Now, past suspicions seem an unsure guide; there are evidences that Soviet strategy may have been revised. Noted at the outset of the Newsletter were Russian tentatives to find an accommodation with the West. The guise of "peaceful competitor" may be one which Khrushchev will also wish to present to the Middle East, including the Arabs. One observer has even argued that the Soviet Union may keep a tight leash on the U.A.R.:

> The U.A.R. president has no reason to believe that the Soviet bloc would at this time back him in any adventure against Israel. For the time being, the Soviet Union is seeking its ends by 'political,' not military means. It might even be expected to cut off arms shipments if the United Arab Republic started a local war contrary to Soviet interest. That is, after all, the price Colonel Nasser pays for depending on the Kremlin for his supplies. (Dana Adams Schmidt, in The New York Times, February 7).

(A little too sanguine perhaps. With all due respect, the writer himself can have 'no reason' to know the common stalking grounds of the Egyptian and Soviet dictators.)

Yet heavy Soviet investments in the Middle East during the last several years could be whetting an unwonted appetite for area stability. Consider, for instance, the announced plan to lend the U.A.R. the equivalent of $280 million (approximately 1/3 of which has already been committed) for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. If completed according to schedule -- some ten or twelve years hence, that is -- this gigantic project should cast some of its pharaonic radiance on the Soviet Union, to the latter's great profit among the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa. No peace, no monument, may be a thought tugging at Soviet minds as they contemplate the possible effects on Egypt of a full-scale war.

Probably a more significant element in Communist thinking is the Soviet position of influence in Iraq. The latter country, while not an Israel neighbor, is vulnerable to some of the same popular ardors on Palestine questions. Yet it would be Nasser, not Kassem, who in the event of an eruption would become the rallying-point of the Arab world. Political waves then released might tear loose the leftist nationalist regime in Baghdad from its insecure moorings. And with it, Soviet influence.

These clues, even if assigned full value, suggest no more than a possible Soviet distaste for open Arab-Israel warfare. Progress toward an Arab-Israel settlement -- as against prevention of hostilities -- will depend in large degree on the reconciliatory pressures which the Western world, and principally the U.S., can bring to bear. Within this context, Washington's position has been less forthright. The reason is not hard to find. U.S. diplomatic energies (and credit) have for several years been drained off in the struggle against international communism. At a press conference in July, 1957, Mr. Dulles said the U.S. would thenceforth "not take such a prominent role" in Arab-Israel affairs (this was just after the Eisenhower Doctrine had been approved by Congress); and that "other nations" could perhaps "usefully play a greater" one. Chillingly -- for any prospective mediator -- Mr. Dulles went on to say: "I don't know whether the time is here to make progress ... either totally or partially."