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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Henry:

Recently I was reminded of two letters I received
in the twelve months preceding the June 1967 war 50X1

50X1
50X1

These two documents provide an unusual insight to the motives and anxieties of Israel in the months leading to the present crisis; I am certain they remain central issues to Israel's current position.

During this period - 1966 and 1967 -- Israel's attention was focused on the implications of the imminent British withdrawal from Aden in early 1968.

The theme of the 50X1 letters was clear: The British government had announced it was leaving Aden; the Egyptian army in the Yemen was positioned to seize Aden and threaten Saudi Arabia; the Soviet Union would follow the Egyptians into the Peninsula and the Gulf; the balance of power and stability in the region was threatened. The following extracts from the first 50X1 letter on 10 July 1966 expand this theme:

"Thus the transition of South Arabia to independence may outpace the arrangements for its adequate security; and there are other

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possible implications of such a development: South Arabia as a springboard for Egypt towards the Persian Gulf; Egyptian military presence at the southern entry of the Red Sea; Soviet interest following upon and backing Egyptian achievements; Aden and Mogadishu as two possible pivots of Egyptian and Soviet policy in that part of the world.

"Indeed we have reason to believe that severe Soviet predicaments and setbacks elsewhere have led them to turn once again to the Middle East where they have been eager to seize many opportunities over recent months (Syria, Iraq) for fresh initiatives. In terms of possible historical eras, 1966 is a turning point similar only to 1955 in significance and in magnitude. Egypt plays a central role in this new phase and of all its ventures, the Southern Arabian one is at present both most important and promising.

"History has taught us that in the final analysis it is invariably easier to influence trends of events through systematic prevention than by subsequent intervention. That is why I am writing to you now, since we are still in a position to forestall events rather than to react to them.

"I feel sure that firm measures adopted forthwith could do much to secure both the new South Arabian State and the well-being of the region as a whole. The power vacuum about to be created necessitates firm and unequivocal United States action to guarantee the political integrity and economic viability of the newly created state and definite guarantees against hostile offensive action against it. We are certain that the Soviet Union in conformity with its overall global policy, will fall short

of direct confrontation with the United States. Thus the prospect of forestalling Soviet advancement in the wake of Egyptian expansion is a real one -- an essential one."

In ^{50X1} second letter of 13 March 1967 -- ^{50X1}

50X1

50X1

elaboration ^{50X1}

a 17-page examined

the new balance of power in the area in these terms:

"The present Middle Eastern situation may be seen as a direct continuation of the events which took place some ten and twenty years ago. While twenty years ago the area was in the main subjected to British hegemony, today there is an internal balance of power: On the one side there is EGYPT which in the name of Arab revolutionary ideology aspires to gain control over the traditional targets of Egyptian nationalism, whether in SYRIA, JORDAN or YEMEN; by EGYPT's side, at least formally if not in practice, stand the so-called Arab revolutionary states. On the other side there is the much less clearly defined and quite uncohesive camp. This is composed of ISRAEL (for a confrontation with whom EGYPT does not at present consider herself prepared), SAUDI ARABIA (the principal state which EGYPT considers herself duty-bound to challenge), and JORDAN, LIBYA, TUNISIA, MOROCCO and KUWAIT. The latter five states stand somewhat apart, their primary aspiration being the preservation of their indigenous independence.

"These are the two components of the Middle Eastern balance of power; and their focal point in the coming two years lies in the southwest of the Arabian peninsula."

.....

"While in 1948 and 1954 BRITAIN hoped that her withdrawal would allow her to retain some

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form of influence, as regards southwest ARABIA she has adopted...a policy of 'après moi, le deluge.' 1968 has been arbitrarily set as the date for the evacuation of the Federation of SOUTHERN ARABIA, no account being taken of the structure of the Federation -- which is not yet sufficiently well-knit -- or of the fact that a foreign expeditionary force has for the past five years been engaged in a stale-mated war on the Federation's borders. The presence of this Egyptian army but a few hours journey from ADEN (and less by air), gives this problem regional dimensions, and not purely local ones. For what is at stake in ADEN is first and foremost the entire regional balance of power."

After fifteen pages of detailed examination of the regional problem [redacted] concluded with the statement that:

"In our view it is essential to create an adequate and clear deterrent as regards the Egyptians. It is essential to make it clear to EGYPT that she must concentrate her energies on her own problems, that she must restrict herself to the bounds of her own ability and dimensions, and that all initiative to intervene outside her own boundaries will be firmly checked. It is only in this way, we believe, that a modicum of stability can be maintained in the Middle East, and that a situation of peaceful coexistence can be brought about between the so-called revolutionary states and their neighbours."

It has been apparent for most of the past decade in which the Soviet position in the Middle East was expanding that Israel saw her future security depended on some kind of a balance of power between the revolutionary and the moderate Arabs. The element not alluded to in the [redacted] letters but central to Israeli strategic thinking is her great dependence on Iran oil which reaches Israel through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Although the June 1967 war and the continuing conflict since then has badly eroded.

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the basis for the balance of power described ^{50X1} in March 1967, I believe that it still remains an important consideration in Israeli thinking -- particularly if Iran is added to the equation -- and a factor which may deserve more of our attention as we currently address ourselves to the question of the balance of power in the Middle East.

I thought you might find these ideas relevant to some of the issues that currently confront us in the Middle East.

Sincerely,



Richard Helms
Director

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