

History created  
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the West only with all sorts of strings attached. The Russian strings were to appear later.

The Egyptian experience of Western imperialism does not, however, exhaust the country's legacy from the Western world. Ever since Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, Europe and the West have stood for the wonders of modernity and technological progress. Western-style education and legal systems were adopted. European literature, together with the revival of Egypt's own Arabic heritage, provided the stimulus for a new literary renaissance. In short, over the past century and three-quarters, Egypt has become culturally oriented to the West. This orientation cannot be changed overnight. The result of both the political and cultural experiences of Egypt in modern times is its peculiar love-hate relation with the West. There does exist in Egypt a large fund of potential goodwill toward the West, especially toward France and the United States.

Given the historical facts here touched upon — its Pharaonic past, its Arab-Islamic history, its experience of European imperialism and institutions, and the founding of the state of Israel in spite of repeated Arab protests and resistance — it was only natural that Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's first native son to rule the country in two and a half millennia, should resist pressure to join any Middle East defence organization dominated by the West, and should opt for a "neutralist" course in the Fifties. Yugoslavia's Tito and India's Nehru became Nasser's mentors as he rode high to a position of prominence in the neutralist bloc and the Arab world.

#### Dependent on Soviet

Gradually, however, Egypt became more and more dependent upon the Eastern bloc, as the United States more and more assumed the role of guarantor and supplier at large for Israel. The total of Soviet aid to Egypt has been estimated at anywhere from \$4 billion to \$6 billion, with an outstanding debt of at least \$3 billion, while the United States has supplied Israel with much larger amounts of capital and equipment.

Then came the catastrophic Six-Day War in June 1967, with Egypt's loss of Sinai to Israel in addition to vast amounts of equipment and men. Russia agreed to rearm and train the Egyptian forces, but never to provide the offensive missiles and air-strike capability required for Egypt to attempt to regain its lost territory. While the United States has supplied Israel with 100 *Phantom* supersonic fighter-bombers,

with 40 more promised (*Phantoms* that, by the way, have not yet been supplied to its NATO partners or to the Northern Tier Middle East nations), the U.S.S.R. has sent only a few T-U16 subsonic *Badger* bombers to Egypt. The MIGs stationed in Egypt are definitely inferior to either the *Phantoms* or *Skyhawks* and, without some semblance of equality in the air, any war against Israel would be suicide. The missiles supplied to Egypt were also essentially defensive.

President Sadat journeyed to Moscow three times in order to press his demand for more offensive weapons, but to no avail. The Russian leaders were looking ahead towards a *détente* with the United States, and when the Nixon visit to Moscow came about last May, Egypt undertook a serious re-evaluation of its policy. Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, the influential editor of *al-Ahram*, convened a symposium on the Nixon-Brezhnev talks, which concluded that the "no-peace, no-war" situation with Israel was beneficial to the interests of all parties except Egypt. In spite of Haykal's belief that Egypt needs Soviet friendship and has little to expect from the United States, still the May symposium opted for a policy of non-alignment, in spite of its risks, rather than for reliance upon one power. This is the policy President Sadat dramatically announced on July 18, which resulted in the expulsion of some 15,000 Soviet military advisers.

There were other factors that entered into this decision. The Russians were never liked by the Egyptians, who regarded them as boors and detested taking orders from them. There were also clandestine Russian attempts to subvert the middle echelons of the Egyptian bureaucracy and to win over some of the journalists. A decisive factor was the growing feeling that Egypt was being used by the Russians for its own ends of strengthening the U.S.S.R.'s strategic entrenchment in the Mediterranean area and carrying on a surveillance of the American Sixth Fleet, all the while disregarding Egypt's military needs and goals. Egypt would be a friend but not a satellite. It might be bribed but could not be bought and owned.

#### Symbolic gesture

In some ways, Sadat's gesture of defiance was more symbolic than real. True, it has been a blow to Soviet prestige in the area, and the Egyptians have been only too happy about the lessening of the Russian presence. Egypt cannot, however, at once pull itself out of the Russian orbit. Sadat's action also contained a silent, but urgent, plea to the world, and especially to the