LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A recent "Letter to the Editor," published in the Herald Tribune, may be of interest to Newsletter readers. It is by Dr. Frank Kingdon and was prompted by Walter Lippmann's excellent report on his trip to Egypt early last December. Dr. Kingdon, member of the Executive Council of the ACPC, is presently at work on a new book, "As F.D.R. Said," to be published by Duell, Sloan, Pearce, Inc. His letter -- titled "Nasser is Prodding History," -- appeared December 22nd.

To the N. Y. Herald Tribune:

There are certain points in Walter Lippmann's fascinating article on his visit to Egypt which invite re-emphasis.

Mr. Lippmann, noting that the Arab world has become filled with "desperate and fanatical men," penetratingly analyzes the not-so-fanatical thinking of Egyptian leadership with respect to Israel. As he reports, at one and the same time, the Cairo government fears that an aggressive Israel will overpower neighboring Arab states, and boasts that, given only a very little time, artificial Israel will wither away. This contradiction, which is more apparent than real, obscures a most useful policy gambit.

Propagation of the image of Israel as an aggressor is a necessary preliminary to the acquisition of massive armaments. Using Israel as a bogeyman, the Egyptian leader has squandered the resources of his people -- with one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world -- to create a world power. As a result, Egypt, after Turkey, now has the largest air power in the Middle East and, after the Western powers, the largest naval force in the Mediterranean.

These "irrational fears" have, in Nasser's mind, a wholly rational aim. Just as the Communists are not prepared to rely on the inevitability of the decline of capitalism, so Nasser is not prepared to wait out for Israel's economic collapse. The dialectics of Nasserism, like those of Marxism, have to be given a helping hand.

In point of fact the Egyptian dictator is prodding history along in a major effort to forestall Israel's agricultural and industrial development. Egypt is now again seeking to block Israel's legitimate use of the Jordan River waters -- vital to her irrigation needs -- according to the plan marked out years ago by Eric Johnston. Egypt has long imposed a blockade against Israel goods passing through the Suez Canal. Its agent, the Arab League, is at present directing an intensified Arab boycott of Israel all over the world.

Mr. Lippmann suggests that we should help Nasser by trying to be "as friendly and as hopeful as we can." This is laudable advice. But if we wish to help Nasser we should do so within the framework of Mr. Lippmann's own words of caution, being mindful that Nasser's only chance is "raising Egypt out of its immemorial poverty and misery." By condoning the wastage of his resources on armament, by acquiescing to his blockade of the Suez, by accepting his policies of economic hostility against Israel, we are not helping him but the reverse -- we are encouraging him to divert his attention from his real problems.

FRANK KINGDON