

Inside Story by Ex-Agent

By Miles Copeland

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The world will never know how the late President Nasser really felt about the U.S. or the possibility of peace with Israel.

Back in 1953-54 he needed Israel as a common enemy against which to unite the Arabs and with which to play the Americans and the Russians off against one another.

Wanted Power

Later, after two humiliating defeats, he developed a genuine feeling of hostility toward Israel. But then he saw the two most loudly anti-Israel countries, Syria and Iraq, make it clear that they really had no intention of fighting Israel and were more interested in squabbling with each other.

Finally, Nasser saw various Palestinian organizations behaving so self-destructively that he began to suspect that some of them were being backed by the Israelis even to the extent of

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being behind the recent airliner hijackings.

What did Nasser want?

First, like any good politician, he wanted to stay in power.

Second, he wanted to use his power for the benefit of Egypt — Egypt primarily, and then the so-called Arab world.

In the 1950s he saw that without massive U.S. aid he couldn't possibly achieve a growth rate to keep up with his country's birth rate, one of the highest in the world.

"With all the help in sight," he once told me, "and with all our best plans coming out perfectly, all I can hope for is to keep Egypt from slipping backwards." This was when, according to American economic experts, Egypt needed some \$1 billion a year in hard currency, and the U.S. State Department was offering Nasser \$40 million.

Dulles View

"If Nasser would only stick to Egypt and leave the rest of the Arab world alone," former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used to say, "we would give him all the aid he wants." But Nasser was programmed to observe U.S. actions, not words.

The United States was then giving him aid and showing him deference to the extent to which he was influential throughout the Arab world

and manifested a capability of making a nuisance of himself. When his behavior was not to our liking, we rewarded him. When he did as we wished, we forgot him.

"It seems to me," a senior associate told Dulles, "we should give Nasser credit for being at least as intelligent as Pavlov's dog."

U.S. Raises Offer

And he was. Nasser began to hint that he might turn to the Soviets, and we raised our offer to \$100 million. Then, being somewhat smarter than Pavlov's dog, he began to sharpen his hints and actually to take some Soviet aid.

The rest is history. Everyone knows how Dulles withdrew his offer of aid for the Aswan Dam and how Nasser immediately got what he needed from the Russians. What is not generally known is that once the U.S. government observed Nasser's new chumminess with the Soviets, it jumped right into the competition and began to offer greater amounts of aid than ever before.

Lebanese President Camille Chamoun was quick to spot the lesson. "Our difficulty in getting aid from the United States," he once told me, "is that we aren't very good at being anti-American. Perhaps I can get President Nasser to show me how," he said facetiously.

Chamoun knew, as any of Nasser's closest friends knew, that the Egyptian

leader was never seriously anti-American, not anyhow until the U.S. government dropped out of the competition and became unreservedly pro-Israel.