if certain hopeful signs are not deceptive, is an uneasy truce enforced by a United Nations Emergency Force. The lava in the volcano will, temporarily at least, cease to flow. The pillar of smoke will subside and in the relatively quiet interval the task of peacemaking can be started; a task calling for years of patient effort.

Dulles's principal function as Secretary of State has been to hold the lid on one boiling situation after another so that it would not foam over in open war. The bloody conflict in Korea was ended and the Communist and the anti-Communist armies face each other across an uneasy truce line. Similarly in Indochina, an uncertain truce keeps the two forces apart. In Berlin, they confront each other against the background of the explosive potential of the rebellious satellites. These are all lids held precariously in place.

The chief difference in the Middle East is a commodity vital to the life of Western Europe—all. If Communism succeeds in establishing itself at key points in the Middle East, then Europe and the West will be subject to Moscow blackmail. That is why the outcome of the Middle East dispute has been followed so breathlessly. It is why it is important to review as objectively as possible the moves and the motivations that during the past two years brought war and may now be subsiding in still another uneasy truce.

### Started By Israeli Raid.

The cycle, for reasons of convenience, can be dated from Feb. 28, 1955, when Israel conducted a raid on the Gaza strip that resulted in 69 Egyptian and 20 Israeli casualties. For the Israelis, this was retaliation for a whole series of Egyptian commando raids that had taken a heavy toll of life and property. But this action started the lava boiling up and in the view of the State Department it made it more difficult to come to any understanding with Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The central figure in the drama, Nasser is a brilliant (or he accepts the advice of brilliant advisers) intensely ambitious, intensely energetic, volatile leader of a people who have caught the fever of nationalism in its most acute form. Some would compare his book, "Revolution," with Hitler's "Mein Kampf" as an exposition of how to overthrow the existing order.

All through the early months of 1955, Dulles was directing negotiations with Nasser over arms for Egypt. This had begun earlier—on Dec. 10, 1952—when the United States and Egypt concluded a cash reimbursable military assistance agreement under the Mutual Defense Act of 1948. An Egyptian military mission visited the United States in the spring of 1953 to implement this agreement, but because of the increasing violence over the presence of British troops in the Suez base area, nothing came of it.

Several attempts were made to work out an arms deal after July of 1954, when the British signed an agreement to leave the Suez base. But nothing came of these efforts, which went on through the end of June, 1955, when the Egyptian government submitted a list of the arms it desired.

### About the Writers

BRIAN GEN. THOMAS R. PHILLIPS, military analyst of the Post-Dispatch, and Richard Dudman, a Washington correspondent of the Post-Dispatch, have returned recently from the Middle East. They talked with heads of state, high officials and ordinary citizens in these restless countries to obtain a comprehensive picture of the political, economic and military aspects of the area.

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The reports presented here are the first of a series which will discuss the problems of the Middle East and their relation to diplomatic moves by the United States to offset the threat of Communist infiltration.

Marquis W. Childs, a Washington correspondent of the Post-Dispatch, has followed closely the efforts of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to contain the Communist threat to the strategic Middle East, and gives his appraisal of the measure of success that Dulles has achieved.

### Cotton Plays Its Role.

In trying to reckon the score on Dulles's performance in the Middle East, there must be taken into account here one of those factors that inevitably limit a Secretary of State. Cotton and the great surpluses of cotton accumulated in this country put a brake on any arms deal with the United States. Egypt could pay only in cotton, which is its one cash crop, and Southern Senators in important committee chairmanships made it plain that any encouragement of Egyptian cotton exports would get the State Department in trouble.

The Department makes an important point of the fact that military aid through direct grant was also rejected by Egypt two years ago. Nasser has since said that the United States sought to impose conditions on direct military assistance and that Egypt was being asked to join an "alliance."

The proposed grant military assistance was in no sense an alliance," the State Department told its diplomats around the world in a confidential memorandum. "It would not commit Egypt in any way to military action. The Government of Egypt