

The Reluctant Dragons at State

By Drew Pearson

Before Tunisia's President Bourguiba issued his startling call for a peaceful settlement of Arab-Israeli differences, he sent a secret emissary to sound out U.S. officials about the prospects.



Pearson

His most trusted aide, Cecil Hourani, spent two months carefully exploring the idea with Washington officials.

For an Arab leader to suggest coming to terms with Israel is considered heresy by many Arabs, and Bourguiba's bold proposal has caused an uproar in the Arab world.

The Tunisian president wanted outside support, specifically from the United States, before springing his surprise proposal. This was the reason for Hourani's secret mission.

Seemingly, it shouldn't have taken two months for him to persuade American policymakers that an Arab peace overture to Israel was a good idea. But the State Department was reluctant to approve any policy that might rile other Arab leaders.

Thus Hourani had considerable difficulty persuading the State Department. He held a round of secret meetings in

Washington and New York City before he got grudging American approval.

This wasn't the first time that Hourani had encountered State Department timidity. Early in the Kennedy administration, he came to Washington to invite Peace Corps volunteers to Tunisia.

The late President Kennedy sent him to see Bibb Haddad, then deputy director of the Peace Corps. Haddad immediately warned: "You must understand that the personnel we send you comes out of the computer. We could send all Jews or no Jews at all."

"That's no problem for us," replied Hourani. After he had already agreed to admit Jews, the State Department was afraid this would offend other Arab nations and opposed the arrangement. Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver, backing up Haddad, refused to fund only non-Jewish volunteers to any Arab country.

In the showdown, the State Department lost. Peace Corps volunteers, many of them Jewish, went not only to Tunisia but to several other Arab nations.

GOP Dissenter

One Republican who doesn't join the pro-Goldwater-GOP clique in praise of Lyndon Johnson for carrying out the Viet-Nam bombing proposals of Barry Goldwater, is the

gnarled and earthy Sen. George Aiken of Vermont.

Aiken has just succeeded in getting his friend Charles Ross, another Vermont Republican, reappointed to the Federal Power Commission after nine months hesitation by the President. Ross was bucked by the big oil-gas companies who used to be LBJ's biggest backers for the Senate.

"I told Charley Ross, 'Now you know how a girl feels, who had to wait nine months,'" Sen. Aiken told friends.

"I've been waiting for Lyndon to send me a directive to take over the war in Viet-Nam," he continued, "I'd consider it my patriotic duty to accept. The present policy is very simple. We can win the war all right if we want to kill 200 million Chinese.

"Of course, our own casualties might be 160 million. We'd have less than 40 million left to bury the dead.

"Secretary McNamara was most unfair to Madison Avenue," Aiken continued, ribbing the Secretary of Defense regarding the publicity buildup for his recent press conference. "There was nothing on television the day before except notices that he would hold a press conference next day. The TV commercials were almost blacked out. And what McNamara finally reported was that ever since we began bombing North Viet-Nam the Communists have been coming down in droves."

USA and the Juntas

The United States has partly itself to blame for the turmoil in the Dominican Republic. In the first place we sent so many arms to that country during the days of Dictator Trujillo that it has enough weapons to arm revolutionary armies for years to come.

Second, the Johnson Administration recognized the military junta that threw out President Bosch three weeks after LBJ took office. Bosch was the first Dominican president elected in 32 years, and when he was overthrown on Sept. 25, 1963, the Kennedy Administration let it be known that it would wait a long, long time before recognizing the military regime that ousted him.

Without recognition the new regime could not exist, and there was praise all over Latin America for Kennedy's stand in favor of democracy.

One of Mr. Johnson's first acts was to appoint his old Texas friend, Ambassador Tom Mann, as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America, and one of Tom's first acts was to recognize the Dominican military junta.

So it was only a matter of time before the legitimately elected regime of President Bosch revolted to put him back.