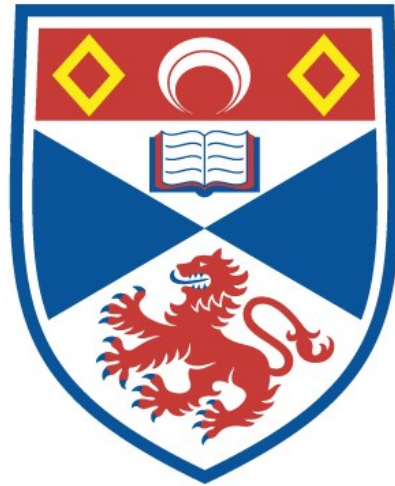


University of St Andrews



Full metadata for this thesis is available in
St Andrews Research Repository
at:

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by original copyright

The following thesis is submitted for a degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in Arts. The work represents the work of Brian McGuinn and has never been submitted previously for a higher degree to the University of St. Andrews or to any other university.

I was accepted as a research student under Ordinance General 12 commencing October, 1967. Research encompassed the resources of the following libraries: The University Library at St. Andrews; the British Museum Library, Great Russell Street, London; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

B. McGuinn

I certify that Brian McGuinn has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appertaining to the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy.

Lecturer in Modern History
and supervisor.

THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS:

BRITISH REACTION TO UNITED STATES POLICY

Brian J. McGuinn
August 1971



Tm 5888

In late October 1956 Israel crossed into Egyptian territory and the security of the Suez Canal became the world's concern. Forty-eight different nations had utilized the Canal during the previous year when more than one hundred million shipping tons were transitted. The Canal's location in the Middle East compounds the problem of security, for the Middle East combines many rivalries that could possibly effect the operation of the Canal: Arabs, Israeli, pro-Western, and Communist groups continually vie to promote their respective causes. A Middle East confrontation quickly ignites several factions and some of the strangest ad hoc agreements develop as each tries to protect his interests.

One critic termed the 1956 flare-up the "most inexcusable, ill-explained crisis of the mid-Twentieth Century."¹ From a Western standpoint the Suez Crisis raised some fundamental questions in post world war problem solving. The crisis was ill-explained, not because historians were unable to reconstruct the events, but rather because the crisis educed reactions, which in retrospect, appear irrational and inexcusable. The breakdown in dialogue between

¹Erskine B. Childers, The Road to Suez, pg. 11.

the wartime allies, Great Britain and the United States, was a major divergence in Western relations. Neither country doubted the significance of the Atlantic Alliance during the two world wars, but suddenly, a small country nationalist, Colonel Abdel Nasser, challenged the strength of this relationship.

The focus of this work is the American influence upon British policy during the crisis. Prime Minister Anthony Eden premised his policy upon United States support; this contingency became increasingly imperative as negotiations lingered. In the end the rift between the two Governments cost the Prime Minister his position. To the writer, who is now serving in the armed services, Americans have failed to learn the lessons of the crisis in their own global policies.

CHAPTER I

The Frenchman, Ferdinand de Lesseps, completed construction of the Suez Canal in 1869. In financial straits soon thereafter, the Suez Canal Company needed funds to continue operations. Under the aegis of Disraeli, the British Government procured 44 percent of the company's stock. The Canal became the lifeline of the Empire, the main channel of communication to British interests in the East. Passage through the Canal eliminated several sailing days from the normal trip around the Cape of Good Hope. Never officially annexing Egypt into the Empire, Great Britain assumed various relationships with Egypt to secure continued passage through the one hundred-mile Canal. The discovery of Middle East oil reinforced Britain's determination to safeguard Canal passage.

Aside from the economic importance of the Suez Canal, Great Britain developed an affinity toward the Arab and his way of life. Milner, Kitchner, and Lawrence bolstered the amity. Inspired by a greater patriotism, a belief that empire transcends country boundaries, many Britishers demonstrated an altruistic, though sometimes condescending,

spirit toward their Arab friends. In the heat of one of the fiercest Parliamentary debates during the crisis, one Conservative MP said:

The Egyptians are a kindly friendly simple people and once they realize this man Nasser is a menace to their peaceful existence and to their future happy relations with the Western nations, they will turn on him and throw him out. ¹

Perhaps the MP was wishful in his ruminations but among those who believed in Empire and the wonderful advances the influence of Empire had had on indigenous populations was the thought that these people owed a debt of gratitude to Great Britain; under proper leadership this gratitude would be realized.

The power of imperialism demanded the presence of troops. Seventy-four years of continual occupation of Egypt proved overbearing. The Egyptians maintained that Britain had not removed Turkish hegemony in 1882, they had replaced it. British occupation fostered Egyptian nationalism. Emanating from its literary beginnings in the last century, Egyptian nationalism achieved political and military expression with the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser replaced Mohammed Naguib, surrogate leader of the revolution in 1954. Through punctilious negotiations, Nasser managed to initiate a timetable for the departure of British troops from Egyptian soil. The British evacuation enhanced Nasser's position in the Arab world, but the shadow of British influence remained.

¹Sir Thomas Moore, Hansard, 1 November 1956, Vol. 558, Col. 1678.

The United States' Middle East legacy was sketchy as well as void of British fervor. "The Middle East was not regarded as of prime importance to the United States,"² one American diplomat wrote. The difference in perspective between Great Britain and the United States was the foundation for the dichotomy that ensued.

Throughout most of this century the United States lacked any discernible policy in the Middle East. Isolationists had their day as overtures by Wilson and Roosevelt to establish interests in the area proved fruitless. To become concerned with an area of the world which had been a perennial Anglo-Soviet quarrel was asking for trouble.³ As long as Great Britain could quell Soviet attempts to establish a Middle East stronghold, the United States remained aloof. This policy persisted until the close of World War Two when British Labor Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin wrote President Harry Truman that it would be economically unfeasible for Great Britain to continue military presence in Greece and Turkey. Truman picked up the standard and proclaimed what became known as the Truman Doctrine on 12 March 1947: The defense of the Middle East against communism would no longer be a singly handled task but a joint responsibility between the two countries. To one American observer, Britain's declaration was tantamount to their abdication of the Middle East.⁴ Although Great Britain's military responsibility in the Middle East waned, the mental discipline governing the military obligation and the foreign policy

²Robert Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors, pg. 461.

³Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956, pg. 100.

⁴Secretary of Defense, James Vincent Forrestal, Forrestal Diaries, pg. 242.

continued like a vestige from the Empire. The United States continued to follow the British cue in the Middle East as long as the Soviet Union remained out of the area.⁵ The maintenance of a large British military force at Suez before the programmed withdrawal in 1954 exemplified the point. Oil supplies and Soviet pressures in Africa were valid reasons to warrant the large force but a more cogent argument would be that Britain came to believe that she alone was responsible for the Canal's welfare. Though an international waterway, the Suez Canal was somehow uniquely British.

The formation of the Baghdad Pact illustrated another example of British assertiveness at the time; American policy on the issue appears ambivalent in retrospect. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles toured the Middle East in 1953 and in his appraisal of the area, endorsed the theory of a northern tier defense pact to include those countries bordering on the Soviet Union. Dulles dismissed the notion that the pact should be initiated by a Western power: "It should be designed to grow from within out of a sense of common destiny and common danger."⁶ Official American policy felt that the initiation of such an alliance by a Western power would aggravate Arab relations with the West and put an added strain on Israel. Dulles outlined the policy in one of his numerous memoranda: "We must attempt solutions of local problems in the Near East without so worsening our relations with Britain as to unduly weaken or wreck the NATO alliance", he wrote. Foreshadowing the dilemma of American policy, Dulles continued, "Our

⁵Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace: 1956-1961, pg. 25.

⁶Department of State Bulletin, 15 June 1953, Vol. 28, pp. 831-835.

efforts with the British must be such as will avoid being placed in a position where we must choose between maintenance of the NATO alliance and action to keep a large portion that is still free from drifting into Soviet hands."⁷

When Eden negotiated the removal of British troops from Suez, he looked to Iraq and the formation of the pact as an opportunity to maintain British presence in the Middle East. Anticipating vitriolic attacks from Radio Cairo and the rekindling of an Arab power struggle between Egypt and Iraq, the United States objected to Iraq's participation in the Baghdad Pact. President Eisenhower saw the pact for what it was: "A device to perpetuate unpopular British influence."⁸ Nevertheless, the United States refused to squelch the pact. Harold Macmillan remembered that the United States later favored the plan for Jordan to become a member, but United States public endorsement would not be forthcoming until after the Presidential election in November.⁹ Whether the Baghdad Pact received United States sanction was not the main issue. The important fact underlining the negotiations was the United States' reluctance to become actively involved. Lack of United States initiative did little to elucidate the changing roles in Western policy. Without the threat of Soviet intervention, the United States complacently permitted Great Britain to implement Western policy in the Middle East--a position Britain readily accepted.

⁷Kennett Love, Suez the Twice Fought War, pg. 194.

⁸Eisenhower, pg. 26.

⁹Harold Macmillan, Riding the Storm: 1956-1959, pg. 91.

Careful consideration should be given to the sponsorship of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. The Western refusal to support financially the enterprise precipitated the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. Amazingly, the refusal became the decision of one man, John Foster Dulles. His action marked the beginning of the Anglo-American rift.

As the summer of 1956 approached, Colonel Nasser rode a crescendo of prestige: British troops evacuated Suez after seventy-four years of occupation; the first presidential election credited him with 99.8 percent of the popular vote; Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov visited Cairo and witnessed an impressive array of Egyptian military armaments during the festivities celebrating the British evacuation; and he attended a high-powered meeting of neutral world leaders at Brioni--leaders such as Nehru and Tito. Nasser had, by this time, tested the mettle of Western powers by completing an arms deal with the Soviet Union, by recognizing Red China, and by indirectly influencing the dismissal of Glubb Pasha in Jordan. He appeared the strong leader of Egypt, the chosen head of Pan Arabism. Nasser knew differently.

Poverty was widespread in Egypt; much of the soil was not arable. Oil revenues enjoyed by many Arab countries were denied Egypt. Egyptians cheered the departure of British troops but without the abatement of domestic poverty, euphoria would be short-lived. In an attempt to ameliorate living conditions, Nasser promised the construction of the Aswan High Dam: A dam that would bring a higher standard of living; a dam "seventeen times greater than the Great Pyramid of the Pharaohs." Besides permitting the harvest of

one or two additional crops and increasing cultivation by 25 percent, the proposed dam would produce ten billion kilowatt hours of electricity.¹⁰ Plans for the enterprise commenced shortly after World War Two, but not until 1955 did Egypt approach the West for financial support. Although the cost would be \$1.3 billion, few doubted the value of the project to Egypt.

In June 1955 Egypt appropriated eight million dollars to facilitate access to the dam site and to construct accommodations for the workers. Soon thereafter, the World Bank became interested and published a favorable financial report on the project. In October, one month after the Soviet arms deal, Soviet Ambassador Daniel Solod proposed a Soviet loan for the construction of the High Dam.¹¹ Nasser, apprehensive about too much dependence upon Soviet funds, sent Ahmed Hussein to Washington to explore the possibility of Western aid.

The United States was visibly annoyed over the announced Soviet arms deal, but now that the Soviet Union was in the Middle East arena, Washington felt that the best procedure to neutralize the impact of the arms deal would be to initiate economic support to Egypt. President Eisenhower had no desire to become involved in a Middle East arms race. The High Dam presented a most acceptable alternative and measures were taken with Egyptian Finance Minister Abdel Monheim Kaissouny to establish a loan. Under the agreement, the United States and Great Britain would provide

¹⁰James E. Dougherty, "The Aswan Decision in Perspective", pg. 22.

¹¹Love, pg. 302.

\$70 million for the first of a two-stage construction plan. Subsequent aid would be forthcoming to supplement World Bank support if construction went smoothly during the initial phase. The agreement called for a \$200 million loan from the World Bank to defray foreign exchange costs during the second phase while Egypt would contribute \$760 million in labor and construction costs.

Nasser saw complications in the arrangement; he disapproved of the West's conditional clause, the 'sympathetic consideration' for further aid. If the West reneged during the second phase, Egypt would be out several hundred million dollars.

In time the project became a political football. Dulles explored the possibility of using the loan to establish peace in the Middle East. An earlier endeavor, the Johnston Plan, failed when Syrian and Lebanese cabinet crises developed and Israel promoted a violent attack on Syria in December 1955. Nasser, Dulles, and the Soviet Union were acutely aware that support of the High Dam would allow a prolonged influence, perhaps twenty years, on the Egyptian economy. For this reason, Nasser favored multifarious Western aid rather than support from the Soviet monolith. Dulles tried to manipulate this knowledge for his own benefit: Endorsement of the loan in return for peace with Israel.

Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr., became deeply entrenched in the plan; a secret mission materialized under his cognizance. President Eisenhower appointed Robert B. Anderson to present the proposal to Nasser and to Israel's Ben-Gurion. An

Israeli attack on Syria threatened to abort the mission before Anderson left the United States. Negotiations broke down when Ben-Gurion insisted upon a direct public confrontation with Nasser. The demand was totally unacceptable to Nasser, and Ben-Gurion realized it. Even during the negotiations, Ben-Gurion secretly endorsed the war preparations of his military advisor, Moshe Dayan. Ben-Gurion's intransigence and clandestine belligerent policy destroyed the Anderson mission and conceivably, any opportunity that Egypt might receive Western finance for the High Dam. "Hoover wanted out of Aswan the moment he couldn't buy Egyptian-Israeli peace with it," one insider reported. "This was the real reason we [United States] backed out. Hoover was responsible for the Aswan offer in the first place as a quid pro quid to buy Arab-Israeli peace and it was he who dumped it when the deal failed."¹²

After the failure of the Anderson mission, the United States was no longer the vehicle for the loan. Washington thought that Egyptian interest in the dam had declined although such a belief was difficult to support in light of the importance of the project to Nasser. While American enthusiasm waned, Mr. Eugene Black, President of the World Bank, worked incessantly to assuage Nasser's objections to Anglo-American prerequisites for the loan, namely-- resources were not to be dispersed to other projects; construction contracts were to be awarded on a competitive basis; and other foreign loans were not to be consummated without World Bank consent.

¹²Love, pg. 309.

Mr. Black conducted another study of the Egyptian economy and assured the West of Egypt's ability to satisfy the demands of the loan and other extant contracts. (Egypt had since completed arrangements for another arms deal with the Communist bloc.) President Eisenhower either refused to accept Mr. Black's findings or he decided to utilize Egyptian insolvency to rationalize the refusal of the loan.¹³ Economics played a peripheral role in the final decision.

The Egyptian recognition of Red China in May 1956, abrogated any ray of hope for the loan. The Soviet arms deal, rumors of Soviet support for the High Dam, another arms deal, now the recognition of Red China!! Dulles despised what he thought was Nasser's attempt to play both sides against the middle. He could not accept what appeared to be Nasser's attempt to make Egypt the focal point of the cold war; nor could he tolerate Nasser's approach to diplomacy which Dulles labeled "political blackmail". The Secretary once said "a nation that can best gain safety for itself by being indifferent to the fate of others...except under very exceptional circumstances...is an amoral and short-sighted conception."¹⁴

Opinion also ran against the offer in England. From an engineering viewpoint, a regional system of watershed control with multiple barrages which could regulate the Nile at key locations along its length received more praise than the High Dam project.¹⁵

¹³Eisenhower, pg. 31.

¹⁴Herman Finer, Dulles Over Suez, pg. 43.

¹⁵Dougherty, pg. 25.

British policy opposed the offer once General Glubb, Commander of the Arab Legion was dismissed on 1 March 1956. Ironically, the formation of the Baghdad Pact foreshadowed the termination of Glubb's tour in Jordan. After the Iraq-Turkey alliance (24 February 1955) initiating the Baghdad Pact, Eden and Nasser agreed to a moratorium: England would avoid the enlistment of any other Arab country into the pact in return for an Egyptian promise to cease further vituperations against the existing Pact. Great Britain tried to lure Jordan into the alliance before the year ended. Macmillan noted American approval for the venture.¹⁶ Negotiations continued through November-December and culminated in a British mission to Amman headed by General Templer. Macmillan keenly favored the mission but oddly failed to mention Templer's efforts in his memoirs.

Egypt refrained no longer from what appeared to be a "Zionist-Imperialist ploy"; Radio Cairo unleashed an attack on Great Britain charging that Jordanian acceptance of the alliance compromised Arab intelligence in Israel. Shortly thereafter, rioting broke out in Jordan; in a six-day period, forty-one persons died and one hundred fifty more sustained injuries.¹⁷ Jordan's King Hussein acquiesced in public opinion and withdrew from the agreement. Curiously, the Egyptian press reported that the United States warned Great Britain against the overture to Jordan in direct contrast to Macmillan's recollection. President Eisenhower opposed the entry of any country bordering on Israel, believing such an alliance could incur

¹⁶Macmillan, pg. 91.

¹⁷Love, pg. 204.

Israeli retaliation. On 11 December Israel responded with an unprovoked attack on Syria, killing over sixty people.

The dismissal of General Glubb followed the abortive Templer mission. Glubb represented British hegemony. He had spent twenty-six years in Jordan and as head of the Arab Legion he was in a position to wield considerable political influence. King Hussein's prestige suffered because of the Templer mission and Glubb's presence proved an added handicap. Hussein said: "...to be blunt about it, he [Glubb] was serving as my Commander-in-Chief yet could not ignore his loyalty to Britain. He operated from a position of such strength that our political leaders tended to turn to him or the British embassy before taking the slightest decisions."¹⁸

With the use of Radio Cairo, Nasser attempted to isolate the Hashemite kingdoms (Iraq and Jordan) from the remainder of the Arab world before Britain could join forces to isolate Egypt. Glubb became a propaganda target though Nasser thought his removal too much to expect. When King Hussein made his decision, the Prime Minister mistakenly accused Nasser of the removal. He later wrote disparagingly of King Hussein, but at the time, he was convinced that Nasser instigated the removal.¹⁹ British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, who was in Cairo during the dismissal, returned to England with similar views.²⁰

¹⁸Love, pg. 208-209.

¹⁹Anthony Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pg. 9.

²⁰Humphrey Trevelyan, The Middle East in Revolution, pg. 64.

In Parliament at least one MP argued for the immediate retraction of the dam offer.²¹

Anthony Nutting sent a memorandum to Eden suggesting possible means to neutralize Nasser in Arab politics. Eden's reply reflected his attitude toward Nasser throughout the ensuing crisis:

What's all this nonsense about isolating Nasser or neutralizing him, as you call it? I want him destroyed, can't you understand? I want him removed. 22

Eden was hardly ecstatic about promoting the High Dam, a project that would enhance the position of a man he sought to vanquish.

Great Britain and the United States arrived separately at their decisions to refuse the loan. The absence of dialogue proved embarrassing to the West when Nasser suddenly decided to send Ahmed Hussein to Washington to accept the abeyant loan. Dulles quickly contacted Sir Roger Makins, Great Britain's ambassador to the United States, to ascertain Prime Minister Eden's view on the issue. Makins reported back to Dulles: "We leave the decision to your judgment whether you grant or rescind the offer of the loan. But we do not wish you to be precipitate; we wish you to play it along."²³

Dulles received Hussein on 19 July. When the conversation turned to the dam, Hussein made a gesture to his pocket suggesting that Egypt held a Soviet offer for the project. Dulles' image of

²¹Lord Killearn, H.L., Mansard, Vol. 196, Col. 387.

²²Nutting, pg. 34.

²³Finer, pg. 46.

blackmail proved the last straw in possible negotiations. "Well, as you have the money already, you don't need any from us! My offer is withdrawn!"²⁴

Surprised by Dulles' abrupt action, Eden viewed the decision "...for reasons connected with the Senate's attitude toward foreign aid and the critical climate towards neutralism then prevalent in Washington."²⁵ Great Britain followed the United States' lead by withdrawing the loan offer on 20 July. Eden recorded that there had been no opportunity to concert timing or methods between the allies.²⁶ Macmillan concurred²⁷ but Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd, in a Parliamentary statement, implied closer coordination of policy.²⁸ Throughout the spring, Great Britain tried to direct American efforts to the problems of the Middle East but British proposals received no response. America's lackadaisical approach and want of deference towards British objectives frustrated Government concern. Reports circulated that President Eisenhower gave more attention to his golf game than the Middle East situation.²⁹ Parliamentary debate after nationalization reflected this frustration.

While the Anglo-American partnership endures, it certainly does not prosper.

²⁴Finer, pg. 48.

²⁵Love, pg. 221.

²⁶Sir Anthony Eden, Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, pg. 422.

²⁷Macmillan, pp. 98-99.

²⁸Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 412.

²⁹Macmillan, pg. 95.

Unless I am greatly in error, we were dragged along like a tin can tied to a dog's tail, following the decision of 19 July...There seems to be a dual standard of values at work. Our American friends lose no sleep about their own continued occupation of Okinawa but the sight of the British army on the Suez lay like a ton of bricks on the American conscience. 30

Dulles could fabricate many reasons for rescission: Reluctance of southern farmers to support Egyptian cotton; fear that a long term commitment to the High Dam might damage American-Egyptian relations if construction stalled; lack of confidence in the Egyptian economy to support the project (overriding the recommendations of Eugene Black); the failure of the Anderson mission; and the Egyptian recognition of Red China. The recognition of Red China and Nasser's use of "political blackmail" provided Dulles with the opportunity to challenge the Soviets to make their offer good. Dulles contended that a long term Soviet loan would place a heavy burden on the Soviet economy. He also seized the chance to humble Nasser in a ploy similar to American designs in Iran (1953) when Messadegh was overthrown. Dulles believed that Nasser would receive harsh domestic criticism if the dam he promised faltered. Eugene Black accurately diagnosed Dulles' specious strategy: "It was not only a mistake to turn the project down and the way he turned it down, but in his guess that by turning it down this would be the death knell of Nasser."³¹

The refusal was an error in American judgment. President

³⁰S.N. Evans, Labor MP, Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1643.

³¹Love, pg. 327.

Eisenhower strove to deemphasize the two salient tenets of the Truman administration: diplomatic and economic support for Israel, and solicitude for British and French concerns in the area. The United States hoped to acquire Arab friendship by dissociation from colonialism and by neutralistic efforts in Arab-Israeli relations. Egypt represented the keystone. Only Egypt could lead the Arabs in a mutual defense pact against communism and complete the link between NATO and SEATO as Dulles envisaged in 1953. Dulles promoted the British evacuation from the Sudan and later from the Suez Canal Zone. Censuring Israeli border policy in the United Nations and refusing requested arms purchases, the United States also assumed a stronger posture toward Israel. No Egyptian-American rapprochement developed. The United States' endorsement of the High Dam offer in December 1955 had marked the pinnacle in Egyptian-American relations. American efforts succeeded only in alienating her Western allies.

The United States strove for an untenable position; her ambition was unrealistic. Egyptians thought that the United States planned to replace Great Britain in the Middle East just as Great Britain replaced Turkish hegemony in 1882. Egypt doubted American sincerity, her ability to sever ties with Great Britain and France; Anglo-French Middle East past policies were hardly lauded by the Arabs. The possibility of an African tier, an alliance among the United States, Great Britain, Ethiopia, and the Sudan against Egypt to control the Nile's flow was a popular, though hysterical, rumor in Egypt. America's indirect arms support (NATO) of the French struggle

in Algeria also cast doubt on American integrity.

Most significant was the 1950 Tripartite Declaration. Under its terms, the United States, Great Britain, and France promised to perpetuate, by force if necessary, the extant borders between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Nothing could be more adverse to Arab thought than the perpetuation of Israel!

Nasser put Dulles' loan abrogation to great political advantage. In a vitriolic speech on 24 July, he denounced the United States: "Drop dead of your fury! You will never be able to dictate to Egypt." Nasser promised to outline his plans for the Egyptian economy two days later: "...projects which we draw up will build our national economy and at the same time build our sovereignty, dignity, and independence." Dulles and Eden may well have expected Nasser to announce an agreement with the Soviet Union. They were bitterly surprised.

Two hundred and fifty thousand people listened to Nasser's Alexandria speech on 26 July 1956:

It is no shame for one to be poor and to borrow in order to build up one's country; what is a shame is to suck the blood of a people and usurp their rights...We shall never repeat the past but we shall eliminate the past by regaining our rights in the Suez Canal. This money is ours and this Canal belongs to Egypt because it is an Egyptian united liability company. 32

The contrast between American and British reactions to Nasser's

decision to nationalize the Suez Canal Company reflected the differences in their approach to the crisis. The United States adopted an understated, low-pressure view. Nasser's seizure carried "far-reaching implications. It affects the nations whose economies depend upon the products which move through the international waterway and the maritime countries as well as the owners of the Company itself."³³ Washington, realizing the failure in American-Egyptian relations, admonished Nasser's "intemperate, inaccurate and misleading statements made with respect to the United States...such statements were entirely inconsistent with the friendly relations which have existed between the two governments and peoples."³⁴ Dulles, in Peru at the time, felt no immediate need to fly back to Washington. The New York Times devoted most of its front page to the tragic collision of the Andrea Doria and the Stockholm off Nantucket Island. The major question surrounding the nationalization was Nasser's ability to control Canal traffic efficiently.³⁵ This later became the prime criterion in Washington for utilization of force against Nasser.

One reason for Washington detachment was the relative lack of dependence upon Middle East oil. The problem was not one of livelihood but a "business dispute over the control of an international public utility in a monopolistic position."³⁶ The United States did

³³D.C. Watt, Documents on the Suez Crisis, pg. 117.

³⁴Documents, pg. 118.

³⁵Eisenhower, pg. 44.

³⁶Documents, pg. 5.

not wish to give Nasser too much importance in the issue. The American dilemma was immediately apparent: To... "coordinate a policy reflecting solidarity with British and French interests while concurrently maintaining favorable terms with Middle East countries lest they fall into the Soviet sphere."³⁷

Prime Minister Eden first received news of nationalization while entertaining Nasser's Middle East antagonist, the King of Iraq. Eden promptly dismissed the gathering and called an impromptu meeting of British, French, and American officials. Andrew Foster, American charge d' affairs recapped the meeting in a communique to President Eisenhower.³⁸ Legal action was not immediately planned nor sought but members believed that expropriation violated the 1888 Convention if Canal maintenance and operation became impaired. Eden dismissed the UN as "hopelessly bogged down" in discussions, delay in action which was not presently appropriate. He favored economic, political and military leverage against Egypt to maintain freedom of Canal traffic. American support became the overriding issue. As an alternative to Eden's proposal of a meeting of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration signers, Foster suggested consultation with a larger gathering of the main Canal users. The Prime Minister considered the prompt removal of Canal pilots, but such a move could upset Canal traffic and establish a casus belli which was not considered necessary at this time.

³⁷Survey of International Affairs, 1956, pg. 8.

³⁸Love, pg. 355.

His apprehension was not unfounded. In 1955, 14,666 ships passed through the Canal and nearly one third flew the British flag. In contrast, the United States accounted for only 15 percent of the traffic. Rerouting traffic around the Cape would put a considerable economic burden on Great Britain. Time saved by transit through the Canal increased the potential of British shipping by one third. Eden estimated that Great Britain had oil reserves for six weeks.³⁹ He could not permit Nasser "to have his thumb on our windpipe." The Times adopted a similar view: "...Nasser is ready to tear up international agreements and base himself on hatred against the West."⁴⁰

Nasser's actions naturally piqued Great Britain; a country that had known success in two world wars was now suddenly challenged by a small country nationalist. The Prime Minister accepted the challenge personally; he was determined to force Nasser's removal.

Militarily, Eden knew that an immediate airborne attack launched from Cyprus could have no Navy follow-up. Without a deep water harbor, Cyprus could not be the embarkation point for a naval operation. Any navy maneuvers would have to commence at Malta, nearly one thousand miles and at least five cruising days from Port Said. Remembering naval operations in World War Two, Eden recalled that the invasion of Sicily took six weeks in preparation and, while the Egyptians could hardly match the Axis' military prowess, British resources in the

³⁹Eden, pg. 429.

⁴⁰The Times, 30 July 1956.

Mediterranean in 1956 were not comparable to the combined British-American 1942 Expedition.⁴¹

Eden thought immediate recourse to the UN would not meet his demand to install an international board to run the Canal. He recalled the difficulty in the United Nations over the nationalization of the Armac Oil Company in Iraq. Soviet veto propensity further encouraged Eden to achieve his objectives outside Security Council jurisdiction. Under no condition did he want Great Britain censured by the Security Council. Recourse in this direction might prove necessary at a later date but for the present, he hoped to garner world support through a conference in London sponsored by Great Britain, the United States, and France.

Eden cabled President Eisenhower on 27 July: "...we cannot afford to allow Nasser to seize control of the Canal in this way, in defiance of international agreements," he said. Great Britain may be forced to call upon United States' assistance to foster oil supplies in an emergency. "The maritime powers cannot afford," he continued, "to allow Egypt to expropriate it [the Suez Canal Company] and to exploit it by using the revenues for her own internal purposes irrespective of the interests of the Canal and the Canal users..." Sir Anthony Eden probably anticipated American reservations when he said, "We should not allow ourselves to become involved in legal quibbles about the rights of the Egyptian Government to nationalize what is

⁴¹Eden, pg. 479.

technically an Egyptian company, or in financial arguments about their capacity to pay the compensation which they have offered." Throughout the subsequent months, American policy insisted that failure to award financial compensation and to maintain the smooth flow of Canal traffic were the only criteria to warrant military intervention save the possible hazard to Western civilians in the area. Eden finished his cable by recommending economic pressures as vital but ineffective alone. He favored "maximum political pressure" supported by military readiness: "...we must be ready, in the last resort to use force to bring Nasser to his senses. For our part we are prepared to do so. I have this morning instructed our Chief of Staff to prepare a military plan accordingly."⁴² The Prime Minister's strongest supporter remembered that the United States could have no doubt of the British position from the outset.⁴³

The emotional pitch in Great Britain was more acute than in the United States. Throughout negotiations the two countries were on different levels and moved at different speeds. Eden sought to impress the severity of the situation and the necessity for a quick response to Nasser's arrogation. Dulles, Eisenhower's foreign policy architect, strove to tone down British and French tempers through a series of prolonged negotiations. Dulles thought each day's delay decreased the likelihood of a military settlement.

President Eisenhower decided to send Robert Murphy, Deputy

⁴²Eden, pp. 427ff.

⁴³Macmillan, pg. 103.

Under Secretary of State, to London with no more instructions than to "hold the fort." Murphy arrived in London on 28 July and at a stag dinner given the subsequent evening by an old friend from Algiers days, Harold Macmillan, he recalled: "I was left in no doubt that the United Kingdom believed that Suez was a test that could only be met with force."⁴⁴ Murphy did not share the belief that the United States had a "common identity of interests" with her NATO allies. Eden did request that the United States "take care of the Bear" if the Soviets intervened. The British approach apparently succeeded: "it seems that we have succeeded in thoroughly alarming Murphy. He must have reported in the sense which we wanted, and Foster Dulles is now coming over post haste. This is a very good development."⁴⁵ Dulles did not want to go to London;⁴⁶ he thought his presence would increase speculation about growing Western anxiety.

Unfortunately for Anglo-American relations, Eden and Dulles were not close friends: "Behind them stretched years of animosity."⁴⁷ Eden recalled an incident between Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison and Dulles during the Japanese Peace Conference in 1951. Dulles promised Morrison to refrain from pressuring Japan into the recognition of Chiang Kai-shek. In return, Dulles asked Morrison to remain silent on the issue. Once back in the United States, Dulles bowed to Senate

⁴⁴Murphy, pg. 463.

⁴⁵Macmillan, pg. 105.

⁴⁶Murphy, pg. 469.

⁴⁷Hugh Thomas, Suez, pg. 54.

pressure which insisted Japanese Premier Yoshida recognize Nationalist China. Dulles implied that Morrison concurred with the action which was hardly likely in light of the British recognition of Red China. When Dulles squeezed a letter of recognition from Yoshida, Morrison was caught off guard.⁴⁸ Eden resented Dulles' duplicity. He had a knack for saying one thing and doing another. "My difficulty in working with Mr. Dulles," the Prime Minister said, "was to determine what he really meant and in consequence the significance to be attached to his words and actions."⁴⁹ Other encounters festered the relationship: Vietnam, SEATO, Quemay and Matsu, and Geneva 1954. Their different approaches to problem solving further irritated negotiations. The Prime Minister relied upon his intuition to achieve results. Mr. Dulles was pedagogical; each situation was a challenge to his intellect and he never wanted it forgotten that he possessed a first class intellect. He was also embittered by the allies treatment of his mentor, President Wilson, at Versailles after World War One. He realized the United States held the stronger hand in the Atlantic alliance and impressed this fact upon the British. Eisenhower shared a much warmer friendship with the British, but it was a mistake for the British to believe that they could circumvent the Secretary of State and negotiate with the President.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Finer, pg. 84.

⁴⁹Love, pg. 379.

⁵⁰Macmillan, pg. 94.

Dulles arrived in London on 1 August with a letter from the President emphasizing "the unwisdom even of contemplating the use of...force at this moment...I realize that the messages from both you and Harold stress that the decision was firm and irrevocable. But...I hope you will consent to reviewing this matter once more in its broadest aspects..."⁵¹ Eden later remembered the letter, "...it did not rule out the use of force...the eventual use of force might become necessary in order to protect international rights."⁵² However, Eden often took correspondence with the United States and molded the most optimistic phrases out of context to accommodate his viewpoint. Such tactics made him unpopular in many Washington circles.⁵³

Dulles confronted two resolute nations determined to take action against Nasser. The French appeared more belligerent; the effects of Nasser's nationalization upon the already strong Arab resistance to French rule in Algeria caused disquiet. Without American support international control of the Canal could not be militarily established for at least six weeks.⁵⁴ France insisted upon stepping up the timetable while the British tactic was to keep the United States involved.

⁵¹Eisenhower, pg. 664-668.

⁵²Eden, Pg. 486.

⁵³Love, pg. 377.

⁵⁴Thomas, pg. 55.

It was a question not of honor only but survival...There was no other choice for us...We must keep the Americans really frightened. There must not be allowed any illusion. 55

Dulles adopted a legal approach during negotiations. He argued the distinctions between the Panama Canal which was under private treaty with the United States and the Suez Canal which was under the auspices of the 1888 Convention. The first article of the Constantinople Convention (29 October 1888) declared:

The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag. 56

Article X provided for the additional defense of Egypt in time of war. Egypt, technically at war with Israel, used this article to justify prohibition of Israel shipping through the Canal. Dulles wanted to assure that there could be no correlation between the private leasing arrangement of the Panama Canal and the international character of the Suez Canal.

The Secretary questioned the legal recourse to nationalization. In 1940 Mexico had nationalized some United States oil enterprises and Secretary of State Cordell Hull remarked: "The right to expropriate property is coupled with and conditioned on the obligation to make adequate, effective, and prompt compensation. The legality of an expropriation is in fact dependent upon the observation of this

⁵⁵Macmillan, pg. 106.

⁵⁶Love, pg. 171.

requirement.⁵⁷ This train of thought influenced Dulles' policy. President Eisenhower also believed that if Great Britain and France wanted Nasser removed, "they ought to have better grounds for it" than the nationalization.⁵⁸

In defense of his behavior during the loan debacle, Dulles viewed Nasser's nationalization not as a retaliatory measure but as a long term Egyptian plan.⁵⁹ The United States did not want the Suez Crisis to become a Middle East Crisis. Such an event might force her to take a position in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Previous attempts to straddle the fence had proven unsuccessful but the United States was in no mood to see the Middle East become the setting for World War Three. To prevent such an occurrence, Dulles proposed "to isolate Egypt among the nations of the world and to bring the moral pressure of combined opinion to bear upon Colonel Nasser."⁶⁰

After negotiations Eden noted the Secretary's views: The Canal should not be under the domination of a single country; the Convention of 1888 should be the basis of discussion to avoid confusion with the Panama Canal; the United States would not exclude the use of force if all else failed; world opinion should be mobilized in favor of international operation of the Canal; and the

⁵⁷Love, pg. 365.

⁵⁸Ibid., pg. 368.

⁵⁹Eden, pg. 465.

⁶⁰Ibid., pg. 432.

tripartite views should be accepted by at least two thirds of the nations to be convened at a future conference.

Invitations were extended to twenty-four nations, the eight signatories of the 1888 Convention and sixteen other nations whose Canal use and trade patterns were effected. Eden opposed invitations to the Soviet Union and Egypt but Dulles, stressing the importance of world opinion, persuaded the Prime Minister to concede. The delay of the conference to 15 August was also a concession to the United States though Eden thought the date a compromise because the United States originally suggested a much later convening date. The delay exasperated the French who sought immediate reprisal but a short wait was tolerable to Eden if it meant that the United States would support British-French strategy. One cabinet member recalled thinking that Dulles thought that if force became necessary "the world would understand."⁶¹

Eden made considerable mention in his memoirs of a statement he attributed to Dulles:

A way had to be found to make Nasser disgorge what he was attempting to swallow...we must make a genuine effort to bring world opinion to favor the international operation of the Canal...It should be possible to create a world opinion so adverse to Nasser that he would be isolated. Then if military operation had to be undertaken it would be more

⁶¹ Macmillan, pg. 107.

apt to succeed and have less grave repercussions than if it had been undertaken precipitately. 62

From this statement it appears that Eden became convinced that Great Britain could depend upon American support of British policy and probably prompted Macmillan to note that "the Americans have certainly moved a long way."⁶³

Eden mistakenly extracted the word "disgorge" and developed it into a policy. He placed a premium on Dulles' vocabulary which, he believed, reflected Dulles' legal profession. Robert Murphy interpreted the Secretary's language differently: "He was entirely capable of suddenly ejaculating in the midst of a critical situation: 'It's about time we started throwing bombs in the market place.' But that type of statement was a relief from the pressure and was to be taken with a warehouse full of salt."⁶⁴

The writer believes that Americans often incorporate hyperboles into their speech while the English achieve similar results by utilizing understatement. While the English and Americans speak the same language, interpretation of the words often loses something in understanding.

Dulles returned to the United States and gave the following account of the tripartite meeting. It is quoted at length to demonstrate the difficulty Eden encountered with the Secretary. Dulles

⁶²Eden, pg. 437.

⁶³Macmillan, pg. 107.

⁶⁴Murphy, pg. 470.

had a tendency to tell his allies one thing and the American public quite another although public statements did not necessarily constitute official American policy.

...We decided to call together in conference the nations most directly involved with a view to see whether agreement could not be reached upon an adequate and dependable international administration of the Canal on terms which would respect, and generously respect, all of the legitimate rights of Egypt.

Now, I've been asked, "What will we do if the conference fails?" My answer to that is that we are not thinking in terms of the conference failing. But I can say this: We have given no commitments at any time as to what the United States would do in that unhappy contingency. 65

Dulles stated that the purpose of the conference was to see whether international administration could achieve an equitable settlement. The Prime Minister had much more forceful ideas. Noticeably the Secretary made no mention of Egypt's failure to permit Israeli shipping through the Canal. This was an indication of American efforts to isolate the crisis from the Arab-Israeli dispute. To invoke the 1888 Convention and later the UN, which had endorsed Israel's claim to passage in 1951, as the basis for negotiation while avoiding Israel's claim was tightrope diplomacy indeed!

Israel was a thorn in British policy as well; Eden had done nothing previously to enforce the 1951 UN decision. On 2 August the Prime Minister told Parliament that "freedom and security of transit through the Canal, without discrimination and the efficiency

⁶⁵Documents, pp. 152ff.

of its operation can be effectually ensured only by an international authority."⁶⁶ There was no mention of Egypt's rights. Nor was there conjecture that the conference's findings would not be binding. Eden did not seek the repristination of the Canal authority; he wanted a new international authority that would dictate to Nasser. Such an authority would obviously be unacceptable to Nasser; Nasser's refusal, Eden believed, would establish a casus belli.

The Tripartite Declaration on 2 August was misleading. The allies were not in close harmony. The legal position remained uncertain and world reactions were not in clear agreement with Great Britain and France. Jordan, Iraq, India, South Africa, Germany, Scandinavia, and predictably the communist countries had reservations. An Indian quotation captured the feelings: "...if the prospect of free navigation has been shattered, the reason lies not in the act of nationalization but in Western policies."⁶⁷ The Prime Minister pressed more urgently for American support.

⁶⁶Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1608.

⁶⁷Manchester Guardian, 31 July 1956.

CHAPTER II

Eden formed the Suez Committee, also known as the "Inner Cabinet", to oversee the Suez Crisis. The group comprised one third of the eighteen Cabinet members: Harold Macmillan, Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord President of the Privy Council; Alan Lennex-Boyd, Colonial Secretary; Viscount Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor; Peter Thorneycroft, President of the Board of Trade; and Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Secretary.

The importance of Macmillan in this group cannot be overlooked. Throughout the crisis he was "the most consistently ardent advocate of the Suez invasion..."¹ The fact that Richard Butler was not an original member was regarded as a Macmillan victory.² As the senior statesman in the Cabinet, he influenced Eden's decision in the abortive Templer mission and throughout the Suez Crisis gave the Prime Minister continued optimistic reports from his American friends.

Eden appointed Macmillan Foreign Secretary in April 1955. A clash ensued between the Prime Minister who desired to control

¹Anthony Sampson, Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity, pg. 109.

²Thomas, pg. 41. Mr. Butler was ten years younger than Macmillan and considered the likely candidate to succeed Mr. Eden within the Conservative Party.

foreign policy and the Foreign Secretary who was determined to direct his own department. Macmillan moved to the Exchequer in December 1955 on the understanding that the move would not be viewed as a step removed from the prime ministership.³ From the Exchequer Macmillan commanded the economic assessment of the planned military operation against Nasser. "Without his consistent support as Chancellor," one source wrote, "the invasion would probably never have happened."⁴

Eden and Macmillan were not close friends, but the Prime Minister relied heavily upon Macmillan during the crisis. To buttress his influence as Eden's economic adviser, the Chancellor had many close friends in America who could be used as barometers for American opinion. From these sources Macmillan continued to exude confidence in the American desire to stand by Great Britain in any eventuality. The Prime Minister's reliance upon the Chancellor handicapped the objectivity he needed to act rationally.

Prime Minister Eden mistakenly failed to seek bipartisan support for his policy throughout the crisis. He refused to consult the leader of the Opposition, Hugh Gaitskell. In the Opposition the Prime Minister preferred Herbert Morrison to Gaitskell. When Gaitskell defeated Morrison for the Labor leadership, Eden was concerned that this "was a national misfortune. In all my years of political life I had not met anyone with his cast of mind and approach

³Thomas, pg. 51.

⁴Sampson, pg. 109.

to problems. We never seemed to be able to get on terms."⁵
Gaitskell dined at No. 10 Downing Street the night news of nationalization arrived but he was not asked to remain for the briefing. Throughout the next few months, he often found himself unprepared in Commons because of his inability to ascertain the truth about Government policy from the Prime Minister.

Even in his own party, Eden did not have the confidence of many. He incurred the wrath of the Suez Group, right wingers who disapproved of British withdrawal from the Suez, or any other part of the world. Julian Amery, Harold Macmillan's son-in-law, and Captain Charles Waterhouse were the most vehement spokesmen of the group. The dismissal of Glubb followed by the departure of troops from Suez diminished Eden's popularity with the right wing faction. Any move by the Government to thwart Nasser received wild acclaim from the Suez Group, but Dulles' procrastination made the Prime Minister's situation difficult.

Another reason jeopardizing Eden's leadership centered around the abolition of capital punishment. The Government favored abolition for some crimes and consequently, permitted members of the Conservative Party to follow their consciences. The Government's later quasi-endorsement of the traditional party platform against abolition, proved too little too late as liberal Tories combined with Laborites to overthrow the existing statute.

⁵Love, pg. 372.

The House of Lords overruled the Commons' verdict but the damage had been done. The Government's failure to insist upon straight party voting undermined the confidence in party leadership. These were some of the prevalent attitudes when Eden addressed the House of Commons on 30 July:

No arrangement for the future of this great international waterway could be acceptable to Her Majesty's Government which would leave it in the unfettered control of a single power which could as recent events have shown exploit it purely for purposes of national policy. 6

He found ample support for his position during the Parliamentary debates on 2 August. Eden insisted on nothing less than an international authority to conduct canal operations.⁷

Gaitskell's speech gave the impression of bipartisan support. His remonstrations against Nasser were more vehement than Eden's: "If Colonel Nasser's prestige is put up sufficiently, and ours is put down sufficiently, the effects of that in part of the world will be that our friends desert us because they think we are lost, and go over to Egypt."⁸ Julian Amery could not have spoken more convincingly. Gaitskell believed in the British mission in the Middle East and he viewed Nasser's action as "the same we encountered from Mussolini and Hitler in those years before the war." He pressed for the curtailment of armaments heading for Egypt and other unfriendly Middle East countries, namely--Lebanon and Syria.

⁶Eden, pg. 434.

⁷Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1615.

⁸Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1620ff.

To this point Gaitskell gave full support to Government objectives. He had devoted thirty-five minutes to British indignation at Nasser's usurpation. Few attached much significance to his closing adumbrations, reservations that foreshadowed Labor Party divergence from Government policy:

We must not...allow ourselves to get into a position where we might be denounced in the Security Council as aggressors or where the majority of the Assembly were against us.

He thought the Government's refusal to utilize force to support the 1951 United Nations' resolution guaranteeing Israeli passage through the Canal complicated the legal justification for force now. In the Shadow Cabinet only Kenneth Younger and Philip Noel-Baker endorsed direct recourse to the UN.⁹ Gaitskell's warnings went unheeded at the time. Bipartisanship carried the day at Westminster.

In the debate which followed several questioned the United States' integrity in the Middle East. Labor MP S.N. Evans saw the United States undermining British interests:

I am not one of those who think in terms of an American bus with a British driver, American strength and British diplomacy. That is not how power works...Equally, I accept that we are a junior partner in the Anglo-American partnership. But even junior partners have their rights. I am therefore bound to say that our friends seem extraordinarily nearsighted in relation to the rights of what, in

⁹Thomas, pg. 57.

the last resort, is their only firm and dependable ally. 10

Walham Warbey, a left wing socialist, in reference to Conservative MP Hinchingsbrook's demand that the British and French present an ultimatum to Egypt with or without the United States, cautioned that "our country's prestige will suffer enormously because, against the background of their language and their demands, the ultimate conduct of this country will appear to be a climb-down."¹¹

Something like this happened in Great Britain. Rhetoric and emotions went unharnessed; whether by chance or design Government policy lost its flexibility. The Government wanted Nasser's removal and so did just about everyone else in Great Britain. Policy was channelled toward this objective with no apparent arrangements for compromise.

Eden took two steps on 2 August which increased the potential of war. First, the Inner Cabinet decided that force would be employed if negotiations were not forthcoming within a reasonable time frame.¹² Secondly, he announced the mobilization of 25,000 reservists. Activating the reservists implied a national emergency. No country of Britain's stature would activate reserves for purely defensive measures against a man like Nasser. To remove 25,000 people from their homes and jobs placed a premium on their function within the armed services. To deactivate them without utilization would create psychological and political repercussions: A loss of

¹⁰Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1643ff.

¹¹Hansard, Vol. 557, Col. 1650.

¹²Thomas, pg. 55.

prestige, and a loss of confidence in Government policy to achieve promised goals. The reservists became a barometer of British temperament. Financial sacrifice and family separation could signal widespread discontent if action were not quickly forthcoming.

The Prime Minister's demand for an international authority and the activation of the reserves set him on an irreversible course. He failed to allow Nasser any margin for negotiation, and in doing so, limited his own flexibility. Any retraction from the aggressive policy would result in a loss of British prestige. Neither Eden nor Nasser was in a position to back down gracefully. The Prime Minister, no doubt, thought he could "break" Nasser, but his policy was a statesman's error; one authority on international affairs said it succinctly: "...never point in one direction, and while ruling out certain choices, leave a considerable margin for maneuver..."¹³

American support was a prime factor in Eden's policy. American aid could make a military operation more readily available than the six-week preparation Eden anticipated, and more important, the United States could help mold world opinion against Nasser. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister received indications that British intentions might not be wholly acceptable to the United States. Dulles' proposal to convene the London Conference at a much later date has been previously cited. Such a proposal was not the action of a country contemplating quick military retaliation.

¹³Stanley Hoffmann, Gulliver's Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy, pg. xvi.

More frustrating to Eden was the American decision to continue payment of canal dues to the Egyptian company. The French and British made payments to the old Suez Company's Paris and London offices which accounted for 65 percent of the annual dues collected. Eden had no success in diverting American revenues. The Secretary claimed lack of jurisdiction to impose restraints upon American owned ships, many of which flew Liberian and Panamanian flags. On 5 August American ships received authority from the United States Government to pay dues to the nationalized Egyptian authority but such payments were to be "under protest and without prejudice."¹⁴

If Dulles cooperated with his allies, Nasser would receive barely one fifth of the annual dues. Such a marginal collection could impair the effective operation of the Canal. Dulles' refusal to comply with the Anglo-French request marked the de facto recognition of the nationalized company. The Secretary's motives were unquestionably directed toward keeping the Canal operational, thereby eliminating the justification for coercion. One critic thought that from an American viewpoint, avoidance of war was paramount to international justice.¹⁵ World opinion questioned whether the British and French had a strong claim against Egypt.

1956 was a Presidential Election year in the United States. Prime Minister Eden knew the President planned to seek another term

¹⁴Times, 6 August 1956.

¹⁵Finer, pg. 110.

and realized the potential influence of a major confrontation in the Middle East upon the American voter. Elected in 1952 to end the Korean War, Eisenhower had been hailed as the President of Peace. Politically, Republicans stressed the period of international tranquility during the Eisenhower administration. Republicans sought to neutralize international affairs as a political issue in the campaign. Eisenhower had suffered a heart attack in 1955 and an international crisis could cause undue pressure on the President's heart. Under the Constitution the Vice-President would succeed in case of the President's ill health or demise. After the Republican National Convention there was an unprecedented attempt to dump Richard Nixon from the second slot on the Republican ticket. Mr. Nixon went on national television and delivered his famous Checkers speech to arrest the movement. At that time many Republicans wanted to avoid any issue that could possibly jeopardize the President's health and put Mr. Nixon at the helm.

Democratic Presidential Nominee Adlai Stevenson could not have been more helpful to the Republican strategy. He avoided questions, either general or specific, anent American foreign policy. Men in public office believed that America would have more impact if it represented the united efforts of Republicans and Democrats. Foreign policy became sacrosanct, undebatable. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under the inquisitive eye of Senator J. William Fulbright, never became the symbol of the

questioning public until the escalation of the Southeast Asian conflict in the 1960s.

Some Americans stressed the importance of the election while dealing with the Suez crisis,¹⁶ and the British Government correctly assessed that the United States did not wish to take action until after the 6 November election. However, the likelihood that a Middle East flare-up would create sufficient tension to alter the election outcome was remote. Frankly, the American voter was not abreast of the Middle East situation. Dulles told Macmillan that "Suez was playing no part in the elections at the present time, since the Republicans didn't understand it, and the Democrats were frightened by it."¹⁷ The one exception, the Jewish voter, could mean the difference in New York's electoral vote, but even New York, according to the polls, was insufficient to sway the election.

More significance should have been placed on the date of the election than the effect on the results. Dulles took 6 November and incorporated it into his plan of procrastination. The Secretary believed that time assuaged the requirement for force, and the Presidential Election, fully three months after nationalization, would be ample time for him to secure a peaceful settlement.

On his side the Prime Minister realized that many Americans questioned British unity on the crisis:

¹⁶UN Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., and Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover.

¹⁷Macmillan, pg. 136.

...Mr. Dulles spoke several times to me of the state of public opinion in Britain, which he maintained was not in support of the Government's policies over Suez. In the end I had to contest this myself. I still believe that American opinion underestimated the firm sentiments of our country at that time, and that this underestimate had a debilitating influence on their policy. 18

Gaitskell's closing remarks on 2 August forecast division and the Sunday Times opposed armed intervention as a "necessary procedure."¹⁹ Perhaps sensing possible dissension, Eden made a nationwide television speech on 8 August to solidify British opposition against Nasser and to stiffen Egyptian resistance to Great Britain. The latter objective guaranteed Nasser's absence from the upcoming London Conference. The effects of the speech were well calculated before presentation.²⁰

The whole trend in the world today is against taking selfish action for purely national ends...Our quarrel is not with Egypt, still less with the Arab world. It is with Colonel Nasser... He has shown he is not a man who can be trusted to keep an agreement...If Colonel Nasser's action were to succeed, each one of us would be at the mercy of one man for the supplies upon which we live. 21

The speech polarized national feeling; the majority favored a strong course of action. Gaitskell made two attempts to impress upon the Prime Minister Labor sentiment against any military inter-

¹⁸Eden, pg. 549.

¹⁹Sunday Times, 29 July 1956.

²⁰William Clark, Mr. Eden's press secretary; Love, pg. 396.

²¹Times, 9 August 1956.

vention.²² With Parliament adjourned Government opposition was difficult to gauge. Eden worked to keep his own party in line, but reports emanating from Washington were not helpful.

At a press conference on 8 August the President said, "...I can't conceive of military force being a good solution, certainly under conditions as we know them now, and in view of our hopes that things are going to be settled peacefully."²³ The President advocated common sense and sober thinking and pointed "out that damage and destruction is no settlement when you are trying to build and construct." Eisenhower thought Prime Minister Eden placed too much premium on breaking Nasser. Britain received these statements with much disquiet. Was this in line with Dulles' promise to "disgorge" what Nasser swallowed?

Almost in the next minute the President answered a question concerning military intervention under any circumstances:

...every important question in the world in which more than one nation is interested should be settled by negotiation. We have tried to substitute the conference table for the battlefield. Now, I don't mean to say that anyone has to surrender rights without using everything they can to preserve their rights. ²⁴

The implication of force appeared perfectly clear to the Prime Minister. The continued use of tergiversation left the American position uncertain.

American lack of empathy was a bitter disappointment to the

²²Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 117.

²³Department of State Publication, The Suez Canal Problem: July 26-September 22, 1956, pg. 46.

²⁴Ibid., pg. 46.

Prime Minister. United States Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson called the Canal seizure a "ripple in world affairs."²⁵ Such offhand remarks received stern criticism from Great Britain. The President, more than any other American official, strove to maintain cordial relations with Great Britain; but the Prime Minister could not help thinking that the Americans approached the crisis as a business deal concerning the world's largest public utility rather than as an ally's fight for political existence.

Constant pressure from Paris further complicated the British position. At the London Conference Eden was wedged between French belligerence and American equivocation. A newspaper report in an American paper predicted more disharmony.

The United States at London will not back the British-French idea of a new international agency to run the Canal. Instead, Mr. Dulles will propose that Egypt alone will run the Canal and that a new international body be erected to hear appeals on such matters' as toll rates, management efficiency, provisions for expanding the Canal and unhindered passage for ships of all nations...²⁶

Nasser did not plan to attend the conference; Eden's 8 August speech made his presence impossible. In his refusal Nasser proposed another conference "for the purpose of reviving the Constantinople Convention and guaranteeing the freedom of navigation on the Suez Canal."²⁷ India advised Egypt's more concilia-

²⁵Eisenhower, pg. 43.

²⁶Washington Post, 13 August 1956.

²⁷Documents, pg. 173.

tory tone throughout August. Nasser chose moderation in dealing with Canal workers and the use of revenues for the High Dam. On 6 August Nasser promised to modernize the Canal to accommodate larger oil tankers. He further initiated an appeal to the Security Council claiming Great Britain and France planned to use force to imperil world peace. At this time Dulles disapproved of British-French recourse to the United Nations because the subject of international control of waterways would jeopardize American privileges in Panama.²⁸

Compensation was the only solid basis for intervention while traffic ran smoothly through the Canal. To consider compensation condoned the legality of Nasser's nationalization, a fact Great Britain did not wish to concede. Britain was reluctant to accept the truth that the hazards to the British economy emanating from nationalization were "more speculative than those which international law deems a justification for military acts of self-defense."²⁹

Responses to the invitation were not overwhelming. India, Ceylon, Indonesia, and Pakistan withheld acceptance; rumors spread that sufficient acceptance would not be received.³⁰ The buildup of British-French forces in the Mediterranean caused apprehension among invitees who wondered whether acceptance to the London Conference meant the de facto recognition of the British-French position.

²⁸Macmillan, pg. 118.

²⁹Survey, pg. 18.

³⁰Manchester Guardian, 6 August 1956.

Dulles arrived in London on 15 August. The First London Conference met at Lancaster House the following day. Representatives from Egypt and Greece were conspicuously absent. Greece protested against the British position in Cyprus. Nasser sent Wing Commander Ali Sabrey to London as an outside observer to the proceedings. He met with several of the representatives during negotiations.

Secretary of State Dulles delivered a major speech on the opening day, stressing the international character of the Canal and the importance of free navigation. He argued that Nasser's action had been performed for national purposes rather than retaliation against the West for refusing the High Dam loan. The Secretary advocated an international board "to be established by treaty and associated with the UN. Egypt would be represented on such a board, but no single nation would dominate it." ³¹ Such a board would conduct the efficient operation of the international waterway and would be divorced from the influence of national politics.

Great Britain and the United States were more concerned with safeguarding the Canal from the control of one country than France who was not as conciliatory but supported the argument if it could overthrow Nasser. Eden underrated the difference between Dulles' position on 2 August and his argument at the London Conference. ³²

³¹Finer, pg. 150ff.

³²Eden, pg. 451.

Much more amenable in tone, Dulles now offered a Suez Canal Board that included Egypt to conduct operations and not a Suez Canal Authority to take over operation of the Canal. The irreconcilable fact of his proposal was the recognition of Egypt's sovereign rights while simultaneously advocating the removal of management from Egyptian hands.

India made a counterproposal offering a consultative body rather than an independent board which would be associated with the Egyptian Canal Authority in an advisory capacity. President Eisenhower cabled Dulles on 19 August that he believed the Indian suggestion would be more palatable to Nasser than the operating board.

Dulles approached the conference again on 20 August. He did not think the conference could make binding decisions on Egypt or dissenting members of the conference.

What we are proposing is courteously to inform Egypt of certain facts, and to ask Egypt whether or not she is prepared to enter into negotiations for a convention which will take account of those facts. 33

He hoped to acquire maximum unanimity on what was right for the international well-being of the Canal and to present these views along with dissenting opinions to Nasser. The Prime Minister's plan was not so magnanimous.

Dmitri Shepilov, representing the Soviet Union, tried to disrupt American proposals. "Nobody now disputed the legality of

the nationalization," he said. "Egypt was the rightful owner of the Canal and the conference decision as it now stood planned to allow Egypt "a place in her own home."

Selwyn Lloyd, able chairman of the conference, presented a strong reservation to Egyptian sovereignty:

Sovereignty does not mean the right to do exactly what you please within your own territory...the doctrine of sovereignty gives no right to use the national territory or to do things within the national territory which are of an internationally harmful character. 34

The French, who were openly hostile in their tone against Nasser, were willing to proceed without American support. "Nasser's not going to hurt us" French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau said optimistically. He proceeded even more confidently: "It would have been extremely normal for Egypt to be here to state its case."³⁵ French qualms anent the American commitment were reinforced by Dulles' refusal to lead the delegation to Egypt.

The Prime Minister approached Carl McCardle, a Dulles intimate, on 20 August and suggested that he induce Dulles to lead the mission. McCardle agreed with Eden's view but was unsuccessful in his talk with the Secretary. Macmillan also exhorted Dulles with similar results. Reasons for Dulles' refusal are conjecture but the Secretary probably thought his talents should not be placed in direct confrontation with a petty tyrant like Nasser.

³⁴Finer, pg. 169.

³⁵Ibid., pg. 177.

More accurately, perhaps, he did not want to share responsibility if the mission failed. In lieu of Dulles, Prime Minister Robert M. Menzies of Australia headed the mission. A qualified diplomat, Menzies' affinity with Great Britain and his forceful speech made him ill-suited for the task. Representatives from the United States, Sweden, Ethiopia, and Iran served on the committee with Menzies.

Opportunity for success was slim once Dulles refused to participate. Without power to negotiate Menzies realized the weakness in the assumption of a Canal free from politics governed by a board void of authority to "take over the operation of the Canal."

Military preparations did not cease in anticipation of Menzies' mission; the British buildup on Cyprus and Malta continued. By 29 August French troops were also mobilizing on Cyprus, and Great Britain had completed Operation Nursery, the evacuation of 872 British wives and children from Egypt. Macmillan submitted a budget report requesting an increase in \$280 million in defense. He did not foresee "a flight from the pound" as long as the United States supported Great Britain.³⁶ He did warn that the expense of a long military operation would be exorbitant.

Meanwhile, Nasser announced the discovery of a spy ring under the leadership of two first secretaries of the British Embassy. Three British subjects were incarcerated and many Embassy officials were told to leave the country. Five British newspaper correspondents were ordered out; only the Manchester

³⁶Macmillan, pg. 109.

Guardian correspondent received permission to remain.

Word from Washington did not encourage Prime Minister Eden either. Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador to the United States, cabled London that American support of force was out of the question at least until after 6 November. A Dulles press conference on 28 August fortified Makins' report. Dulles said the Canal "is not a matter which is primarily of United States concern but primarily of concern to many countries--about twenty--whose economies are virtually dependent upon the Canal."³⁷ This may have been true but to Great Britain the comment was inopportune. Menzies had not departed for Cairo and already Dulles had made public statements suggesting a rift in the Western position. Nasser had no intention of accepting an international board. He would "accept any solution that does not affect our sovereignty." He went on to say, "we interpret international control to be a form of collective colonialism."³⁸

Menzies attributed the failure of the mission to a remark President Eisenhower made at a press conference.

Well, I am not going to comment on the actions of any other government. For ourselves we are determined to exhaust every possible, every feasible method of peaceful settlement...and we believe it can be done, and I am not going to comment on what other people are doing.. We are committed to a peaceful settlement of this dispute, nothing else. 39

³⁷Finer, pg. 187.

³⁸New York Times, 3 September 1956.

³⁹Macmillan, pg. 117.

Menzies' accusation suffered from a lapse in chronology. Nasser told Menzies that he could not accept the international board prior to Eisenhower's press conference.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, lengthy efforts by American officials to explain the American position often undermined British attempts to establish a united Western position. The Prime Minister longed for the old American cliché "No comment!" at these press conferences but it never came.⁴¹ The President's remarks reduced the likelihood of force and substantiated the belief that other American proposals were forthcoming.

Before the American Representative Roy Henderson flew to Cairo, Eden impressed upon him Britain's adamant position.

We are determined to secure our just rights in Suez, and if necessary we will use force because I would rather have the British Empire fall in one crash than have it nibbled away as it seems is happening now.⁴²

British sources later charged that Henderson conducted private talks with Nasser while Menzies tried to reach a settlement along the lines of the eighteen-nation proposal.⁴³

Nasser formally rejected the eighteen-nation proposal on 10 September. He made another plea for a conference similar to his request on 12 August which would review the Convention of 1888. Eisenhower dismissed the offer as void of any "substantive point".

⁴⁰Love, pg. 416-417.

⁴¹Macmillan, pg. 117.

⁴²Finer, pg. 192.

⁴³Manchester Guardian, 8 September 1956; Times, 11 September 1956.

Britain worked in a different vein deciding on 25 August to go to the United Nations if the Menzies mission failed.⁴⁴

While President Eisenhower advocated the exploration of every peaceful means to settle the crisis, Secretary Dulles opposed the British decision to go to the United Nations. He reversed his earlier decision of 24 August in favor of the UN.⁴⁵ Eden charged that the United States did not approach the issue in the spirit of an ally. "Rather did they try to gain time," he said, "coast along over difficulties as they arose and improvise policies, each following on the failure of its immediate predecessor."⁴⁶

Dulles resorted to legal jargon and subtle arguments to subdue the British and French move to the UN. He elaborated on the difference between "dispute" and "situation", emphasizing that if the resolution was the former the West might find itself in the minority while the latter might not be sufficient for the Security Council to render a resolution. All this double talk left Great Britain and France dumbfounded. The Secretary accused Great Britain and France of enlisting the aid of the Security Council to force a new treaty on Egypt which would bestow new rights on the users.⁴⁷ Dulles advocated a letter to inform the Security Council of the situation. One French official remarked that it was like leaving a calling card.

⁴⁴Eden, pg. 457.

⁴⁵Macmillan, pf. 118.

⁴⁶Eden, pg. 509.

⁴⁷Survey, pg. 30.

Eden remembered that "given the lack of American support for a stronger move, we were obliged to adopt" his proposal.⁴⁸ Great Britain and France sent a joint letter to the United Nations Security Council without a United States signature on 12 September. The United States' reluctance to support the Anglo-French letter left little doubt that the opposition was formulated upon the suspicion that it was not an honest attempt to reach a solution but "a device for obtaining cover" for armed attack on Egypt."⁴⁹

Since Gaitskell's speech on 2 August, the Opposition had been trying to forward the issue to the United Nations. The Prime Minister's decision to follow Dulles' advice would provoke harsh criticism from the Labor Party when Parliament reconvened for a special session on 12 September. Dulles recognized the Prime Minister's predicament and worked over the Labor Day weekend to devise an alternative. His substitute for United Nations action was the Suez Canal Users Association. Under the Users Association members of the London Conference would be invited to join a Users Club equipped with pilots and a collection agency. SCUA pilots would keep traffic running smoothly if Nasser withdrew his pilots. A system would also be devised to provide just compensation for Egypt. From the scheme's inception, the important question was implementation: Did SCUA members plan to force their ships through the Canal if and when Nasser stopped them? Dulles presented the plan

⁴⁸Eden, pg. 476.

⁴⁹Ibid., pg. 460.

to Sir Roger Makins who recalled the Secretary's views:

The Convention gave Nasser no right to make a profit out of the operation of the Canal. He would now see the money vanishing from his grasp and this, so Dulles argued, would deflate him more effectively than threat or use of force. 50

Not three weeks earlier Eden tried to get Dulles to redirect Canal dues; France, Holland, Norway, and Germany supported Eden in this request. At that time Dulles said, "No! You've got alternatives. If the canal is closed because we refuse to pay tolls, you know that it's going to cost you a lot of money to go around by the Cape! Besides, you can get some relief by rationing gasoline!"⁵¹ Eden queried what Dulles really planned now; his past remarks hardly confirmed good faith.

Prime Minister Eden visualized the Users Association as an opportunity to truncate dues payments to the Egyptian company and also solidify the waning alliance between Great Britain and the United States. He personally thought the plan "cockeyed, but if it brings the Americans in, I can go along."⁵² He decided in favor of the plan believing the United States would be committed to their own plan and dues would be diverted from Nasser's grasp which "was the key to the whole business."⁵³

Correspondence between Eisenhower and Eden accelerated during

⁵⁰Eden, pg. 516.

⁵¹Finer, pg. 203.

⁵²Thomas, pg. 76.

⁵³Eden, pg. 517.

early September. Had the contents of the communications been made public, the Prime Minister's decision to use force might have been thwarted by public opinion. On 2 September the President wrote:

I am afraid, Anthony, that from this point onward our views on the situation diverge...I must tell you frankly that American public opinion flatly rejects the thought of using force particularly when it does not seem that every possible peaceful means of protecting our vital interests has been exhausted without result. ⁵⁴

The President wrote this letter because of growing apprehension in the United States at the Anglo-French buildup of military forces in the Mediterranean. The Prime Minister remembered that the President's thought on the separation of the Canal dispute from the larger Middle East question was the main tenet of the letter.⁵⁵

Eden's return correspondence was more indicative than his memoirs of the disquieting news in the President's letter. He wrote on 6 September that Nasser's actions paralleled Hitler's movements before World War Two. Through expansionist and clandestine methods Nasser's motives were to undermine Western influence in the Middle East. The seizure of the Canal Company might begin a plan that would culminate in the cessation of oil supplies to Western Europe. He thought the British-American policy diverged in its assessment of Nasser's intentions and did not choose to wait "until

⁵⁴Eisenhower, pg. 666-668.

⁵⁵Eden, pg. 518.

Nasser had unmistakably unveiled his intentions."⁵⁶ The Prime Minister did not wish to take part in what he termed the "ignoble end to our history if we accepted to perish by degrees."⁵⁷

His reference to Hitler evoked an immediate response from the President. "The place where we apparently do not agree", the President said, "is on the probable effects on the Arab world to [sic] the various possible reactions by the Western world."⁵⁸ The Prime Minister made too much of Nasser, Eisenhower thought. Nasser thrived on drama and present Anglo-French preparations only enhanced his prestige. The President offered economic boycotts and Arab rivalries as an alternative to force. His tone of moderation could not be misinterpreted: "I assure you that we are not blind to the fact that eventually there may be no escape from the use of force" nevertheless "the world believes there are other means available" and military action at this juncture "would set in motion forces that could lead...to the most distressing results."⁵⁹

The Prime Minister now confronted the most crucial phase of Anglo-American relations. Secret negotiations with France for military intervention were in full swing. Canal traffic passed unhampered and the scheduled removal of British and French pilots was not likely to provide sufficient breakdown in traffic to warrant

⁵⁶Eden, pp. 518ff.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁵⁸Eisenhower, pp. 669ff.

⁵⁹Ibid.

a military operation. French Prime Minister Mollet and Foreign Minister Pineau flew to London to revamp military plans: Port Said was redesignated as the prime target site. This made more sense than the alternate target Alexandria since the ostensible reason for intervention was the protection of the Canal, and Alexandria is about as close to the Canal as Liverpool is to London.

British Cabinet debate focused upon course of action while military operations continued: UN or SCUA. Selwyn Lloyd endorsed the United Nations and warned the Prime Minister against Dulles' plan.⁶⁰ President Eisenhower's press conference on 11 September provided the prescient knowledge Eden needed to realize that the United States had no intention of solving the crisis by coercion.

As you know, this country will not go to war ever while I am occupying my present position unless the Congress is called into session...so as far as going into any kind of military action under present conditions we are not. ⁶¹

Eisenhower's suggestion that the problem be solved through the UN struck an ironic note to British observers aware of Dulles' intention to prevent initiatives to the UN. Convinced that the United States would be committed to her own project, the Prime Minister decided in favor of SCUA and stood by to receive vociferous rebuttals from the Opposition.

The House of Commons convened on 12 September for the third emergency session since World War Two.⁶² The Prime Minister held

⁶⁰Thomas, pg. 25.

⁶¹Eden, pg. 480.

⁶²The other two occasions were devaluation in 1949 and the Korean War in 1950.

his position and introduced the Users Association. In justification for not approaching the UN, he related the unfortunate results of the Iranian Abadan affair in 1951 when UN action lingered, and later appeal to the International Court found the situation outside its jurisdiction. Cries of "Deliberate provocation!" and "Resign!" could be heard above Eden's voice when he mentioned that Nasser "should not seek to interfere" with SCUA.

The Prime Minister's decision was now public record; he was committed to the American plan. On the same day, Secretary of State Dulles issued his first public statement on SCUA, implying that the plan was a British rather than an American proposal. That evening he studied Eden's presentation of the Users Association and decided his approach was too bellicose. The following day when asked whether the United States would support Britain in an armed convoy through the Canal if Nasser stopped SCUA ships, he responded:

Well, I don't know what you mean by "support". I have said that the United States did not intend to try to shoot its way through the Canal. 63

The Prime Minister recalled: "It would be hard to imagine a statement more likely to cause the maximum allied disunity and disarray."⁶⁴ Robert Murphy who worked with Dulles on SCUA recalled: "If John Foster Dulles ever was actually convinced of the possibility of organizing a Canal Users Association to

⁶³ Documents, pp. 210ff.

⁶⁴ Eden, pg. 539.

operate the Suez Canal, I was not aware of it."⁶⁵ The Secretary's remark shattered Eden's attempt to align British-American policy. The Prime Minister, understandably, did not look forward to the following day at Westminster.

Dulles' statement provoked the most insensed reaction in Commons since Nasser's nationalization speech.⁶⁶ The Prime Minister faced an unenviable twofold task: Support the American SCUA plan which Dulles had so weakly defended the day previous and postpone UN action which the Labor Party adamantly requested and Dulles poignantly disdained. When asked what Great Britain would do in the eventuality Egypt refused passage, the Prime Minister quoted the most positive statement in Dulles' otherwise deflating press conference: "In this event the parties to or beneficiaries of the convention would be free to take steps to assure their rights through the United Nations or other action appropriate to the circumstances."⁶⁷

Gaitskell queried British intentions to shoot her way through the Canal. Eden evaded the question and replied that Great Britain was in complete accord with the United States about what to do and reminded the House that Great Britain was acting in concert with other governments, and that it waited the opportune moment to approach the Security Council.⁶⁸ He could not promise postponement of

⁶⁵Murphy, pg. 470.

⁶⁶Survey, pg. 36.

⁶⁷Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 299ff.

⁶⁸Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 306.

military action until after the UN had been consulted. The Prime Minister's reservation opened the door for the Opposition.

Hugh Gaitskell led the attack stating that he had asked the Prime Minister on 13 August to make a public statement declaring military preparations precautionary and defensive in nature, but Eden at that time, refused. Gaitskell challenged the Government's initiative to withdraw Canal pilots and firmly dismissed any delays in shipping as pretext for military intervention. He raised the one question British-French military planners apparently ignored: How did the Government intend to occupy the Canal Zone after military intervention?

Labor MP, R.H.S. Crossman, warned the Government that military action without United States support would send the United States to the Security Council to censure British unilateral action.⁶⁹ Invoking Dulles' forced retreat over Indo-China with Eden's well-managed assistance, Crossman begged the Government to get off their very high horse "with as good a grace as possible." Labor MP Edelman, hesitated to accept United States association with SCUA. "The Americans, and Mr. Dulles in particular", he said, "suffer from the belief that nationalism is necessarily a step forward from colonialism."⁷⁰ To one Conservative MP the absence of Anglo-American cooperation signaled the decline of Western influence in the Middle East.⁷¹

⁶⁹Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 90.

⁷⁰Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 110.

⁷¹Sir R. Boothby, Hansard, Vol. 558, Col. 142.

Dulles' 13 September press conference undoubtedly induced further polarization of British opinion. The Labor Party insisted upon recourse to the UN and the inefficacy of force as a successful deterrent to Nasser in world opinion. Conservatives criticized American policy which undermined the British position in the Middle East. The Suez Group attached economic significance to the American role in the Middle East and thought that it was about time that the Government protect her interests and act independently.⁷² On the main question to accept SCUA, the Government majority was sixty-nine votes, larger than straight party voting, but British opinion now clearly separated on the question of force.

The debates were hard on the Prime Minister. Negotiations with France and the United States, had thrown Eden into a revolving door. Two days at Westminster defending an American proposal the United States refused to support was sufficient for Eden to side with France. "American torpedoing of their own plan on the first day of launching it left no alternative but to use force or acquiesce in Nasser's triumph," the Prime Minister wrote.⁷³ He might also have added that he was now barely on speaking terms with Secretary Dulles.

⁷²Leon D. Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis, pg. 59.

⁷³Love, pg. 427.

CHAPTER III

Dulles in his SCUA proposal clearly played for time.¹ He told Macmillan that "six months of economic pressure on Nasser would accomplish all we wanted."² For the previous two months the Secretary refused to redirect dues to the Suez Canal Company offices in Paris or London. His demand now for economic pressures had a hollow ring.

The Prime Minister had miscalculated the response of American policy and it cost him dearly. Communications from the President and disturbing reports from American press conferences amply suggested American reluctance to utilize force. The Prime Minister also realized that the walkout of Canal pilots would not provide the occasion for intervention.

Even before nationalization there was a shortage of pilots. The Canal normally required 250 pilots, but only 205 were on hand on 26 July, and of these, 115 were British and French citizens. To alleviate any tension or pretext for war, Nasser went to extremes to guarantee the perpetuation of traffic through the Canal.

¹Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power, pp. 177-178.

²Macmillan, pg. 136.

On 4 August he authorized the payment of Canal dues to frozen Egyptian accounts in Paris and London. He followed with a five-year \$56-million Canal program to enlarge the Canal's dimensions for larger transports. He made little mention of his earlier promise to reallocate Canal dues for the construction of the High Dam. With a loan from India and promised credits against cotton from Communist China, Nasser faced little difficulty in operating the Canal.

Britain and France overestimated the difficulty of transit through the Suez Canal. The miscalculation stemmed partially from the pilots themselves who, wanting to protect the uniqueness of their skilled jobs, publicized the difficulty of transit. The job was more tedious than skillful; a one-way excursion took twelve hours. The Suez Canal does not have to contend with the many locks which hamper passage through the Panama Canal.³ Several merchant captains who frequently passed through the Suez Canal navigated the passage themselves. Egyptians anticipated the walkout of Western pilots and worked quickly to train new pilots, many of whom were captains in the Egyptian Navy. Lloyd's of London increased their war risk insurance premiums on cargoes earmarked for Canal transit on 14 September,⁴ but the measure was more a reflection of the British bellicose interpretation of SQUA than the scheduled walkout of pilots the following day.

In a public statement on 16 September, Nasser took advantage of

³An error in an Eighteenth Century survey established a water level difference of 8 feet between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and influenced Napoleon's decision not to construct a connecting Canal.

⁴Love, pg. 429.

the Western rift:

We shall not allow the Western-proposed Canal Users Association to function through the Canal. We Egyptians shall run the Canal smoothly and efficiently and if, in spite of this, the Canal Users Association forces its way through the Suez Canal then it would mean aggression and would be treated as such. 5

He sent a letter to the Security Council a day later declaring the proposed SCUA violated the UN Charter and the Convention of 1888. Present Anglo-French military preparations, Nasser maintained, were an eminent challenge to international peace. Nasser's UN overture shocked the Prime Minister who now realized the folly of Dulles' advice to stay away from the UN. Nasser's action further aggravated that element of British opinion which endorsed immediate recourse to the United Nations.

The Prime Minister was not enthusiastic about the prospects of the Second London Conference. The conference received the disapproval of several nations who were not extended the diplomatic courtesy of notification of SCUA before Eden's announcement at Commons. The conference commenced on 19 September and many loopholes were obvious. Required land installations, access of foreign pilots to Canal facilities, Egyptian cooperation and subsequent procedures in case of an Egyptian blockade were suspect. Italy refused to accept the Users and Japan offered resistance. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Italy, and the Netherlands favored submission to the United Nations.

⁵New York Times, 17 September 1956.

Spain, seeking to preserve relations with the Arabs in North Africa, recommended attention to Nasser's 10 September plea for a conference. A later conference established SCUA, but no enthusiasm developed. United States Ambassador Aldrich aptly described the futility of the organizational meeting: "It's a terrible thing to have to sit at these great conferences, setting up something that you don't think is going to work--can't possibly work."⁶

In a meeting with Dulles on 21 September, the Prime Minister expressed dissatisfaction with SCUA in its present form and pondered the next step. The Secretary thought that British discontent with SCUA was a premature assessment; the Users should be given an opportunity to work. He implied that the British and the French sought to scuttle SCUA before the organization had been formed and reiterated his reservations about UN action. If Great Britain decided to take the matter to the United Nations, he requested that he be apprised.

Thoughts of war abated in late September as shippers removed the 15 percent freight surcharge levied on Suez cargoes to accommodate the anticipated delay created by the pilots' walkout. Eden and Macmillan tried to keep the Americans "frightened" with hyperbolic statements reflecting British concern. Macmillan told Dulles during the SCUA conference that he would rather pawn the pictures in the National Gallery than accept humiliation from Nasser.⁷ Eden cabled

⁶Love, pg. 438.

⁷Eden, pg. 520.

Eisenhower on 1 October that:

Nasser is now effectively in Russian hands, just as Mussolini was in Hitler's. It would be as ineffective to show weakness to Nasser now in order to placate him as it was to show weakness to Mussolini. The only result was and would be to bring the two together...I feel sure that anything which you can say or do to show firmness to Nasser at this time will help the peace by giving the Russians pause. 8

The Prime Minister realized that the United States would not participate in military action against Nasser. His motive for maintaining amiable relations with the United States was to obtain American neutrality when intervention occurred. The Prime Minister did not wish to alienate the United States sufficiently to ignite American counteraction. American influence on world opinion could not be overlooked.

In late September the Chancellor of the Exchequer journeyed to the United States to attend a meeting of the International Monetary Fund. The trip gave Macmillan an opportunity to visit his mother's home, to renew old friendships, and to calibrate American opinion on the crisis. In Indianapolis he told a group of businessmen that Nasser could not be allowed to succeed; more was at stake than the Suez Canal,⁹ a view the United States was reluctant to acknowledge. In Washington the President sympathized with Great Britain and assured Macmillan "that we must get Nasser down. The only thing was, how to do it." The President realized the inapplicability of

⁸Eden, pg. 498.

⁹Macmillan, pg. 132.

massive retaliation in world situations: Formosa, Indo-China, and Egypt proved its inadequacies. With the United Nations membership climbing to seventy-six nations, the President recognized the United States' inability to control UN voting patterns through foreign aid and political alliances. Eisenhower, by citing the limitations of a super power in world affairs, sought to convey the need for moderation in handling the crisis. Macmillan left with a "strong feeling that the President was really determined to stand up to Nasser."¹⁰

A meeting with Secretary Dulles in the afternoon was considerably less cordial. Dulles was indignant over the British decision to go to the United Nations. He felt double-crossed because Great Britain did not make her intentions known to him.¹¹ On the topic of SCUA Dulles volunteered that the SCUA might work but it would take six months. Macmillan did receive some encouragement concerning the payment of American dues to SCUA though he doubted Great Britain could wait six months for results unless Nasser "was losing face all the time."¹² Macmillan questioned Dulles' willingness to support dues payments to SCUA now when he had continually refused in the past.

With one eye on the Presidential Election, Dulles hoped that no precipitate action would happen before 6 November. From the

¹⁰ Macmillan, pg. 134.

¹¹ Finer, pg. 261.

¹² Macmillan, pg. 136.

discussion, Macmillan made the following observations:

Except for the plea that we should try to avoid pressing the issue until the election was over, there was no hint in this talk that Dulles did not recognize our right and indeed our need to resort to force if necessary. Perhaps I should have attached greater weight to the date of the Presidential Election. Although there was a general opinion that it would be a "walk-over" for Eisenhower, and the Gallup polls confirmed this view, yet there might have been some nervousness at Republican headquarters. 13

Republican Party nervousness prior to the Election reflected the 1948 Presidential Election results when Republican nominee Thomas E. Dewey was defeated by the incumbent, President Harry S. Truman, after all of the major polls predicted an overwhelming Republican victory. The Republicans were not about to take another election lightly. Although the United States did not seek active involvement in the crisis at least until after the Election, Macmillan failed to observe that the President placed a premium on British justification for intervention and inaccurately reported back to the Prime Minister that "Ike will be doggo until after the election."¹⁴

The United States continued to undermine Eden's interpretation of SCUA. Dulles told the press on 26 September that American shipping would go around the Cape if Nasser prevented passage. Ships flying American colors would pay SCUA, but the United States was in no position to regulate American owned ships flying foreign

¹³Macmillan, pp. 136-137.

¹⁴Thomas, pg. 95.

flags. Dulles thought there was little chance of acquiring dues from Liberia and Panama, the two major countries sailing American owned ships. The day prior Dulles had told Macmillan that procurement of dues from ships under "a flag of convenience" could be realized.

The Secretary's equivocation on 26 September was more than matched by his press conference performance on 2 October. He made the following distinction between Anglo-French and American policies:

In some areas the three nations are bound by treaty to protect. In those the three nations stand together. Other problems relate to other areas and touch the so-called problem of colonialism in some way or another. On these problems, the United States plays a somewhat independent role. 15

The official release emended this statement to suggest that the United States did not seek to enhance or to deter anticolonial or colonial factions. The Secretary who originally sought to localize the Canal crisis, raised fundamental questions about issues that were not apposite to the dispute. If his main objective was to keep the Canal open, he could hardly achieve results by further aggravating the two countries who were in a position to shut the Canal down by military intervention. Nasser would surely scuttle every ship in the Canal he could at the first sign of intervention. Dulles' statement supported the contention that many British critics of American policy maintained throughout the crisis; namely--that

¹⁵New York Times, 3 October 1956.

to Americans nationalization was considered a step forward from colonialism.

The final death knell to SCUA was Dulles' following statement concerning the use of force to ensure passage through the Canal: "There is talk about teeth being pulled out of this plan, but I know of no teeth; there were no teeth in it, so far as I am aware."¹⁶ If Eden had any difficulty persuading members of his Cabinet to follow through with secret military plans which now included Israel, Dulles' press conference proved the deciding influence.¹⁷ Anthony Nutting remembered the press conference as the final breaking point in Anglo-American negotiations.¹⁸

The Secretary's handling of SCUA was the culmination of an irresolute American policy. Dulles had to provide the leadership in negotiations because the British and French were too emotionally involved in the situation to achieve a peaceful settlement with Nasser. From the outset, Dulles' actions were nondirectional, improvisational. He arrived in London in early August laden with objectives but no policy. His prime concern was the isolation of the Suez Canal from the unique American arrangement in the Panama Canal Zone and the separation of the Canal crisis from larger Middle East questions. He never approached the crisis with genuine concern for the Anglo-French predicament. The crisis called for a

¹⁶New York Times, 3 October 1956.

¹⁷Thomas, pg. 96.

¹⁸Nutting, pg. 70.

man with imagination and a resolute plan for settlement, but instead of anticipating problems, Dulles reacted to them. His 2 October press conference reflected the frustration of a man who had run out of ideas. Great Britain and France were in no mood to wait longer.

American separation from Anglo-French policy hampered the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a peaceful settlement. Ministers Lloyd and Pineau met with Dulles in New York on 5 October to establish a presentation for the United Nations. Dulles hardly approached the meeting as an ally; he asked "was it for war or peace" that Great Britain and France brought their case to the UN? Pineau and Lloyd held their position maintaining that the capitulation of Nasser was necessary to restore Western influence in the Middle East.¹⁹ Foreign Minister Pineau did not foresee the possibility of a peaceful settlement.²⁰ Lloyd's attempts to establish a firm commitment from Dulles over Canal dues were unsuccessful. "The Secretary of State continued to prevaricate over this point," Macmillan remembered.²¹ Even though the three nations appeared a long way from accord, six principles as a prerequisite for settlement were established: Free transit, Egyptian sovereignty, regulation of tolls, allocation of dues, settlement of disputes by arbitration, and insulation of operations from the politics of one country--all were unanimously passed by the Security Council. Unfortunately, the

¹⁹ Love, pg. 444.

²⁰ Eisenhower, pg. 52.

²¹ Macmillan, pg. 140.

second phase of the resolution met resistance from the Soviet Union. More accurately, the Soviet Union vetoed part two of the resolution because it was completely unacceptable to Nasser. Mollet and Eden feared that the quick acceptance of the six principles opened the way for serious negotiations and jeopardized the forthcoming military plans. Consequently, Great Britain and France insisted upon a second phase to their resolution which argued that Egypt had "not yet formulated sufficiently precise proposals to meet the requirements set out above [in the Principles]"; and demanded forthwith proposals from Egypt "not less effective" than Menzies' proposals which Nasser previously rejected. Until such time, Nasser must comply with SCUA "which has been qualified to receive the dues payable by ships".²² Eden interpreted the UN results differently:

I soon learned that the Soviet Government regarded the proceedings at the United Nations as a victory for Egypt and for them...The powers at the London Conference had worked out an international system giving security for all...now all this was dead. It was no use to fool ourselves on that account. We had been strung along over many months of negotiation from pretext to pretext, from device to device, and from contrivance to contrivance.²³

Eden could take solace in Dulles' role as "the whipping boy for the national feeling of frustration over the Suez Crisis and the focus for the rising anti-Americanism."²⁴ The American per-

²² Love, pg. 446.

²³ Eden, pp. 563-564.

²⁴ Finer, pg. 307.

formance over SCUA fortified the Suez Group within the Conservative Party; Julian Amery was ready to "go forward with the Americans' approval, if we can get it, without it if they withhold it, and against their wishes if need be."²⁵

The climate of Eden's Cabinet was not reassuring; attitudes began to polarize. Macmillan threatened to resign if force was not used against Nasser.²⁶ On the other hand, Minister of Defense, Sir Walter Monckton did resign because he could not tolerate the plans for war. He remained as Paymaster General to prevent an avalanche of further resignations. Other Government officials, Anthony Nutting, William Clark, and Sir Edward Boyle resigned later, but their discontent was known during October.

A new consideration in the military operations threatened to abort British participation. Secret negotiations became considerably more complex in October because France was, by then, deeply allied with Israel. The French-Israeli alliance countered the traditional pro-Arab policy of the British Foreign office. Selwyn Lloyd, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Undersecretary, and Sir George Young, the official spokesman, supported the war effort, but the remainder of the Foreign Office, led by Anthony Nutting advised against any action which might be construed as an alliance with Israel. Great Britain was under agreement with Jordan to support retaliatory action against Israel. The absurdity of the situation was

²⁵Times, 12 October 1956.

²⁶Thomas, pg. 58.

immediately apparent: Great Britain allied with Jordan who was allied with Egypt who was allied with the Soviet Union conceivably fighting Israel who was allied with France. On 10 October Jordan, attacked by Israel, requested British help. Eden quickly notified Israel of British responsibility to honor the Jordanian arrangement and asked Iraq to send troops into Jordan for support. Israel complained about hostile troops on her border and Eden awkwardly retracted his request to Iraq for fear of jeopardizing Israeli cooperation against Nasser.²⁷

By mid-October President Eisenhower felt shut off from allied communication.²⁸ He knew of Israeli war intentions but recent events indicated Jordan was the Israeli objective. The Central Intelligence Agency reported an influx of coded traffic between Paris and Tel Aviv and a disturbing message from Douglas Dillon, United States Ambassador to France, indicated a combined British-French-Israeli intrigue against Nasser.²⁹ The President was unable to consult the British ambassador in Washington as Sir Roger Makins left for London on 11 October and his replacement, Sir Harold Caccia, did not arrive until 8 November by sea.

The tempo of the crisis increased as military operations entered the final planning stages. Eden presented the final military plan to the Cabinet for approval on 25 October. After an

²⁷Nutting, pp. 85ff.

²⁸Eisenhower, pg. 56.

²⁹Love, pg. 472.

Israeli attack on Egypt, Great Britain and France would send an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel insisting that the combatants withdraw from the Canal area. Nasser could not accept such a demand since most of the fighting would take place well east of the Canal. An Egyptian rejection, the ultimatum declared, would evoke joint Anglo-French military action to separate the combatants and maintain the security of the Canal.

The United States, without word from her allies but with several intelligence reports indicating an Israeli military venture, tried to ascertain British knowledge of Israel's plans. On 28 October Ambassador Aldrich approached Foreign Minister Lloyd on the matter. Lloyd intimated that the British Government was more concerned with possible Israeli action against Jordan than against Egypt.³⁰ The Foreign Minister clearly lied. Final military strategy had been formulated on the 25th. Great Britain was in no mood to jostle with another round of American procrastinating initiatives. The following day Israel attacked Egypt and Ambassador Aldrich again called on Lloyd to discover the British response. The Foreign Minister told the ambassador that the British Government awaited the arrival of Prime Minister Mollet and Foreign Minister Pineau from Paris. Lloyd promised to relay the findings to Aldrich after lunch. Lloyd later excused himself from the afternoon meeting as Commons was in session. At 4:45 PM Aldrich finally received word from Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office,

³⁰Love, pg. 505.

that Eden was announcing the ultimatum to the Commons momentarily. President Eisenhower received word of the ultimatum over the wire service. The President found the breach of diplomatic decorum insulting.

Of greater American concern was Great Britain's refusal to support a United Nations' measure censuring Israel's aggression. The President cabled Eden asking him to elucidate the misunderstanding developing from Great Britain's astonishing position in the UN the previous day. Eisenhower asserted the importance of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration and the British and French obligation to maintain extant borders in the Middle East.

The Prime Minister's message explaining the ultimatum crossed the President's cable. Eden felt no obligation to the Tripartite Declaration claiming that Nasser had previously dismissed the agreement. Eden also challenged the UN's ability to assume quick and effective action to stop hostilities.

In the United Nations, the United States pressed for the immediate withdrawal of Israel behind the armistice lines, the cessation of all aid to Israel, and the exclusion of all UN members from the use of force in the area. Britain and France vetoed this resolution and a similar subsequent Soviet resolution; these vetoes were the first ever employed by Great Britain and France in the Security Council. Great Britain argued that an Anglo-French force would be required to maintain the peace until the United Nations had sufficient time to act.

The Government's transparency promised heated debate at home. "It was Munich in reverse," Macmillan said. Privately the Chancellor thought "Anthony's going to have a rough ride for the next few weeks. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if he lost his seat."³¹

The Prime Minister told the Commons that the purpose of the ultimatum was not to stop Nasser "but to stop war." British vetoes in the UN and the cavalier renunciation of the 1950 Declaration strained his integrity. Two years earlier Eden told the same gathering: "I know very few international instruments, if any, which carry as strong a commitment as that one does..."³² MP Nigel Nicholson remembered nine separate occasions during the first six months of 1956 that Government officials supported the Declaration.³³ The critics were predictably obstreperous. Lord Kilmuir captured the emotion:

A storm of booing would break out as soon as Anthony entered the Chamber, and would rise to a crescendo of hysteria when he actually rose to speak. At one point the chances of fighting actually breaking out between Members was very real, so intense were the passions on each side. ³⁴

The unusual degree of backbench interruptions during the sessions was one of the most deplorable aspects of the entire crisis. The momentary suspension of the Commons on 1 November was the first such occurrence since 1924. Backbench opposition never achieved a strong political position; they were disorganized and without leader-

³¹Thomas, pg. 126.

³²Hansard, Vol. 532, Col. 326.

³³Nigel Nicholson, People and Parliament, pg. 121.

³⁴Love, pg. 560.

ship. "We barely know each other's identity", one backbencher observed.³⁵ Nevertheless, the behavior demonstrated the passion of the Members and the emotional pitch the crisis had attained in Great Britain during the long months of futile negotiations.

Lack of bipartisanship created much of the domestic frustration. Without knowledge of military movements or intentions, the Labor Party demanded strong countermeasures. James Griffiths, the Deputy Opposition leader proposed a censure motion and Gaitskell suggested the Conservative Party seek new leadership. The Labor Party thought the economic significance of the Canal warranted the support of the entire British population and that the Government's arbitrary policy was completely irrational.

Hugh Gaitskell accused Eden of jeopardizing the three principles of British foreign policy: Commonwealth unity, the Anglo-American alliance, and the United Nations Charter. The Prime Minister challenged Gaitskell's understanding of the Anglo-American alliance: "It is obvious truth that safety of transit through the Canal, though clearly a concern to the United States, is for them not a matter of survival as it is to us...this fact has inevitably influenced the attitude of the United States." Eden objected to the theory that "we must in all circumstances secure agreement from our American ally before we can act ourselves in what we know to be our own vital interests."³⁶

The crisis developed voting patterns along party lines but

³⁵Nicholson, pg. 117.

³⁶Eden, pg. 533.

there were exceptions. About ten Conservative MPs publically identified with the anti-Suez critics.³⁷ Sir Alex Spearman, Walter Elliott, and Sir Lionel Heald organized the protest. More important were the resignations of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Nutting, Edward Boyle of the Treasury, and Press Secretary William Clark. Only one Labor MP, Stanley Evans, sided with the Government during the November debates.

The press was divided on the issue. Many of the newspapers and periodicals outside London endorsed a strong Government position. The Manchester Guardian, the Daily Mirror, the Economist, and the Spectator opposed Government intervention. In contrast, the Government received support from the Sunday Times, the Daily Express, and the Daily Telegraph. The Times often uncommitted, offered reservations to Eden's policy.³⁸

One curious trend during the November turmoil was the increase in popular support for Eden's measures.³⁹ Critics of Government policy were unpopular because they were unpatriotic. Harold Nicolson knew the reason:

Simple minds work simply. The ladies of Bournemouth do not like the Russians, the Americans, or Nasser. Eden has dealt a blow to these three enemies; therefore, Eden must be right. It is as simple as that. ⁴⁰

On 4 November the Labor Party did stage a large rally in Trafalgar

³⁷Epstein, pg. 97.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 154-156.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 161-162.

⁴⁰Love, pg. 654.

Square to protest against Government policy but much of the opposition remained mute while military operations continued.⁴¹

Nasser predictably rejected the ultimatum. The coordination of Anglo-French air and amphibious movements posed a difficult problem to Eden. On 31 October Great Britain and France commenced air strikes on Egyptian airfields. By 2 November the Egyptian air force was no longer a deterrent to Israeli military operations. Eden's problem was the four-day time lag between the air strikes and the scheduled amphibious assault on 6 November. The hiatus provided the United States with an opportunity to achieve a ceasefire through the United Nations before Great Britain and France could achieve their military objectives.

When British and French vetoes stalemated Security Council action, attention turned to the General Assembly. An esoteric procedure known as "Uniting for Peace", a brainchild of United States' preemptive action during the Korean War, permitted the change of venue. Dulles addressed the Assembly and urged the immediate adoption of a ceasefire resolution. Of the American position in the United Nations against Great Britain and France Dulles said: "It was in many ways the hardest decision that the President and I ever had to take."⁴²

The Secretary considered himself the legal counsel over Suez; Anglo-French independent action had betrayed the lawyer-client relationship and had put the lawyer in an embarrassingly close working

⁴¹Nicholson, pg. 131.

⁴²Louis L. Gearson, The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, Vol. XVII, pg. 296.

relationship with the Soviet Union. The latter condition was intolerable to Dulles; consequently, the maximum amount of pressure was applied to achieve a quick ceasefire. Inopportune comments by British UN Ambassador, Sir Pierson Dixon, only reinforced Dulles' resolve. Dixon audaciously complained that the United States failed to consult Great Britain before approaching the United Nations. He also made a bogus analogy between the Anglo-French attack on Israel's victim Egypt and the 1950 United States' defense of North Korea's victim South Korea. The United States resented Anglo-French efforts to make a mockery of the United Nations. In a television speech on 31 October, President Eisenhower had outlined the American position:

There can be no peace without law.
And there can be no law if we were
to invoke one code of international
conduct for those who oppose us and
another for our friends. 43

The United States' resolution passed on 2 November with five of the sixty-nine votes opposing: Australia and New Zealand joined Great Britain, France, and Israel in protest. Great Britain's refusal of the UN demand reflected British reservations concerning the United Nations ability to mobilize an emergency force able to satisfy the exigencies of the crisis. "We were not prepared to halt our action," Macmillan said.⁴⁴ An intriguing thought considering that the amphibious forces were still three day's sail from Port Said,

⁴³ Documents, pp. 268-269.

⁴⁴ Macmillan, pg. 160.

and Israel's Ben-Gurion was about to accept the United Nations' ceasefire!

Israel's military operations were a stunning success. In fact, Anglo-French intervention would only have undermined Israel's victory. Ben-Gurion achieved his military objectives in Gaza and in the Gulf of Aqaba and willingly acknowledged the ceasefire on 3 November. The decision was momentary as Anglo-French insistence to continue operations prevailed. Eden began to doubt the wisdom of the military strategy and Pineau's attempts to strengthen Eden's resolve on 3 November were only moderately successful. In a letter to President Eisenhower the Prime Minister rationalized the planned intervention: "We cannot have a military vacuum while a UN force is being constituted and is being transported to the spot. That's why we feel we must go on to hold the position until we can hand over responsibility to the UN."⁴⁵ The United Nations' stand against coercion suggested that Anglo-French military operations would not successfully overthrow Nasser but Britain thought that a successful invasion might enhance her bargaining position in the Canal Zone.

Meanwhile, the United Nations, under the able diplomacy of Canada's Lester Pearson, adopted a resolution for an emergency force on 4 November. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who earlier vowed to resign if Britain and France did not retract their ultimatum, reported to the General Assembly that offers for an emergency force had been received. He proposed the immediate

⁴⁵Eden, pg. 552.

enactment of a United Nations Command under the directorship of E.L.M. Burns.

The delayed military operations brought heavy political pressure on the Prime Minister. He phoned Prime Minister Mollet early 6 November. Herman Finer paraphrased Eden's predicament:

I can't hang on. I'm being deserted by everybody...I can't even rely on unanimity among the Conservatives. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Church, the oil businessmen, everybody is against me! The Commonwealth threatened to break up. Nehru says he will break the ties. Canada, Australia are no longer following us in our policy. I cannot be the grave digger of the Crown. And then, I want you to understand, really understand. Eisenhower phoned me. I can't go alone without the United States. It would be the first time in the history of England...⁴⁶

The amphibious landing had just begun when the British Cabinet decided upon a ceasefire. Eden announced the decision in the House of Commons late 6 November. The reasons for the ceasefire were divers.

Uppermost in the Prime Minister's mind was the cessation of fighting between Egypt and Israel.⁴⁷ The ostensible reason for intervention, the separation of the combatants and the security of the Canal, was no longer necessary. In fact, the amphibious raid on Port Said occurred while Egypt and Israel fired their last shots of the war at Sharm-al-Sheikh, two hundred and fifty miles away.

The possibility of Soviet intervention was another factor in the decision. Nickolai Bulganin directed letters to Great Britain,

⁴⁶ Finer, pg. 429.

⁴⁷ Eden, pg. 557.

France, and Israel threatening the use of ballistic missiles if military operations continued. Prime Minister Eden telephoned Mollet on 5 November to evaluate the implications.⁴⁸ They were deeply concerned as to whether the United States would honor NATO commitments if Anglo-French forces were attacked in the Middle East which was outside the area of the NATO Alliance.

The Prime Minister was also responsible for Conservative Party unity, and the continued belligerent policy threatened to divide the Party. Head, Thorneycroft, and Lennox-Boyd did advocate continued military operations but resistance from Nutting, Clark, Boyle, and Monckton, now as Postmaster General, signaled Conservative Party discontent. The Prime Minister had to evaluate the significance of prolonged operations in Egypt upon the Conservative regulars and consider the possibility that growing disunity might jeopardize the Party's control in the Government.

The military operations brought the status of the British economy into question. Macmillan miscalculated the effects of the war on the economy: Reserves slipped £20 million in September, £30 million in October, and an unpredictable £100 million in November. He could no longer be "responsible for Her Majesty's Exchequer unless there was a ceasefire."⁴⁹ These were strong words from one who earlier threatened to resign if no military measures were taken against Nasser. Macmillan could not have accurately predicted the precipitate loss of sterling in November.

⁴⁸Love, pg. 613.

⁴⁹Thomas, pg. 146.

The Government was in a financial position to undertake the military operations but Macmillan, in miscalculating the mood and response of the American Government, failed to realize the repercussions on the British economy. The Chancellor attributed the speculation against sterling to heavy selling in New York and inordinate selling by the Federal Reserve Bank.⁵⁰ His contention was not accurate for the Federal Reserve Bank and the United States Treasury had not held any foreign currency since the 1930s.⁵¹ Nevertheless, it became widely circulated that American selling undermined the confidence in sterling. Macmillan correctly asserted that the fall in reserves was not in itself conclusive. The economy still maintained a positive balance of payments and military success could restore economic confidence.⁵²

More important to Macmillan was the American objection to the British request for a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Macmillan telephoned New York and the request was forwarded to Washington for clearance. The United States conditioned the loan upon a ceasefire in the Middle East. Macmillan challenged the United States' refusal on the grounds that the Fund was international in character and that Great Britain as a member in good standing should have access to the funds:

I regard this then, and still do, as
a breach of the spirit and even to the
letter of the system under which the

⁵⁰Macmillan, pg. 164.

⁵¹Love, pg. 625.

⁵²Macmillan, pg. 165.

Fund is supposed to operate. It was a form of pressure which seemed altogether unworthy. 53

Eden's Great Britain no longer possessed the reserves nor the support of world opinion to coerce Nasser's overthrow.

The Prime Minister telephoned Eisenhower on 7 November to suggest that he and Mollet fly to Washington for a full discussion of the Middle East. Eisenhower proved most receptive and promised to return the call after details had been arranged. Dulles was convalescing from a 3 November cancer operation and was not consulted, but acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover and other State Department representatives thought the meeting premature.⁵⁴ Ben-Gurion had not accepted the UN resolutions to withdraw behind the armistice lines and showed no signs of permitting UN forces on newly aggrandized territory. State Department officials thought an Anglo-French visit at this juncture would compromise the United States' position in the UN against Israeli aggression and Anglo-French involvement.

The British determination to maintain Port Said after the ceasefire incurred further pressures from the United States. Macmillan was refused oil provisions from America at an international conference in Paris on 15 November. The United States was in no mood to help with oil reserves until Great Britain withdrew her forces.⁵⁵ Three-fourths of Western Europe's oil came by way of the

⁵³Macmillan, pg. 164.

⁵⁴Sherman Adams, First Hand Report, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁵Survey, pg. 63.

Canal and Middle East terrestrial pipelines. Nasser had thirty-two ships scuttled in the Canal and all the pipelines save the American owned Trans Arabian Pipeline were sabotaged. Western Europe stood to receive little more than one third of her normal oil supply: 27 percent from non Middle East sources and 9 percent from the American pipeline.⁵⁶ The United States Middle East Emergency Committee established in response to Nasser's nationalization of the Canal company, had no plans to assist Great Britain and France until arrangements for the withdrawal of troops was promulgated. Foreign Minister Lloyd journeyed to Washington on 19 November in an attempt to alleviate American pressure on Great Britain to quit Port Said. Lloyd's efforts were ineffective as the United States endorsed an Afro-Asian resolution in the UN for an immediate removal of belligerent forces from Egypt.

With Eden in Jamaica because of ill health, R.A. Butler had the unenviable task of submitting to American demands. With knowledge of the British evacuation, Eisenhower promised emergency oil shipments on 30 November. Lloyd made the official announcement of acquiescence to American pressure on 3 December. The last British and French troops evacuated Egypt three days before Christmas.

⁵⁶ Love, pg. 651.

CHAPTER IV

The cost of the war was considerably more than July estimates for military intervention: Eden mentioned \$280 million and the Labor Party put the price at \$918 million to include the lost market in exports and the increased price in imports.¹ Twenty-two British, ten French, two hundred Israeli, and nearly three thousand Egyptians lost their lives in military operations. The futility of the sacrifice was a depressing commentary on the venture.

British motives to promote an international authority to operate the Canal soon gave way to emotional arguments to overthrow Nasser. "Using force was not a solution to the Suez dispute", a critic noted; "the Suez dispute was a solution to using force."² Conditioned by the Munich appeasement experience, Eden overresponded to Nasser's usurpation. The withdrawal from the Sudan and the Canal Zone, the Glubb dismissal, and the nationalization of the Canal Company reflected a trend Eden sought to arrest. "Superpowers are always slow to realize the decline in their capacity to command events,"³ an American historian wrote; Eden, who had negotiated for the removal from Egypt, decided

¹Thomas, pg. 151.

²Love, pg. 361.

³Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The End of the Age of Superpowers", pg. 46.

to make a stand against Nasser's nationalization rather than abdicate the role of British importance in world politics.

Nationalization signalled more than a potential economic crisis; it became a threat to the British way of life--a life dating from Clive's Eighteenth Century exploits in India. To believe in Empire was to believe in the greatness of one's nation.⁴ Though never formally annexed into the Empire, the Suez Canal was the lifeline of the Empire, a symbol of British greatness. Nasser challenged this greatness and only his submission could placate the defenders of the Empire. This concern distorted the realities of Nasser's actions. Arab nationalism and, more important, Egypt's quest for self-expression were never well understood in Great Britain. Eden preferred to identify Nasser's arrogation with Hitler's aggrandizement; he wrote to President Eisenhower that Nasser was "effectively in Russian hands."

From the American viewpoint, British Middle East policy did not reflect the realities of the post war era: Washington could work with London but not in their present position which former Secretary of State Dean Acheson "likened to two people locked in loving embrace in a row boat about to go over Niagara Falls."⁵ Secretary of State Dulles worked behind the scenes to curtail the British colonial heritage in the Middle East; his efforts in the Sudan and the Canal Zone assisted the British withdrawal.

American reluctance to join the Baghdad Pact was another example

⁴ Epstein, pg. 9.

⁵ Louis L. Gearson, The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, Vol. XVII, pg. 242.

of Anglo-American cross-purposes. President Eisenhower also thought British membership unwise: "An uninvited guest cannot possibly come into your house, be asked to leave, and then expect cordial and courteous treatment if he insists upon staying."⁶ But the President made no effort to block Britain's entry!! To keep the Soviet Union out of the Middle East, the United States gladly consented to British interests. The British Government mistakenly confused American recognition of special interests with tacit approval of British policy. American absence of policy was as much responsible for the misconception as the British desire to perpetuate her Middle East position. Emmet Hughes, an Eisenhower speechwriter, recognized the problem while preparing a response to Israel's attack on Egypt: "The damn trouble is that we don't have a policy in this Crisis and you can't try to use a speech as a substitute."⁷

The callousness Dulles exhibited before the ceasefire--his precipitate rescission of the High Dam Loan, his reluctance to divert Canal dues, his refusal to sign the Anglo-French letter to the United Nations, the press conferences on 13 September and 2 October, and his adamant demand for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of belligerent forces--crystalized anti-American sentiment in Great Britain during November. American intransigence in the United Nations appeared designed to break Great Britain; more humiliating than functional. Macmillan thought Dulles viewed himself as the UN's "international

⁶ Gearson, pg. 245.

⁷ Hughes, pg. 217.

Sir Galahad",⁸ and that the United States substituted faith in the United Nations for a foreign policy.⁹

Britishers believed that Americans were using a double standard in their actions. They resented the American view of trusteeship, whereby Americans derived financial rewards from investments but took no responsibility for the administration of government.¹⁰ They also disapproved of the American dissident view of the Canal: The closing of the Canal was hardly an economic inconvenience because it increased dependence upon the United States for oil and lending power.¹¹ The need for consulting the United States before taking necessary action aggravated British observers. Eden left for Jamaica on 19 November to convalesce from bile trouble and overall exhaustion; one MP disdainfully queried whether the United States would consent to Eden's return.¹² In late November 127 Conservatives supported a motion chastising American action throughout the crisis. The motion represented the upper class element of the Conservative Party who were disenchanted with the American replacement of what was their position in world politics.¹³

Had relations between negotiators been more cordial, a more moderate course of action might have developed. Eden could not help thinking that Eisenhower was much more favorable to British policy

⁸Macmillan, pg. 123.

⁹Ibid., pg. 243.

¹⁰Eden, pg. 500.

¹¹John Biggs-Davison, The Uncertain Ally, pg. 185.

¹²Sir I. Horobin, Hansard, Vol. 561, Col. 891.

¹³Epstein, pg. 58.

than Dulles and though the President might offer a strong protest, he would not take measures to prevent Anglo-French intervention.

Eden decided that the best time for military intervention, a time when a strong American counteraction would be least likely, was prior to the Presidential Election. Dulles, Hoover, Humphrey, Lodge, and Murphy all had mentioned the importance of the upcoming election at some juncture in negotiations. The election became so important that one critic conjectured: "...Presidential Elections have now become far too serious to be left to Americans only, and Britain too should be allowed to join in."¹⁴ Eden failed in his estimate of Eisenhower's faith in the United Nations to solve international differences. As the President of Peace he would not stand by and watch Anglo-French forces make, what he considered, a mockery of the organization.

The Atlantic partnership withstood the crisis but not in its former status. Macmillan gave much of the credit to Sir Winston Churchill's initiative. In November Mr. Churchill wrote a moving and forceful letter to President Eisenhower. In part he said:

There is not much left for me to do in this world and I have neither the wish nor the strength to involve myself in the present political stress and turmoil. But I do believe with unfaltering conviction, that the theme of the Anglo-American alliance is more important today than at any time since the war.

...If we do not take immediate action in harmony, it is no exaggeration to say that

¹⁴ Charles Curran, Spectator, 2 November, pg. 598-9.

we must expect to see the Middle East and the North African coastline under Soviet control and Western Europe placed at the mercy of the Russians. If at this juncture we fail in our responsibility to act positively and fearlessly we shall no longer be worthy of the leadership with which we are entrusted. 15

Once Great Britain withdrew from Port Said, America responded with deferred bank loans and oil supplies to alleviate immediate economic burdens. The more important issue, the political status of the Atlantic Alliance, remained questionable. Macmillan became Prime Minister when Prime Minister Eden resigned because of ill health on 9 January 1957. In his first national speech Macmillan approached the American partnership:

...true partnership is based upon respect. We don't intend to part from the Americans, and we don't intend to be satellites...the stronger we are, the better partners we shall be;..16

In March Macmillan met with President Eisenhower on Bermuda and from the discussions took satisfaction in agreements: The American decision to join the Military Committee of the Baghdad Pact, the installation of guided missiles in Great Britain, and the resumption of nuclear tests. The third accord permitted Macmillan some reprieve from Canal pressures as the Labor Party became "entangled in a hopeless web of confusion."¹⁷ Macmillan accomplished his objective to re-establish rapport with the United States though he had little success on the Suez issue.

¹⁵ Macmillan, pg. 176.

¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 196.

¹⁷ Ibid., pg. 261.

The Canal opened on 9 April; Great Britain boycotted its use until the middle of May when sterling credits were worked out with Egyptian financiers in Basel, Switzerland.

The Suez Crisis indicated the need for moderation and cooperation among the Western allies. The rise of third world nationalism and the increased membership in the United Nations signalled the importance of world opinion in international disputes. Britain, while seeking to maintain the Anglo-American bond, turned toward Europe and the Common Market for support.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Sherman, First-Hand Report. Hutchinson and Co.: London, 1962.
- Barraclough, Geoffrey, Survey of International Affairs: 1956-1958. Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Chatham House: London, 1962.
- Biggs-Davison, John, The Uncertain Ally. Christopher Johnson: London, 1957.
- Calvocoressi, Peter, Suez: Ten Years After. Pantheon: New York, 1967.
- Campbell, John C., Defense of the Middle East. Harper and Brothers: New York, 1958.
- Childers, Erskine B., The Road to Suez. Macgibbon and Kee: London, 1962.
- Department of State Bulletin, "Report on the Near East." Department of State Publication 5088. United States Government Printing Office: Washington, 1953.
- Documents on International Affairs, 1956. Eds., Noble Frankland and Vera King. Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Chatham House: London, 1957.
- Eden, Sir Anthony (Earl of Avon), Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden. Cassell and Co., Ltd.: London, 1960. (The third of three volumes.)
- Eisenhower, Dwight D., Waging Peace: 1956-1961. Heinemann: London, 1966. (The second of two volumes of White House memoirs.)
- Epstein, Leon D., British Politics in the Suez Crisis. Pall Mall Press: London, 1964.
- Finer, Hermann, Dulles over Suez. London, 1964.
- Foot, Michael and Jones, Mervyn, Guilty Men, 1957. Victor Gollancz Ltd.: London, 1957.
- Forrestal, James, Vincent, Forrestal Diaries. Ed. Walter Mills, Cassell: London, 1952.
- Gearson, Louis L., The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, Vol. XVII. Cooper Square Publishers, Inc.: New York, 1967.

Hansard, the official Parliamentary record.

Hoffmann, Stanley, Gulliver's Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy. McGraw-Hill Book Company: New York, 1968.

Hughes, Emmet John, The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years. Atheneum: New York, 1963.

Ionides, Michael, Divide and Lose: The Arab Revolt, 1955 to 1958. Geoffrey Bles: London, 1960.

Johnson, Paul, The Suez War. Macgibbon and Kee: London, 1957.

Love, Kennett, Suez, The Twice-Fought War. McGraw-Hill Book Company: New York, 1969.

Macmillan, Harold, Riding the Storm: 1956-1959. Macmillan: London, 1971. (The fourth and latest volume in Macmillan's memoirs.)

Marlowe, John, Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism, Cresset Press: London, 1961.

Monroe, Elizabeth, Britain's Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956. University Paperbacks: London, 1963.

Murphy, Robert, Diplomat Among Warriors. Colins St. James's Place: London, 1964.

Nutting, Anthony, No End of a Lesson. Constable: London, 1967.

Rondot, Pierre, The Changing Patterns of the Middle East. Chatto and Windus: London, 1961.

Sampson, Anthony, Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1967.

The Suez Canal Problem: July 26-September 22, 1956. Department of State Publication 6505. United States Government Printing Office: Washington, 1956.

Thornton, Archibald Paton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1966.

Thomas, Hugh, Suez. Harper and Row: New York, 1967.

Trevelyan, Humphrey, The Middle East in Revolution. Gambit Incorporated: Boston, 1970.

Watt, D.C., Documents on the Suez Crisis. Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Chatham House: London, 1957.

Wint, Cug and Calvocoressi, Peter, Middle East Crisis. Penguin:
London, 1957.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Economist

Manchester Guardian

New York Times

Spectator

The Times

Washington Post

Dougherty, James, E., "The Aswan Decision in Perspective" (Political
Science Quarterly, Vol. 74, 1959.)

Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr., "The End of the Age of Superpowers" (Harper's
Magazine, March, 1969.)