

IRAQ BOMBSHELL:

Without warning, revolution has swept away the young King Feisal of Iraq and his uncle, Crown Prince Abdul Illah. Iraq becomes No.1 danger spot. Veteran premier Nuri es-Said is deposed; he has fled, and the republican rebels have offered £10,000 for his arrest. The tide of Arab nationalism is again in flood. The King is reported a prisoner, the Crown Prince dead; only one thing is certain - the Kremlin is jubilant.

Khrushchev was quick to see in Nasser the leader who could weld the Arab world into anti-Western unity; the Baghdad Pact, Middle East bulwark against Soviet expansion, looked increasingly unreliable in spite of vigorous Western encouragement.

Feisal, like his cousin Hussein of Jordan, was educated at Harrow and Britain pinned great hope on these Royal fledglings. Some critics say, too much hope - and declare that Britain underestimated the changing spirit of the Middle East. Feisal became King of Iraq before he became of age - and on his young shoulders fell the burden of ruling one of the keystones of Middle Eastern defence. No one can question the patriotism and intelligence of these cousins, Feisal and Hussein, seen here together, but events have moved too fast for them; and unfortunately, for Western policy. Britain has given Feisal and his government whole-hearted support; but the warmth of a London welcome melts no ice in Cairo or Moscow.

Oil-rich Iraq - so vital to the Baghdad Pact, is temporarily at least - in anti-Western hands; the most dangerous crisis since Nasser's star first rose in the Middle East.