

External Affairs

from the Soviet union. I am sure that economic and other assistance will be welcomed by Egypt and other Arab countries from the United Nations or from individual governments.

But it was pointed out to me, both by President Nasser and by Dr. Fawzi, his foreign minister, that under no circumstances were gifts being received from the Soviet union, nor were they going to be solicited from any other quarter. What they wanted was satisfactory credit terms to enable them to make purchases. In any event, the situation now is that the United Arab Republic, and particularly Egypt, a country with a very low standard of living, does need assistance. The same impelling motives that caused us to give assistance to the countries of south and southeast Asia will, I am sure, cause us in due time, possibly through the intermediary of the United Nations, to give assistance under satisfactory conditions to undeveloped areas in the Middle East.

Indeed, President Eisenhower on August 13 did propose to the United Nations that there should be set up an Arab development institution for the purpose of providing economic assistance to the Arab countries. He indicated that the government of the United States would be prepared to give assistance through that body, an organ which should be operated by the Arab nations themselves and which should be based on a concept which they, themselves, should initiate. On this point President Nasser indicated, in welcoming the suggestion of President Eisenhower, that the Arab league itself had some two years before set up an institution of this very kind for the purpose of providing a vehicle to give assistance which might be given from any quarter. I have since examined this, and I find that it is true that the Arab league did set up such a body and at least one Arab country, Saudi Arabia, did make some contribution out of its resources toward the objective intended.

But I fully agree with what the Secretary of State for External Affairs said, that there will have to come to that area, I would think through the United Nations and a body such as that suggested by the President of the United States, assistance for the people particularly in the transit countries to enable them to improve their standard of living. If we do not do that, what the Soviet union has begun to do it will continue to do on an increasing scale. Certainly no one could visit Bagdad, the capital of Iraq, as I did without seeing the evidence, even six weeks after the revolution, of the assistance being accorded by the Soviet union to that country, a country in population as great as

Egypt and economically more powerful because of its oil resources; a country that is now becoming the object of the attentions of the Soviet union on an alarming scale as the Secretary of State for External Affairs, with his access to sources not now available to us, knows even better than I.

The west, whatever may have been the mistakes in the past, and I am sure we will all agree that there have been mistakes and misunderstandings, will have to recognize that it has an obligation to these people just as we have an obligation to certain other undeveloped countries of the world.

Mr. Macdonnell: Would the hon. gentleman permit a question? It is this: Did he find in the president of the Arab republic any desire to move toward a less despotic and more democratic form of government?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I may say that I suggested to President Nasser that the Syrian parliament was no longer in existence. There was the statement of the former foreign minister, Mr. Batar of Syria, who had a notable part in bringing about the union, that there would be set a deliberative assembly of some kind at the earliest possible moment; and President Nasser did say, as he subsequently announced only about ten days ago, the intention to set up some form of deliberative body that would bring together not party opinion—because party opinion is not tolerated under the law—but some kind of body that would permit popular discussion under certain limitations. But I think I must say at once to the hon. gentleman that no one would pretend for a moment that with the high measure of illiteracy—almost 80 per cent—it is possible in those countries, basically feudal in character, to develop the kind of democratic representative institutions that we have without great preparation. I think that we have to realize that one of the misconceptions under which we have suffered in the past is that we have thought that in the Middle East, and in the Arab countries in particular, it would be possible forthwith to establish democratic parliamentary systems such as our own. I am sure that is one of the misconceptions under which we have pursued our analysis.

The situation at the present time is that it would seem that the government of Iraq is not likely to give effect to the bold declaration of intended union with the United Arab Republic made by Prime Minister Kassam, with whom I was given the opportunity of conversation. It would seem that there is no likelihood, notwithstanding the