

# Coup in Libya...

Leftist military officers have seized power in so many Arab countries that the latest coup, in Libya, can hardly occasion much surprise. The 79-year-old King Idris retained his position as long as he did because he devoted a major portion of his country's rapidly rising oil income to an enlightened program of social and economic development. But even this responsible policy finally proved inadequate.

If the new Libyan regime is accurately represented by the radical slogans its radio stations broadcast yesterday, the coup has the potentiality of weakening or destroying the present political equilibrium in the Middle East. Many Arabs will undoubtedly see this latest development as swinging the pendulum away from existing moderate and conservative states toward the leftist end of the spectrum as represented by Iraq and Syria. Tunisia's regime may be particularly endangered now that it is sandwiched in between pro-socialist leaderships in Algeria and Libya.

In the past decade, particularly since the closing of the Suez Canal, Libya has become a major source of oil for Western Europe. Any long interruption in the flow of Libyan oil would require extensive and expensive rerouting of present world petroleum commerce.

First reports from Libya yesterday indicated that nation's new rulers were seeking to reassure foreign interests that existing obligations and arrangements would remain unaffected. It would seem good sense for Libya's new leaders to maintain the oil flow since growing income from that source is essential for continued rapid growth of domestic living standards.

The United States Wheelus Air Force Base outside Tripoli has been under sharp attack from some Libyan groups these last two years. New uncertainty about this base's future arises automatically in the light of the socialist and Arab nationalist slogans voiced yesterday by those who ousted King Idris.

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