

“A Rigged Game in the Middle East” (October 31st, 1956)

Abstract

The Baghdad Pact, mentioned in this article in the East German newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, was a Cold War military alliance comprised of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom; later renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), it lasted from 1955 to 1979 and is considered one of the least successful Cold War alliances. It was formed in an attempt to prevent Soviet incursions into the Middle East by forming a barrier of pro-Western states along the southwestern border of the USSR. The containment value of the barrier ended up being extremely low, as the USSR “leapfrogged” the barrier by establishing close relationships with Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. Egypt was strongly opposed to the Pact, in part because it feared that the West was attempting to set Turkey up as the leader of the region. In a demonstration of Egypt’s power over and importance to the region, the Pact eventually failed in large part because of Egypt’s refusal to join, with other internal dynamics in the Middle East eventually dooming the Pact to dissolution.

Source

Israel has invaded Egypt, and overnight black clouds have risen over the Middle East, which we hope will not burst into a terrible war.

This is by no means one of the numerous Israeli-Arab “incidents” that have been occurring with increasing frequency of late, especially along the Jordanian border, but instead an intentional aggression against Egyptian territory. And what casts an especially telling light on these events is the fact that the Israeli troops are marching towards Suez!

Indeed, we ask ourselves, what in the world are the Israelis doing in Egypt? And what do they want in Suez? If we consider in this context that just a few weeks ago certain other circles would have preferred to shoot their way through to the Suez with cannon in order to get their colonial claws on it, it makes sense that to think that this major assault on the anti-imperialist countries of the Middle East has been planned for quite some time.

Egypt is doubtless the leading Arab state in the anti-colonial struggle of these peoples. Years ago, the West sought to paralyze them by trying to integrate Egypt into a Western system of military pacts. The effort failed. The Bagdad Pact was launched in response, but again Egypt refused to participate. Attempts to organize an anti-Egyptian Hashemite bloc to bring Jordan and Iraq under Western leadership did not succeed either, nor did the effort to pressure Egypt by refusing credits for the construction of the Aswan Dam. When Egypt finally nationalized the Suez Canal the West saw itself confronted with a united Arab front, which, with the help of all peace-loving peoples, prevented the violent recapture of the Canal. The Suez Canal came to epitomize colonial interests in the Middle East. For the colonial masters, prestige, petroleum and profit depend upon control over it. They were prevented from marching, and now Israel is marching on Egypt!

For years, Israel was pumped full of American, English and French weapons. It regularly served as an instrument for creating tensions in the Middle East, which were always convenient for the games played by the West. In short, Israel was the imperialist base in the midst of the Arab world. More than once, the Israeli Communist Party, which advocates a policy of communication and compromise with the Arab peoples, warned against provocations. But the West did not let up; if Israel has now proceeded to one of the greatest aggressions against Egypt, no one will assume that it did so out of the blue.

How strange it must seem, then, that people in the Western capitals are now suddenly wagging their fingers and claiming that this was not what they wanted. Israel's attack on Egypt is terribly reprehensible and they are willing to help Egypt, etc. They even rounded up the Security Council. All of a sudden, they want to present themselves as the "great peacemakers" in the Middle East, or so they would have us believe. A sudden reorientation of Western policy as a whole? This sounds rather improbable in the light of all that has been said before, and it is improbable.

After all, other publications in the Western press speak far more frankly. We can read, for example, that the US Sixth Fleet is crossing the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt lies within the cruising radius of their aircraft carriers. AFP reports that "British troops can land in Egypt" within 24 hours. And that must also be the heart of the matter: Under the hypocritical mask of defenders of the Arab world, they seek to occupy Egypt and ultimately the entire Middle East, and then their troops would finally be where they already wanted them during the Suez Crisis. It is important for certain circles to be in Egypt in 24 hours, although Israel is the aggressor. For them it is important that they finally have a reason, supported by their bayonets, to exert direct influence over events in the Middle East again!

The West always only acts where it believes it will benefit. This fact is substantiated anew by the most recent events. Now it is useful to the West for Israel to attack Egypt "coincidentally," just as it is useful to pose as a champion of peace. Everything is calculated in advance, everything is rigged—a disgraceful game that can degenerate at any time into genocide!

The shameless agitation against the Hungarian working class, against the people's power of the Hungarian People's Republic takes on a particular meaning in this context: they believed that they could conceal the machinations in the Middle East from the public by shrouding it in a foggy wall of lies. The imperialist speculations went further still. According to the *Washington Post* of October 30th, they expected that the Soviet Union would be distracted at the present moment by the new assault on Egypt.

These speculations will prove misguided, however, because, as in the Suez question, the people will now also monitor peace in the Middle East.

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