

Matter of Fact

By Joseph and Stewart Alsop

Khrushchev on the Middle East

WASHINGTON—When Khrushchev and Bulganin visited Britain last April, Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden told them bluntly that Britain would fight for its vital interests in the Middle East, even against the Soviet Union. At

Hamid Serraj. Col. Nasser is, as it were, the majority stockholder in Serraj, but the Soviets also have a controlling interest in the Serraj regime.

They exercise their controlling interest through Soviet arms for the regime, and support for the regime by the Syrian Communist party. The immediate object of the joint Nasser-Soviet exercise is to bring down Iraq's Premier Nuri Said, and pull Iraq out of the anti-Soviet Bagdad pact. Thus British (and American) oil resources in Iraq would be endangered. More important, the British would be denied the base rights in Iraq, which are vital to the protection of the British oil sources in the Persian Gulf, for which they are pledged to fight.

trine by joining the pact. The Bagdad pact was a brainchild of Secretary Dulles, and Iraq joined it originally (the only Arab state to do so) in the belief that this country would be a member. But when it became clear that to do so would enrage Col. Nasser and his allies, the United States, not too gracefully, backed out.

Joining the pact now would certainly enrage Col. Nasser and his allies, including the Soviets, even more than before. But it also would be a way of drawing a thus-far-and-no-further line around threatened Iraq.

In this situation, those Administration officials who still stubbornly contend that the Anglo-American alliance is essential to the containment of Soviet power favor joining the pact. Adm. Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took the same view even before the current crisis came to a head. But those who are now talking rather vaguely about "basing American policy on the UN" wish to avoid irritating Col. Nasser and the Asian-African bloc. The result has been half-way measures—a warning that the United States would regard an attack on any member of the pact "with utmost gravity," and a promise to reconsider the matter when Congress is in session.

But if anything is clear, it is that half-way measures will not suffice in the present situation. Even joining the Bagdad pact would not suffice in itself. Every ounce of American power and influence must be exerted to achieve a real settlement in the Middle East, which must include reopening of the Suez Canal and the oil pipe lines through Syria. But since Col. Nasser has been allowed to enjoy his triumph unscathed, it is doubtful if American power and influence will be enough. If it is not, Khrushchev and Bulganin are likely to have their way in the end.



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first, the visiting Russians pretended to be shocked, saying: "We came to talk about peace, not war." But in the end, the outspoken Khrushchev was almost as frank as Eden had been, and what he said has a special significance in the present situation.

The Soviet Union did not want a world war, Khrushchev said, but the Soviet Union also had natural interests and aspirations in the Middle East. And, short of war, the Soviets would do everything in their power to "liberate" the area from "the imperialists"—meaning, of course, the British and the Americans.

Khrushchev and Bulganin have been, for once, as good as their word. In an alliance of convenience with Egypt's Col. Nasser, they are doing everything in their power to eliminate British interests in the Middle East, thus reducing Britain to a third-class power and destroying the Western alliance. Their chief instrument at the moment is Syria's Col. Abdel

The importance which the Soviets attach to the joint exercise is suggested by the fact that attacks on the Iraqi government have now become the central theme of the Soviet propaganda line. The ultimate object of the exercise is, of course, to make the Middle East a Soviet satrapy.

That some such move would be the immediate consequence of Col. Nasser's triumph in the Suez Canal dispute was entirely predictable, and was, indeed, repeatedly predicted in this space. Administration officials, asked what the United States would do in these circumstances, waffled. But now they are right up against the gun, for the question has got to be answered one way or another.

Logically, the answer might be found in the famous "Dulles doctrine." Secretary of State Dulles has repeatedly proclaimed the theory that the way to avoid war is to draw a clear thus-far-and-no-further line which a potential enemy cannot cross without war.

The British, the Turks, the Iraqi, the Iranians and the Pakistani, all members of the Bagdad pact, are now begging the American government to apply the Dulles doc-