

Arabian Knights and Riddles

By Marguerite Higgins

WASHINGTON—The wisest vazir of old would have a time explaining the hectic events that have brought the American 6th Fleet steaming into the eastern Mediterranean. Those events spoiled Egypt's

chance of celebrating her victory in the Suez Canal affair, and made 21-year-old King Hussein of the hitherto obscure Kingdom of Jordan into a headline hero who dares not only to counter-attack the Communists in his own country, but to take on such powerful Arab leaders as Egypt's President Nasser, whose propaganda—wittingly or unwittingly—plays the Leftist game.

Are we again on the brink of something, and if so, what? And is it really necessary for those in authority to keep talking in riddles?

No wonder there is confusion in the public mind.

First for example, we see King Hussein understandably exasperated with Communist-inspired riots, pamphlets and general trouble-making, declaring martial law and firing one of the principal trouble-makers—former Premier Nabulsi. But then does the King say a kind word for the much maligned West? No. Instead, the young King promptly confounds us by accusing his enemy Nabulsi of the crime of excessive pro-Americanism in the form of a desire to permit a visit to Jordan of the American mission entrusted with the task of explaining the Eisenhower doctrine and also empowered to hand out dollars.

As King Hussein put it in his



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speech: "As for the attitude of Nabulsi concerning the Eisenhower plan and American financial aid, I say that, despite his claims, he was the one who extended the invitation to the American President's mission to visit Jordan. . . . We wish to tell our dear people that it is not our policy to invite the envoy of the American President to visit Jordan. . . ."

And yet in almost the same breath the young King clearly declared that the dangers facing him were the "responsibility of international Communism"—the precise phrase needed to make him a candidate for help under the very Eisenhower doctrine with which he was strenuously claiming disassociation. Even so, the United States paved the way for application of the doctrine—application that can come about only at the specific request of the threatened nation—by publicly agreeing that Hussein was threatened by international Communism, meaning mainly the forces unleashed by Leftist elements infiltrated from Syria and Egypt. On the surface, this poses another puzzle. For only the other day Secretary Dulles was on record in writing in answer to questions from Congress to the effect that the State Department did not think that things had come to the point in either Syria or Egypt where it could be said they were dominated internally by Communism.

And since the Communist party is still outlawed in Egypt and the struggle between Left and Right still deadlocked in Syria, it would appear that nothing has happened to warrant changing Mr. Dulles' diagnoses.

Despite the apparent contradictions, there are answers to the Mid-East riddles and they include several important new directions in American policy.

The first is a decisive broadening

of the concept of what precisely constitutes the "threat of international Communism." On this point the Eisenhower doctrine authorizes the President: "To use the United States armed forces to assist any [Middle Eastern] nation or group of nations requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international Communism. . . ."

And today the real question in Washington is not whether President Nasser is tough on the Communist party inside his country, but whether Egypt is in fact the servant of international Communism. Cairo radio may incite the Jordanian mobs in the name of "Arab nationalism" or "anti-imperialism," but the real profiteers are the Communist organizers who are seeking to unseat King Hussein or to force him to accept a Leftist regime that would be beholden to Moscow.

This is among the reasons why there has been a new look at the criteria under which the Eisenhower doctrine could be invoked.

But in underlining America's vital interest in Jordan's integrity, by various measures, including the dispatch of the 6th Fleet, the United States is now confident that Jordan's trials can remain an internal affair immune from military intervention by anyone, including Egypt, Syria, Israel, the Soviet Union, or the United States.

As to King Hussein's "anti-Americanism," it is directly related to the Communist-inspired propaganda which up till now he has been powerless to control and to the unpleasant reality that vast numbers of exiles from Palestinian lands captured by Israel blame the United States for their troubles. It may be unjust, but the political fact is that America is viewed by the homeless and exiled Arabs as giving one-sided support to Israel with the result—in their opinion—that they are unable to regain their farms and homes.

And so, ironically, in the desperate urgency of gaining support for his anti-Communist drive from the large number of refugees in Jordan, King Hussein has had to resort to the brand of anti-Americanism popular with the masses.

This is well understood by the United States government.

What is important is not what King Hussein says, but what he does. The United States will not, for instance, embarrass the King by demanding that he receive the Richards mission as the price of getting financial aid.

We are prepared also to furnish assistance via Saudi Arabia, which incidentally just borrowed \$25 million from the Arabian-American Oil Company. In brief, the United States government is perfectly prepared to pay the price of being called a few names (after all, our allies are pretty good at this, too) for the larger goal of keeping Jordan away from Communist domination and averting Russian control of the great Mid-East land bridge to Asia.

But will the American Congress and the American people view the Mid-East riddle with the same patient perspective? On this can depend whether the young King remains the hero or becomes the victim of the dangerous Oriental game he is playing.

The Eisenhower doctrine was not passed for the purpose of giving Hussein an issue on which to criticize the United States. But if King Hussein can save Jordan from Communism with speeches opposing the Eisenhower doctrine, he's solving the riddle in his own way, and his way is against the interests of the Soviet bloc. That's what we want, isn't it?

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