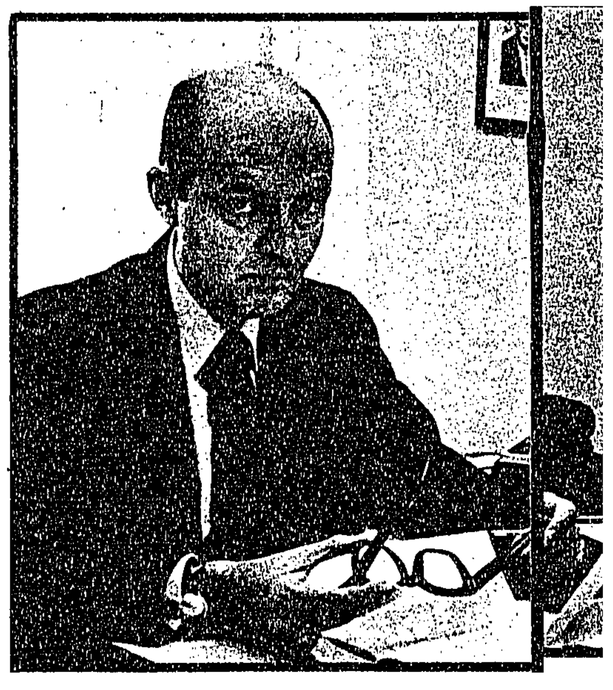
Those Arabists In the State Department

By JOSEPH KRAFT

T. E. LAWRENCE in a World War I photograph. His freewheeling flamboyance characterized an earlier generation of Arabists who were wholly unlike the deskbound bureaucrats of today.



HEYWOOD STACKHOUSE served in Tel Aviv and now heads State's Israeli desk.

"THE Department of State's specialists on the Near East were almost without exception unfriendly to the idea of a Jewish state. . . . Some thought the Arabs, on account of their number and because of the fact that they controlled such immense oil resources, should be appeased. . . . Some among them were also inclined to be anti-Semitic . . . I wanted to make plain that the President of the United States, and not the State Department, is responsible for making foreign policy."

Those are some of the nice things Harry Truman said in his memoirs about the role played by the State Department's Near Eastern experts, or Arabists, in the coming to birth of the State of Israel. The Arabists and their friends in the Department returned the bouquets with interest. "I am not proud," wrote William Phillips, an American diplomat prominent in the Palestine affair, "of the way our Government handled its responsibility, nor do I like to dwell on the shameful manner in which Washington attempted to secure the Jewish vote."

But how do matters stand now, 25 years later? Are the Arabists, as many supporters of Israel assert, still hostile to the Jewish state? Do they, as not a few White House men believe, still try to shape policy in ways contrary to Presidential interests? Or is it the case, as Mustafa Kamel, a recent Egyptian ambassador

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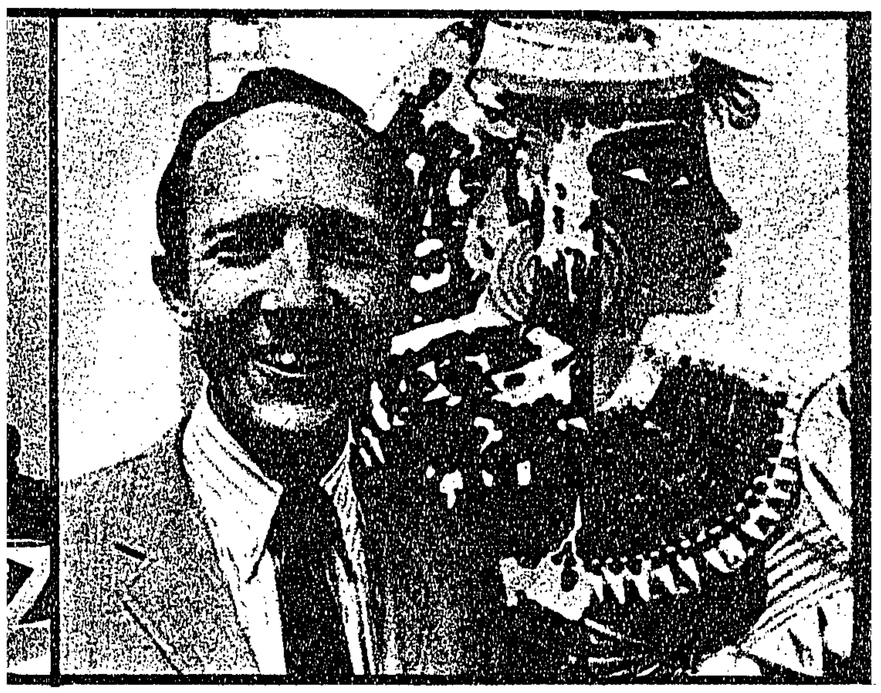

MICHAEL STERNER heads the mission in Cairo. As an escort officer he came to know Egyptian President Sadat a decade ago.

RODGER DAVIES is probably the ranking Arabist now, as First Deputy Assistant Secretary.

RICHARD MURPHY is the Arabist who is currently in charge of the State Department desk responsible for the Red Sea states.

to Washington, asserted, that "the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs is manned by a lot of tired Arabists who have lost whatever influence they ever had"?

One certainty is that the Arabists really and truly, honest to goodness do exist. They are a highly definable group of about a hundred Foreign Service officers who have been given intense training in Arabic, most of them at a special language school operated by the State Department in Beirut. They are knowledgeable about Arabic culture, and have spent big chunks of their careers at posts in the Near East or manning State Department desks connected with that area.

Unlike the Soviet experts, who are almost all bitterly opposed to the Russian regime if only because their personal experiences in Moscow have been so unpleasant, most of the Arabists like life in the Arab world, and, in matters affecting the Arab-Israeli dispute, they come down only very rarely on the Israeli side. They undoubtedly have influence over the making and execution of American policy in the Near East, though exactly how much influence is not clear. They are important artisans of the present policy with its emphasis on seeking a settlement between Israel and the Arab states. They practically invented the prior policy—the policy of courting Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.

But the influence of the Arabists is asserted in obscure ways. They work as cogs in the vast apparatus

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TALCOTT SEELYE is head of the desk that deals with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. Born in Beirut, he knew Arabic from boyhood.

RAYMOND HARE and **PARKER HART** (right) both finished their State Department careers with the rank of Assistant Secretary.

DONALD BERGUS (left) chairs a staff meeting in Cairo. As mission head last spring, he floated the controversial "phantom memorandum" that proposed a possible plan to open the Suez Canal.

ALFRED ATHERTON is Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs.

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Those Arabists in State

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of departments, agencies and offices that make American foreign policy. Their source of strength is at the country-desk level. There are no star performers among the Arabists, no celebrities well-known to the public. Today's Arabists, in other words, have been bureaucratized, and that sets them far apart from the men who gave Harry Truman such a hard time.

Americans involved in the Arab world before the post-war period were generally impelled by personal considerations of a special, even exotic, nature. Shades of T. E. Lawrence suffused their sense of self. "They regarded themselves as surrogates for the American presence in the area," Talcott Seelye, a present-day Arabist who knew them well, says.

Thus Col. William Eddy, who was Minister to Saudi Arabia during World War II and a chief Roosevelt adviser on the Near East, came from a family of Christian missionaries to the Arab world, and had been a Marine Corps hero and university president. George Wadsworth, who served throughout the Near East and was regarded by the Israelis as a particular foe, was a flamboyant figure who had been a teacher at the American University in Beirut. "He played golf all day and worked all night," Seelye recalls.

Parker Hart, who rose to the rank of Assistant Secretary under Lyndon Johnson, was a distinguished linguist. "When you speak to somebody in Arabic," he said the other day in an interview at the Middle East Institute, which he now heads, "It's supposed to be in good Arabic, which means gracious Arabic." In 1961, he felt the need for a refresher course in Arabic before taking up duties as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and he resisted pressure to move to his post rapidly by threatening to take the issue directly to President Kennedy. His feel for gracious Arabic was so exquisite that one draft of a Presidential letter to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia which he prepared aroused the suspicions of Lyndon Johnson who circulated it among his Washington lawyer-friends to find out what it really meant and whether it was likely to get him into trouble.

Raymond Hare, another retired Arabist who rose to the rank of Assistant Secretary, remembers with excitement his days as consul in Cairo before Pearl Harbor. "I was all alone," he says. "There were no attachés, there was no information service, there was no intelligence service. When the Italians started to move on Cairo in 1940, I even did the military reporting."

Not surprisingly in these conditions, the Arabists came to identify their own interest with the American national interest. Their own interest was in good relations with the Arab world, and thus to them American support for Israel was a spoiler pure and simple. As Parker Hart put it the other day: "The area experts to a man were scandalized by what happened in 1948. We had made a tremendous effort to lay the ground for good relations with the Arabs, and all of a sudden, when we were in good position, all of our hopes were dashed."

The big authorities at State backed their Arabists to the hilt. Loy Henderson, who headed the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs during the Palestine crisis, was the patron of both the Russian experts and the Arabists in the Department. Along with the Secretary of State, Gen. George Marshall, he believed that foreign affairs was on a higher plane of national interest, was better and more noble than domestic business. Both he and General Marshall bitterly resented it when White House officals with political responsibilities began to enter into Near Eastern affairs. Indeed at one critical meeting, General Marshall said of Clark Clifford, who was serving Truman as counsel: "Unless politics were involved, Mr. Clifford would not even be at this conference. This is a serious matter of foreign policy determination and the question of politics and political opinion does not enter into it."

WITH that kind of backing, the Arabists did not just disagree with the White House about the birth of Israel. They were, in Hart's phrase, "scandalized." What happened was a personal affront which scarred their whole lives.

Today Arabists are a different breed entirely. Strong personal reasons for getting into the business are a rarity.

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The great majority were drawn to do what they do by the same random circumstances that shaped the destinies of most college-educated Americans who came to maturity in the war and postwar years. For example, Rodger Davies, the First Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who is probably the ranking American Arabist these days, graduated from the University of California in 1942 with a degree in Hispanic languages. The Army sent him to Princeton to brush up on his Portuguese so he could serve as a liaison with a Brazilian Army unit due to fight in Italy. But Princeton had no Portuguese language training program and assigned him to its Arabic program. When he decided to enter the State Department after the war, the Arabic was on his record and he was sent to the Near East. "I became an Arabist," he says, "by pure fluke."

Insofar as deliberate purpose has been at work, the ruling consideration seems to have far more to do with bureaucratic career than a love affair with Arabs. Heywood Stackhouse, who now heads the Israeli desk, started off his years in the Foreign Service as an expert on Latin America. "I felt pretty quickly," he recalls, "that I wanted to get off the Latin-American circuit. I knew I could handle a difficult language. I made a cool calculation about a choice between becoming a Russian expert or an Arabic expert. I counted up the posts where Russian was the language. There were two. I counted the number where Arabic was the language. There were 24. I became an Arabist."

Careerism touches even one case where personal affinities for the Arab world seem to count a great deal. Talcott Seelye, the officer in charge of the desk that deals with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, was born in Beirut, the son of a professor at the American University there. He knew Arabic from boyhood. When he entered the State Department after a year of teaching at Deerfield, he was sent to Germany. "I soon learned," he says, "that there were many people in the State Department who knew more about Germany than I did. That's when I picked the Middle East as my specialty. It seemed to me there was a good opportunity there because there were many fewer people in the State Department who knew about it."

Still a further gauge of the bureaucratic impulse is the enrollment record at the special language school in Beirut. For the first half of the sixties, the two-year course regularly drew upwards of 20 students. But after the Six-Day War of 1967, six Arab states broke diplomatic relations with the United States, and the American embassies in those countries were of course closed. By the end of 1970 there were only 17 students at the school in Beirut. At the end of this year the number will be down to 13. By the end of next year the expectation is an enrollment of six students. "If there is a waning of interest in the program," Rodger Davies acknowledges, "it is because of the lack of openings due to the closing of the embassies."

Bureaucratic sensitivity comes naturally enough to the present-day Arabists. For in the postwar era, departments, agencies and offices all over Washington have taken pieces of the Near Eastern action the Arabists used to regard as their own special turf. Harry Truman, in effect, moved a part of the Israeli desk to the White House office of his adviser on minorities, David Niles. Presidents ever since have given a watching brief on Israeli-Arab affairs to at least one trusted aide well versed in domestic politics and with good lines into the American Jewish community. This so-called "Jewish portfolio" was held by Max Rabb, Secretary to the Cabinet, during the Eisenhower Administration. Myer Feldman, Deputy Special Counsel, did it for Kennedy. Harry McPherson, Counsel to the President, did it for Lyndon Johnson.

THE Nixon Administration has tried to stuff the problem back into a reorganized State Department—in part at least because as a Jew, Henry Kissinger, the President's chief White House adviser on foreign policy, does not feel altogether comfortable with the issue. Even so Arthur Burns, as Counselor to the President before becoming Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, and Leonard Garment, who is a special assistant, have both acted as conduits between Richard Nixon and the American Jewish community.

Because the White House tends to be a mighty political kind of dwelling, the clout of the political aides is considerable. Harry McPherson recalls that he talked about Near Eastern business with many of the very same American Jews who helped the White House raise money and do lobbying for such causes as better race relations. "They were just people who wanted the same things we wanted," he says. Myer Feldman was the guiding force in the decision that sent the first substantial American military aid to Israel—the Hawk missiles shipped over in 1963 after the French, who had been Israel's main suppliers, shifted their policy in the wake of the Algerian settlement. Feldman once pressed

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66In any confrontation with the President or the Secretary of State, Arabists are losers.99

so hard on an issue having to do with a graveyard in the part of Jerusalem then held by Jordan, that he triggered what he regarded as a possible threat of resignation from Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

INEVITABLY there has developed within the White House a counterbalance to the Jewish portfolio. For one thing, there are the oil companies, often represented by pre-eminent figures with personal access to the President. John J. McCloy and Eugene Black and David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank all fit into that category. According to Harry McPherson, "Whenever David Rockefeller came out of President Johnson's office talking about an 'even-handed policy' in the Near East, that meant oil." Moreover, there is also a White House official with Near Eastern responsibilities on the staff of the National Security Council.

Not, however, a State Department Arabist. Harold Saunders, who is the present N.S.C. man on the Near East, and Robert Komer, who preceeded him during the Kennedy era and the first half of the Johnson Administration, both came from the Central Intelligence Agency. The agency, which played some role in the Near East almost from its inception in 1947, became particularly active in the double-Dulles era when Allen was Director of the C.I.A. and John Foster was Secretary of State. During that period there was no little fiddling in the affairs of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. On at least one occasion—just after the Khrushchev-Nasser arms deal of 1955—Kermit Roosevelt of the C.I.A. passed a couple of hours with the Egyptian head of state before the American Ambassador in Cairo, Henry Byroade, even knew he was in town.

Though covert operations have been toned down in the Near East in the past decade, the Agency still plays a critical role on the evaluation side. The coolness of President Johnson to various elaborate schemes for American intervention before the Six-Day War of 1967 was in part conditioned by assurances from C.I.A. Director Richard Helms that the Israelis could take care of themselves. Anybody who now tries to get the President to put pressure on the Israelis has to reckon with Helms's judgment that the Israelis hold the kind of military advantage that enables them to offer strong resistance to any pressure.

The repeated eruption of hostilities in the area has, of course, brought the Pentagon into the picture in a big way. At the highest levels the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been repeatedly seized by such major crises as the Suez War of 1956; the Lebanon landings of 1958; the Six-Day War of 1967; and the Jordanian crisis of last fall. The dispatch of an American aircraft carrier to the Red Sea in 1963 is widely supposed in Washington to have deterred Egypt from spreading the war in Yemen to Saudi Arabia. The movement of the Sixth Fleet, at the end of the 1967 War and again during the Jordan crisis of 1970, may have deterred the Soviet Union from a more troublesome role in those affairs. Perhaps because of a shared *mystique* of battle, the American military, at least compared to the civilian chiefs in the Pentagon, seems relatively pro-Israel.

Even within the State Department, moreover, the Arabists have had to parcel out authority. As late as 1968, they still had the lion's share of the Arab-Israeli business in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Parker Hart was Assistant Secretary. His deputy for Near Eastern Affairs was Rodger Davies. But the Nixon Administration, as part of its effort to move the Near East out of the White House, replaced Hart with a figure anathema to the Arabists in almost every way—Joseph J. Sisco. Sisco, a State Department civil servant, was not only not an Arabist. he had never even served abroad. He had a Ph.D. in Soviet Affairs—and as a Sovietologist was far more suspicious of Arab ties with the Russians than most Arabists. Work for the past 20 years in the Department's bureau of United Nations affairs had put him in close touch with such figures as Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Goldberg and Henry Cabot Lodge, and made him sensitive to domestic political pressure. In particular, he knew well the leaders of the American Jewish community. "I came in

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here," Sisco said the other day in an interview, "with what all Arabists regard as a pro-Israel bias."

ONCE in office, Sisco made a point of breaking up the Arabist concentration in the Bureau. Rodger Davies was promoted to principal deputy to the Assistant Secretary—but given primary responsibility for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. In his place as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Sisco put a man who, while versed in the area, had no Arabic language — Alfred Atherton. The most pro-Arabic of the Arabists, Richard Parker, went from the Egyptian desk to Morocco. The Arabist reputed to be the most hostile to Israel, Robert Munn, went from the Israel desk to Turkey. Embassies that came open in Libya, Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan went to non-Arabists.

Some of the older Arabists resent this trespass on what used to be a closed preserve. Parker Hart, for example, says of the C.I.A. people who came into the Near East: "They saw things in blacks and whites—Communist or anti-Communist. They were fly-by-nighters. They came and went. We stayed there for the long pull." But if the younger Arabists share these feelings, they are too much the prudent bureaucrats, too much inured to being members of the team to knock the other players. Arabists I have talked to in Washington, Cairo, Beirut and Amman all emphasize their respect for other agencies in the field—sometimes in the accents of Goody Two-Shoes. Richard Murphy, the desk officer in charge of the Red Sea states, for instance, says: "I feel rather humble when I speak of the White House." Others tend to be very low-profile about their Arabic expertise. "I was an enthusiastic specialist in my early years," Rodger Davies says. "Now I'm more of a generalist." And he feels that even the term Arabist is slightly polemical: "It originated with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency back in 1946 and 1947. Now it's used whenever there's a crisis to try to finger us, to peg us as pro-Arab in order to discredit our views."

"State Department Arabists perceive themselves to be the only spokesmen for the other point of view."

As that comment indicates, however, even the most self-effacing Arabists do have views. While these vary importantly by reason of temperament, experience and age, there remains an irreducible minimum of common ground —a basic set of propositions that constitutes the operational code of the Arabists.

With respect to Israel, they have long since come to accept the Jewish state as a fact of life. Talcott Seelye of the Syria-Iraq desk listed "survival of Israel" first when I asked him to enumerate American interests in the Near East. Rodger Davies remembers calling his staff together back in the fifties and saying: "For better or worse the United States made its decision in 1948. The decision clearly reflects the sentiment of the Congress and the sentiment of the country as a whole. Everybody has to live with it."

As that tone suggests, however, love is not lost between the Arabists and Israel. Only three Arabists have learned Hebrew, and only recently did Arabists begin serving in Israel. Heywood Stackhouse, who has served in Tel Aviv and now heads the Israel desk, recalls that his fellow Arabists were puzzled, even hostile, when he spent a vacation from the Beirut language school in Israel. "You won't find any pro-Israelis among the Arabists," says Harrison Symmes, a former Ambassador to Jordan who is perhaps as friendly to Israel as any Arabist.

WITH respect to the Arabs, the feelings of the Arabists are not all hearts and flowers either. Ambassador Symmes left Jordan back in 1970 at the request of King Hussein who was nettled by his repeated calls for a more positive stance against the depredations of the Palestine commandos. The older Arabists, who had feelings of attachment for the Bedouins and their traditions, were never, as Parker Hart puts it, "exactly sold on Nasser." Donald Bergus, who has been the officer in charge of the mission in Cairo, has had something of a running feud with Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad. Curt Jones, the chief political officer in Beirut and one of the most ardent supporters of the Arab side in the quarrel with Israel, says: "God knows the Arabs can try your patience."

Still, Arabs are the stock in trade of Arabists. The Arabists have invested long months of study in acquiring a difficult language, and years of obscure service in remote posts. At a minimum they tend to be convinced that it was not for nothing. They set stock in what Arabs think and do and have. Every Arabist I questioned mentioned, as major American interests in the Near East, oil, communications facilities with the rest of the world, and cultural ties with the various Arab countries. They cited as a vital interest the need to prevent the area from becoming a

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CAIRO—Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, left, with Alfred Atherton and Donald Bergus, greet Egyptian President Nasser in April, 1970, five months before his death. After 1960, American Near East policy concentrated on the assiduous courting of Nasser.

Soviet dependency. As Michael Sterner of the Egyptian desk put it: "Our main interest is to see that these 170 million people don't fall under the domination of a hostile power. If the Soviet Union became dominant in the Arab world, there would be a shift in the global balance of power."

As a chief barrier to Communist penetration, the Arabists all cite the special qualities of the Arabs themselves. Miles Copeland, a C.I.A. official with extensive experience in the Near East, claimed in his book "The Game of Nations" that the State Department Arabists felt that the "Arabs being Moslem had a natural antipathy to Communism." Donald Bergus in Cairo and Michael Sterner both claimed that Arabs preferred to buy American rather than Russian. Deputy Assistant Secretary Rodger Davies says: "The best defense against Soviet control is the vitality of Arab nationalism."

What emerges from these views is something less than a perfect even-handed balance between Israel and the Arab states. A nice example of the tilt, because it is so unselfconscious, is an article written by Rodger Davies for the National Jewish Monthly of January, 1967, which Davies passed on to me as a representative piece of work. The article begins with a definition of the American stake in the Near East. Under the heading Davies cites "our worldwide strategic interest . . . transit, communications and . . . maintaining access to Middle East oil on reasonable terms both for ourselves and our allies." Davies then asks: "Given our interests, what then are our problems?" And he replies: "First the complex of problems stemming from our interest in the integrity and well-being of Israel." In other words—and this seems to me the central tenet of Arabist thinking—the Arabs represent an opportunity for the United States; Israel is a headache.

THAT basic bias is further intensified by the play of bureaucratic circumstance. Views favorable to Israel are cranked into policy-making machinery through the press, the Congress, the national committees of the Republican and Democratic parties and Israeli diplomatic representation. But the State Department Arabists perceive themselves to be the only spokesmen in American official councils for the other point of view. Some Arabists have become almost paranoiac about what they are pleased to call "Zionist influence." David Nes, an Arabist who retired from the Foreign Service after a stormy period in Cairo just before the 1967 War, writes of Israel as "our 51st state."

While not so wild, most of the other Arabists think they have a special function in leaning against the pro-Israeli bias of the system. "The Arabists feel they have to counter Israeli influence from the other direction," says Robert Oakley, a Foreign Service officer who has worked extensively on Near Eastern problems though he is no Arabist. Michael Sterner of the Egyptian desk makes no bones about the adversary role inside the bureaucracy. "We represent the U.S. security interest in the Arab world. We have to express the Arab point of view." Richard Murphy, who presides over

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the Arabian desk says: "We're always being asked what the Arab reaction to something is going to be. How do they feel about such and such? We're called on to play a role in projecting their feelings. That's what we're paid to do." "What Arabists always do," according to Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco, "is tell you what the Arab reaction to something will be."

Sensitivity to Arab reactions repeatedly brings the Arabists into collision with Israeli projects. The Arabists have at all times opposed American arms shipments to Israel. They take strong exception to Israeli take-over moves in Jerusalem and the territories occupied in the Six-Day War. They counseled against doing anything in 1967 when Israel was screaming about unilateral Egyptian liquidation of the internationally guaranteed setup after the Suez War of 1956. They wanted to turn a deaf ear to Israel's complaints of Egypt's violation of the 1970 cease-fire along the Suez Canal.

Obviously, the Arabists do not get their way all the time —or even most of it. In any confrontation with the President, or the Secretary of State, or the Assistant Secretary, the Arabists are losers. But in an atmosphere of unconfrontation, when nobody knows what to do, when one policy is exhausted and another needs to be tried, they come into their own. One good example is the so-called Nasser policy which dominated the American approach to the Near East in the early nineteen-sixties.

THE Nasser policy was put together in 1959-1960 by Raymond Hare, then serving as Ambassador to Cairo, and a group of low-level Arabists (among them Rodger Davies, Harrison Symmes, Donald Bergus and Talcott Seelye) working under the direction of two officials who later moved to ambassadorial rank —Armin Meyer, currently Ambassador in Japan, and William M. Rountree who is now Ambassador to Brazil.

The spur to the policy was the landing of American troops in Lebanon following the military coup which unseated the monarch of Iraq in July, 1958. In the wake of those landings, there was widespread feeling the United States should not have to be responding militarily to every shake-up in the Arab world. There was a search for the base of a steady long-term policy. The Arabists felt that the key to stability in the Near East was Egypt. So they sought to keep Egypt in relatively good shape economically, and to direct Cairo's energies toward internal improvements and away from subversion of the Arab lands or conflict with Israel. To that end they recommended a major American aid program for Colonel Nasser's regime.

When these ideas were first put forward in 1960, they were rejected by officials of the Eisenhower Administration on the grounds that the Nasser regime was oriented toward the Communists. But the Kennedy Administration, eager to knit relations with what were called progressive leaders of the Third World, bought the package whole. Beginning in 1961, there was an all-out effort to cultivate Colonel Nasser. An Arabist from the academic world, Professor John Badeau, was sent to Cairo as Ambassador. Economic assistance was extended on a long-term basis. A cordial correspondence was initiated between President Kennedy and President Nasser. This policy survived an Egyptian war on the Yemen, a mob attack on the U.S.I.A. office in Cairo and even some rude remarks by President Nasser about Lyndon Johnson. It came to a final end only when the 1967 War made it seem a hollow mockery to base hopes for stability in the Near East on being kind to Cairo.

NOT only can the Arabists invent a policy, they can also adopt a policy and force the pace a bit by personal initiative. A nice case in point is the so-called phantom memorandum, delivered last spring by Donald Bergus to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in Cairo, the better to advance the policy that rose in the wake of the Six-Day War.

The war put into question not only the Nasser policy but all efforts to sweep Arab-Israeli tension under the rug. The United States came to favor a serious drive for settlement, and that position was embodied in the famous United Nations resolution of Nov. 22, 1967, calling for peace between Israel and the Arabs along "secure and recognized borders." Initially the Arabists did not like the resolution. As explained at the U.N. by Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, the stress seemed to be on Arab acceptance of Israel. But in 1969 and 1970, under the plan put forward by Secretary of State Rogers, the emphasis shifted to Israeli withdrawal from lands occu-

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pied in the Six-Day War, and the Arabists began to rally round the idea of pressure on the Israelis. They backed Big Two talks with Russia and Big Four talks with Russia, Britain and France. They favored the efforts by U.N. mediator Gunnar Jarring. When that effort hit a snag they switched to the plan for an interim settlement built around the reopening of the Suez Canal as a first step. When that idea seemed to be running into a stone wall, after Secretary Rogers visited the Near East last May, there took place the episode of the phantom memorandum.

The phantom memorandum was submitted by Bergus to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on May 23 of this year. It set forth a possible plan for clearing the Canal after a partial Israeli withdrawal followed by a partial Egyptian occupation of the Sinai desert. Bergus had no authority for advancing the idea. He wrote "personal" across the top of his memorandum, and did not even keep a copy. But he lobbied so hard for an official Egyptian comment on the proposal, that Cairo came to think that it was an Israeli idea sanctioned by the United States. In that belief the Egyptians did make a positive response to the Bergus proposal. And they leaked the story of the memorandum—to me, as it happened—only when it became apparent that the United States was not in any position to win Israeli approval for the idea.

The Israelis, when they discovered what happened, were furious. They assumed that the memorandum had official American backing, and that the idea was to build up a head of steam for a proposal the Israelis would not otherwise accept. So they called on the United States to disavow the proposal.

But there was no disavowal. Instead Bergus was kept on in Cairo over the summer. Though negotiations on the interim settlement were adjourned for the opening of the annual screaming match at the United Nations, there is already underway a move to pick them up again. If that move succeeds, they will undoubtedly pick up again when the General Assembly concludes. And when they do, the proposition on the table will be the idea surfaced in that most extraordinary individual effort by Bergus.

FOR the time being, the Arabists are a relatively happy bunch. President Nixon, Secretary Rogers and Assistant Secretary Sisco are all pushing for a settlement in the Near East. As never before, the official ear is cocked for any suggestions from down the line.

In line with the general approach, American policy since the death of Colonel Nasser has been to cultivate Arab leaders — especially President Sadat of Egypt. So the stock in trade of Arabists, which is their ability to get on with Arabs, is at a premium. Thus, when Donald Bergus was at last recalled from Cairo this month, his designated successor was Michael Sterner, the Egyptian desk man who had come to know Sadat as his escort officer on an American tour he made nearly a decade ago.

Finally, the thrust of American policy is to put pressure on the Israelis for withdrawal —even by holding out on arms shipments. That line fits a public mood of disillusionment with force as a component of foreign policy. For the first time in years, Arabists are finding a receptive climate, in Government and out, for their complaints about Israeli intransigence.

Some Arabists believe that the United States now stands on the verge of a great diplomatic coup—a peace in the Near East between Arabs and Israelis made in America at the expense of the Soviet Union. Probably that ambitious goal will not be achieved. Almost certainly there will be new waves of disillusion and disappointment for the Arabists. Still, a reversion to the bitter animosity of the Truman period is not in the cards. The Arabists have finally been fitted into the system — domesticated, as it were. Everybody in Government knows that, as Sisco puts it, "we need their input." For their part, the Arabists have come to understand what Harry Truman thought he had to teach them—that policy in the United States, even foreign policy, even foreign policy in the Near East, is made by the President.■

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