

Morty Meekle



Traveling U.S. Editor Reports On Situation In Middle East

Editor's Note: The following dispatch was written for the United Press by O. Preston Robinson, general manager of the Salt Lake City, Utah, Deseret News. His dispatch is an assessment of the Middle East situation as seen through the eyes of a visiting American Editor.

By O. PRESTON ROBINSON

LONDON (UP) — Anti-Americanism has settled like a thick blanket in the Middle East. Yet the situation there is by no means hopeless.

Beneath the layer of hostile suspicion that confronts the West, particularly in Syria and Egypt, there is a deep wellspring of desire for friendship at least with the United States. It would require no miracle to tap it.

Nothing was so impressive as this latent desire for friendship during an 18-day tour of four Middle Eastern countries.

It was the same whether we talked to taxi drivers or shopkeepers or to political figures such as Premier Sami Solh of Lebanon, President Nasser of Egypt, King Hussein of Jordan or Emile Hourani, the most influential man today in the Syrian Parliament.

Equally impressive, however, was a feeling that the key to this friendship lies in recognizing that these are independent states caught up in a tremendous upsurge of nationalism.

Nothing is going to stop this movement. It is this keen feeling of nationalism that reacts so violently to the slightest suspicion that some big outside power is trying to tell them how to run their own affairs.

The West is most suspect because it was not too long ago that Britain and France ruled the area. They still have a vital economic stake there. The fact the United States is an ally of France and Britain is something that is not forgotten.

America's condemnation of the Anglo-French attack on Egypt last year raised U.S. prestige to a high that unfortunately has not been maintained.

Today, one year after the United States was being hailed in Egypt as a champion, we are being accused by Nasser of trying to overthrow his government and of attempting to dominate Egypt by economic pressure just as Britain and France had previously done by force.

What is particularly rankling to the Egyptians is the failure of the United States to release Egypt's blocked funds. In Cairo, President Nasser recalled this refusal in the same breath with which he hailed America's role in halting the Suez attack.

"One day a friend," he said. "The next day, the dagger." Egypt is in many ways the key to the Mideastern situation. Nasser is popular in his country and in Syria where his photographs are liberally plastered in public places and in shops and private offices.

An improvement in Western and especially American relations with Egypt would undoubtedly help with regard to Syria.

In addition to American support of Israel during and since the Palestine war and the freezing of Egyptian funds at a time of crisis, there are several other American actions that sorely rankle the Egyptians. Among these are:

The abrupt cancellation of the American agreement to sell arms to Egypt in 1953, a move that is laid directly at the door of British pressure. The cancellation came while an Egyptian mission was in the United States to procure the arms. This action carried a lasting sting of humiliation.

The equally abrupt withdrawal of American aid for the Aswan high dam project. It is difficult not to feel that a little more diplomacy might have headed off the turbulent events that followed this decision.

The manner in which the Eisenhower Doctrine was launched. The Egyptians and the Syrians do not accept this doctrine for what it is—a formula reflecting the sincere desire of the United States to help the Mideastern countries solidify and strengthen their independence. They see in it a desire, backed by offers of aid, to dictate to them who they may have for friends.

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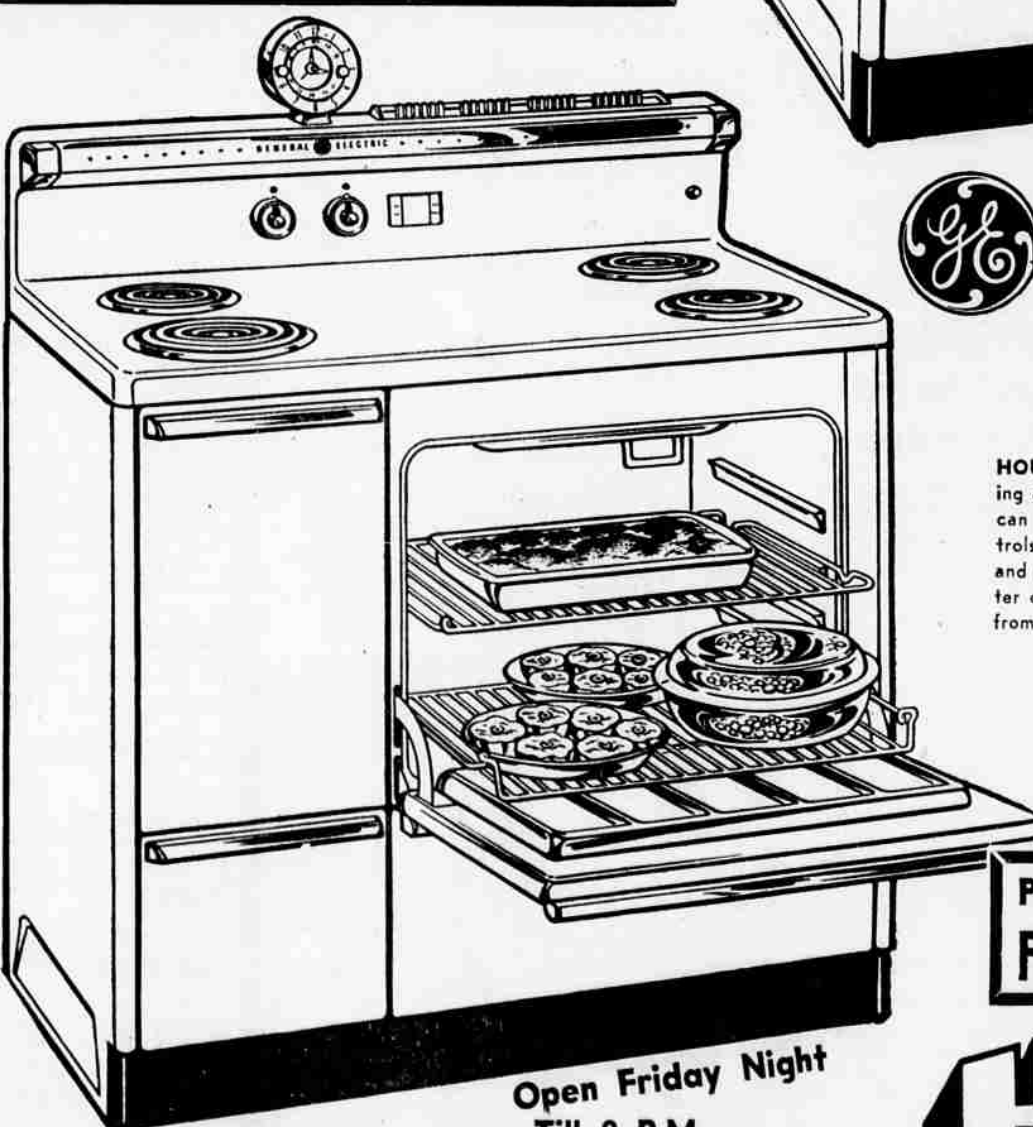
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