

DIVIDED WE STAND: THE SUEZ CRISIS OF 1956

AND THE ANGLO-AMERICAN 'ALLIANCE'

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, using recently-released American, British, and Israeli documents, private papers, and oral evidence in addition to published work, it re-evaluates the causes and development of the Suez Crisis of 1956. Secondly, it examines the operation of the Anglo-American 'alliance' in the Middle East, if one existed, in the 1950s by considering not only the policymaking structures and personalities involved in 'alliance' but also external factors, notably the actions of other countries, affecting relations between the American and British Governments.

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1956, Britain, France, and Israel, all of whom desired the overthrow of the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, agreed to attack Egypt. The Israelis invaded the Sinai Peninsula on 29 October, and the British and French, intervening as 'peacekeepers,' began bombing on 31 October, dropping paratroopers on the Suez Canal Zone on 5 November, and landing the main assault force 24 hours later. Almost immediately, Britain, under pressure from the U.S., was forced to cease fire. The Anglo-French force occupied only one-third of the Canal Zone and failed to topple Nasser. British and French troops left Egypt in December, and the Israelis departed in March 1957. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden was replaced by Harold Macmillan in January, as the Americans, under the Eisenhower Doctrine, replaced Britain as the dominant Western power in the Levant.

This chronology of the Suez War is well-known, but it fails to answer questions surrounding the conflict. Why did Britain, traditionally allied with Arab States, risk her Middle Eastern position by conspiring with Israel? Why did Ministers ignore the warnings of their officials against war and then circumvent them to carry out the invasion? Why did the United States, who privately shared Britain's aim of curbing Nasser's prestige and discussed covert plans against Egypt with Britain, cooperate with the Soviet Union in the United Nations, as the Soviets were crushing the Hungarian Revolution, and force two of her NATO allies to cease fire? Why did an operation which

was a military success end in political failure?

Past accounts of Suez have often tried to answer these questions by placing the responsibility for 'failure' upon individuals or portraying the crisis in terms of a 'moral,' rather than political or legal, conflict. Some authors ascribe the failure of Anglo-American 'alliance' to the hypocrisy and deceit of U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; some blame the 'irrational' behaviour of Prime Minister Eden. Some portray Suez as a Cold War episode with Britain and France confronting the Communist menace in the Middle East; others describe it as Egyptian resistance to imperialist oppression.

Recently-released documents and private papers from Britain, the U.S., and Israel do not contain portentous revelations about the chronology of Suez. No 'smoking gun' identifies the culprit who destroyed Anglo-American cooperation or orchestrated collusion between Britain, France, and Israel. Yet this approach to the crisis, which assumes that a few pieces of 'evidence' will solve all mysteries, is flawed in itself. By focussing merely on a talisman like the intrigue of collusion or American betrayal of her allies, we fail to recognise that those talismen are products of a number of variables within and outside the control of policymakers on either side of the Atlantic.

The first task of this thesis is to reconstruct those policies, actions, and circumstances which led to the Suez crisis and determined its course. British and American policies were not only influenced by France, Israel, and

Egypt. The cast of actors must be extended to include the Soviets, the Iraqis, the Jordanians, the Saudis, the Syrians, and the Turks, among others. The loci of action not only included 10 Downing Street and the White House, the State Department and the Foreign Office but also the Treasuries of both the U.S. and Britain, the CIA, MI6, and military staffs in both countries. 'Chance' occurrences such as Foster Dulles' departure for hospital during the Suez War must also be considered.

Through reconstruction, 'irrationality' becomes, if not 'rational,' at least comprehensible. The immediate 'causes' of the Suez War can be perceived as products of wider issues. Collusion becomes a strand of a web including Britain's Middle Eastern foundation of an Israeli-Jordanian axis, the Israeli-Jordanian border conflict, and the developing Franco-Israeli 'alliance.' Eden's apparent obsession with Nasser is appreciated in the context of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, Macmillan, who believed Britain could not survive as a global power without a victory over Egypt, a press which criticised the Prime Minister for being weak and indecisive, and an intelligence service, MI6, which insisted that Nasser was Britain's enemy and a Soviet puppet.

Re-evaluation of Suez leads to re-evaluation of the Anglo-American 'alliance.' The 'alliance' is not a fixed entity, subjectively defined by language, culture, and tradition or objectively defined by institutions and operating procedures. By autumn 1956, relations between Washington and London were so complex that, while the U.S. was refusing to join Anglo-French military planning

against Nasser, it was cooperating with Britain in a comprehensive program of political, economic, and psychological action to overthrow the Egyptian Government. Some American agencies and officials continued to work with the British, even during the Suez War, while others advocated sanctions against London.

Some aspects of Suez are still shrouded in secrecy. For example, a detailed account of the Franco-Israeli planning which pushed Britain towards collusion may never be available. However, as the legends of Suez are verified or refuted, so the myths surrounding the Anglo-American 'alliance' can be replaced with an understanding of the complexities of relations between Washington and London. The 'specialness' of the 'special relationship,' if it exists, can only be defined through such an examination.

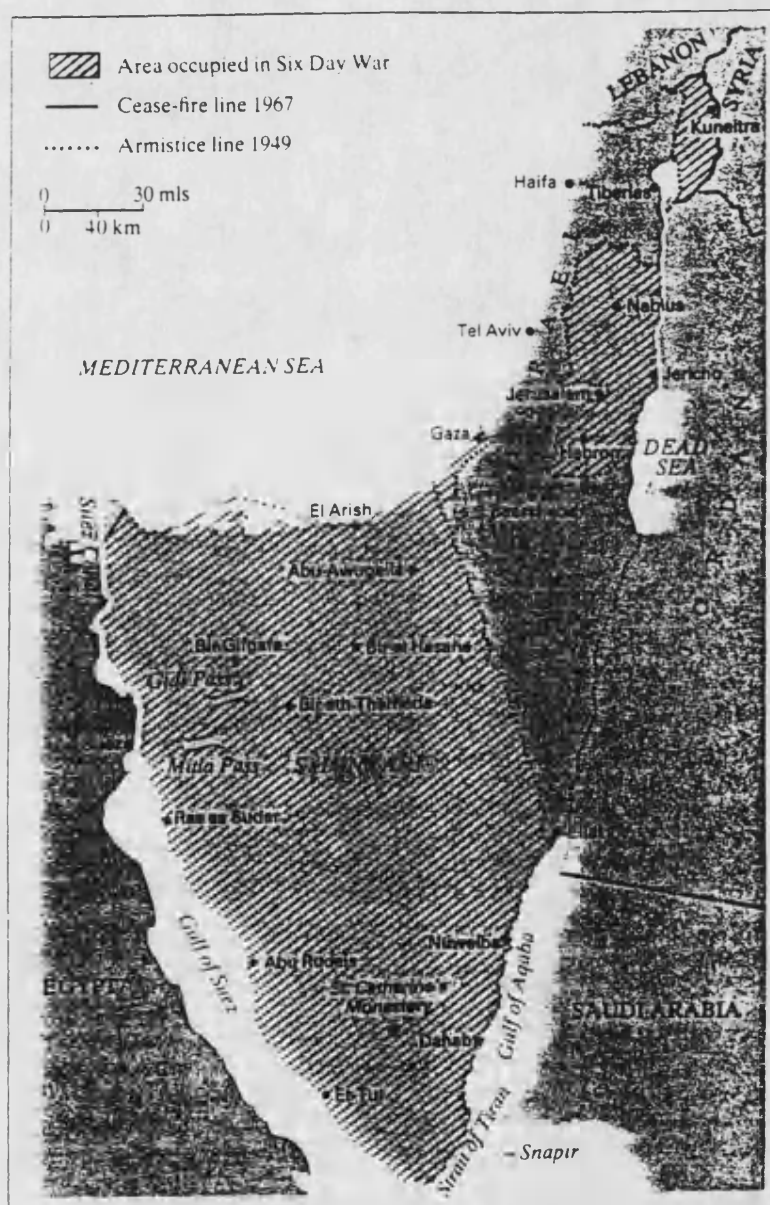
MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1954

V



From R. Orendale, The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars
(London: L. P. Orendale, 1984) pp. 212-213

MAP OF EGYPT AND ISRAEL



From R. Orendale, The Origins of the Arab - Israeli Wars (London: Longman, 1984), p. 214.

CHAPTER 1

1945-1952: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By 1939, Britain's dominant position in the Middle East was firmly established. The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided an important trade route to India. By 1876, Her Majesty's Government had acquired 44 percent of the shares in the Paris-based Suez Canal Company, and six years later, British troops occupied Egypt. The discovery of large oil deposits in the Middle East in the early 20th century expanded British interests in the region, as Britain created the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to supply oil to the British navy and sought concessions in countries formed from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Under the auspices of the League of Nations, Britain and France divided the Middle East into spheres of influence after World War I. Britain, having converted Egypt into a protectorate in 1914, assumed the mandates for Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq, installing Hashemite kings on the thrones of the latter two countries. France assumed responsibility for Syria and the Lebanon. Only Saudi Arabia, where King Ibn Saud ousted the patriarch of the Hashemite dynasty, Sharif Hussein of Mecca, in 1926, escaped the 'spheres of influence' settlement.

In the 1930s, Britain confirmed its position in the region with a series of bilateral political and economic agreements. Iraq was granted independence in 1930, with the 1932 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty guaranteeing British rights to

military bases until 1957. Under the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, Egypt, nominally independent since 1922, obtained the withdrawal of British troops from most of the country. In return, the British were granted free use of the Suez Canal Base until 1956. Besides its controlling stake in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Britain had a 37.5 percent share of the Iraqi Petroleum Company, and British banks and businesses dominated foreign investment in Egypt. King Abdullah of Transjordan was carefully advised by Sir Alec Kirkbride. Closest of all to the British was Nuri es-Sa'id, more influential in Iraqi politics than the titular sovereign.

Control of the Middle East was vital to Britain in World War II. The Suez Canal Base, at the pivot of Europe, Asia, and Africa, was the largest base in the world, through which supplies and troops were shipped to all theatres of the war. The Anglo-American Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo provided \$33 million in aid throughout the area. Axis control of the Mediterranean rendered the Suez Canal ineffective, but Middle Eastern oil supplies were shipped to Britain around the Cape of Good Hope.

In Iraq, the assumption of power by the pro-German Rashid Ali in 1941 not only led to a British-sponsored coup but also provoked the British to remove Reza Shah Pahlavi from the throne of neighbouring Iran, partitioning the country into British and Soviet spheres of influence. Fearful that Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Maher would welcome the Germans, who were advancing from Libya, the British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, surrounded the Abdin Palace of King Farouk with tanks in 1942 and forced

the monarch to remove Ali Maher in favour of Nahas Pasha.

World War II also led to the involvement of the U.S. Government in the region. Private American interests, notably religious, philanthropic, and educational institutions, had entered the Middle East in the 19th century. In the 1930s, U.S. oil companies acquired concessions for exploration in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, while U.S. companies established offices in Egypt. All these private efforts were independent of the U.S. Government.

The tradition of non-involvement was gradually overcome by American entry into the war and the growing strain on British resources, as U.S. finance was necessary for the Middle East Supply Centre and the Persian Gulf Supply Centre in Iran. When Britain requested that the U.S. continue to the annual subsidy to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) recommended U.S. assumption of responsibility in Egypt as well as Saudi Arabia. The State Department planned to discontinue the Middle East Supply Centre after the war and introduce a 'free trade' area providing for equality of opportunity in commerce, transit, and trade, as well as measures for the 'general protection of American citizens [and the] protection and furtherance of legitimate American economic rights, existing or potential.' An interdepartmental committee recommended \$100 million in aid 'for the purpose of furthering the political and strategic interests of the U.S. in the Middle East.'¹

¹ Thomas Bryson, Seeds of Middle East Crisis (Jefferson,

Despite these plans, post-war demobilization reduced the American presence in the Middle East, and the \$100 million in aid was not authorised. Only in Saudi Arabia, where U.S. oil companies triumphed in their bid for influence with King Ibn Saud, and the special political case of Palestine did the U.S. Government retain an interest. In contrast, Britain maintained her position in Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. She also helped Syria and the Lebanon achieve independence by evicting Vichy French governments and preventing the Free French from assuming control after the war.

While the Americans remained aloof from the Middle East, their interest in the Greco-Turkish-Iranian 'tier' increased. In 1946, the U.S. and Britain supported Iran, first against continued Soviet occupation of the north and then against Soviet-backed separatist movements. The U.S. and Britain also resisted Soviet pressure on Turkey to allow Soviet fortifications in the Bosphorus Straits.

In February 1947, Britain's decision to withdraw aid from Greece and Turkey led to the Truman Doctrine. In principle, the U.S. promised to support any country threatened by Soviet expansion. In practice, the Doctrine allocated \$400 million in aid for Greece and Turkey and extended any U.S. commitment to Western Europe to Greece, Turkey, and Iran, a possible 'outer ring' defence of the Middle East.

In October 1947, 'outer ring' defence was taken up in high-level Anglo-American talks in Washington. For the first time, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized

Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern security as 'vital' to American defence. The diplomatic and economic representatives agreed:

Both Governments should endeavor to prevent either foreign countries, or commercial interests, or any other influence from making capital for themselves by playing Great Britain and the United States off against each other....It should be contrary to their respective policies for either country to make efforts to strengthen itself or to increase its influence at the expense of the other.²

In mid-November, the U.S. National Security Council (NSC) agreed that the U.S., to protect the Middle East, should defend Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Iran. The NSC added, 'It would be unrealistic for the U.S. to undertake to carry out such a policy unless the British maintain their strong strategic, political, and economic position in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean and unless they and ourselves follow parallel policies in that area.'³

The British hoped for American assistance to finance economic development and build 'outer ring' defence while retaining a free hand to maintain their political and economic interests in the Middle East. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin recognized that Britain could not afford, politically or financially, to return to its pre-war policy. Resentment among nationalists in Egypt and Iraq at British 'domination' was growing as was disillusionment with the 'pashas' and monarchs.⁴

From 1946 to 1949, the Foreign Office pursued

² Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter referred to as FRUS) 1950, Volume V, p. 124.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Alan Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 155.

renegotiation of bilateral treaties. The results were disappointing. Plans to shift the centre of Middle Eastern defence from Egypt to Palestine foundered upon the dispute over a Jewish state. In 1946, Britain and Egypt tentatively revised the 1936 Treaty, with British withdrawal from the Suez Canal Base to bases in Libya and East Africa, but the agreement collapsed over a dispute about control of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The Portsmouth Treaty, signed by the British and Iraqi Governments in January 1948, was abandoned after violent demonstrations in Baghdad. Only in Transjordan was a treaty successfully revised.

Britain's political difficulties were compounded by economic weakness, as a sterling crisis in 1947 exposed the precarious state of Britain's reserves of foreign exchange. The cost of overseas commitments hastened Britain's departure from the Indian sub-continent, Greece, and Palestine, and Prime Minister Clement Attlee even considered withdrawal from the Middle East. In July 1949, Bevin's program to maintain Middle Eastern influence through economic investment was undermined by a crisis that forced the devaluation of sterling.

With the failure of bilateral cooperation and no money for unilateral initiatives, Britain asked the U.S. for economic and military support to the Middle East. In November 1949, Assistant Undersecretary Michael Wright, supervising Middle Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office, visited Washington for several meetings with George McGhee, the Director of NEA. McGhee committed the U.S., in principle, to support of Britain's Middle Eastern position

while noting the obstacles to a coordinated Anglo-American policy:

The objectives of the two countries in the area were identical, although there might be a difference of method in seeking to attain them....The difference in methods might arise from the fact that the influence and material interests of the U.K. and U.S. were not the same in each country....The U.S. Government had no desire to compete with or to hinder the U.K. in carrying out its policy in the Middle East. The U.S. policy was, however, governed by the limitations imposed by the nature of the U.S. Government, its policy of non-interference, and the difficulty of securing ad hoc treatment.⁵

U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, preoccupied with Europe and the Far East, delegated authority on Middle Eastern affairs to McGhee, who told Congressmen in February 1950:

The political loss of the [Middle East] to the Soviet Union would be a major disaster comparable to its loss during the war....The whole area between Greece and India, although constitutionally a relatively stable element, is already threatened by militant communism to the north and would be hard-pressed indeed in its efforts to hold fast to its newly-won independence.⁶

The Arab-Israeli dispute also led the U.S. into a more active role in the Middle East. After the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49, the U.S. refused to supply weapons to countries in the region, but Israeli diplomats and pro-Israeli Congressmen pressed for renewed supplies to Israel. The State Department was also concerned with the effect of the Arab-Israeli dispute upon U.S. aid programs, almost all of which was being spent to keep Arab refugees alive. Little remained for resettlement or development

⁵ Public Record Office, Kew, Surrey, United Kingdom (hereafter referred to as PRO), FO371/81907/E1023/3, Records of Anglo-American discussions, October 1949.

⁶ PRO, FO371/81907/E1023/12, Burrows to Wright, 6 April 1950; FRUS 1950 V, p. 1.

projects, and irrigation programs were blocked by disputes between Israel, Transjordan, and Syria over division of the Jordan River.⁷

When Britain, recognising the American anxiety, suggested an Anglo-American policy on arms supplies, Acheson responded with the suggestion that the U.S., France, and Britain obtain 'non-aggressive declarations from the Middle Eastern countries' who received Western arms. Issued on 25 May, the Tripartite Declaration not only included Acheson's provision but also recognised the de facto Middle Eastern frontiers, pending a final Arab-Israeli settlement. Any violation of those frontiers by aggressive action would be opposed by the three powers 'both within or without the United Nations.'⁸

The practical effect of the Tripartite Declaration was limited. The Western powers did not formally guarantee the Middle Eastern frontiers, and any of them could, unilaterally, refuse to act against an aggressor. The provision on arms supplies was not enforced until the creation of the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee in 1952.

The importance of the Tripartite Declaration was symbolic. The U.S. Government had expressed its willingness to intervene in Middle Eastern affairs, and the Americans were committed to consultations with Britain on Middle Eastern matters. In September 1950, McGhee and Wright, reviewing the Declaration and Arab-Israeli relations, also discussed Anglo-Egyptian negotiations for

⁷ FRUS 1950 V, pp. 125ff.

⁸ PRO, FO371/E1023/10, Furlonge minute, 27 March 1950; FRUS 1950 V, p. 135; PRO, FO371/81907-81910/E1023/File.

a new treaty, oil operations in Iran, and economic aid for the Middle East and South Asia. In October, 'Ambassador-at-Large' Philip Jessup and General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, held talks with the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Oliver Franks, and British military representatives. for specific discussions based upon informal talks in July and September. The British, who had favoured an 'inner ring' defence based on the Lebanon and Jordan, agreed to study protection of Iran against Soviet attack or subversion and defence of the 'outer ring' of Greece, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. In April 1951, McGhee, following a Middle Eastern tour, discussed his impressions with the Foreign Office. After the Truman Administration approved a comprehensive economic and military aid package for the region, McGhee and Franks considered the coordination of American aid with British assistance.⁹

The U.S. balked, however, at an unconditional commitment to support Britain in Middle Eastern defence. Bradley stated in the October 1950 talks that, 'owing to demands elsewhere,' notably Korea, the U.S. could not commit air or ground forces to the Middle East. In wartime, Britain would have to hold the area, without American assistance, for two years.¹⁰ In February 1951,

9 PRO, FO371/81912/E1023/152G, Price to Furlonge, 20 September 1950; PRO, FO371/80382/JE1055/55G, Allen minute, 20 September 1950; PRO, FO371/81922/E10213/File; PRO, FO371/81967/E1195/4G, Ministry of Defence minute, 26 October 1950; FRUS 1951 V, p. 134; PRO, FO371/91185/E1024/24G, Franks to Morrison, 19 May 1951, and subsequent minutes.

10 David Devereux, Between Friend and Foe: The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948-1956 (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1988), pp. 33ff.; PRO, FO371/ 81967/E1195/4G, Ministry of Defence

the Istanbul Conference of U.S. diplomatic representatives in the Middle East, while recommending a new security commitment to Greece and Turkey and an American statement of 'its willingness...to assist the Near Eastern states to strengthen their capabilities to defend themselves against aggression,' rejected a Middle Eastern defence pact. Anglo-American military talks in Malta in early 1951 foundered over the definition of Turkey's role in Middle Eastern defence.¹¹

It was only with the development of Western European defence that the U.S. considered joining Britain in the Middle East. In May 1951, the British agreed to accept Turkish membership in NATO, provided the U.S. and Turkey participated in Middle Eastern defence. In response, the State Department's Policy Planning Staff recommended a Middle East Common Defence Board, led by the U.S., Britain, France, and Turkey, to plan and coordinate defence with Middle Eastern countries, Iran, and Pakistan. In early September, the Foreign Office and State Department agreed the details of a Middle Eastern Command (MEC). France and Turkey joined as sponsors, and on 13 October, Egypt was asked to become a founding member.¹²

The approach had no chance of success. Talks about revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty had resumed in January 1950 but broke down in mid-1951. On 8 October, the Egyptian Government abrogated the 1936 Treaty.¹³ For the

minute, 26 October 1950.

11 FRUS 1951 V, p. 50; PRO, FO371/91219-91221/E1192/File.

12 FRUS 1951 V, p. 50 and p. 144; PRO, CAB128/26, C.M.36(51), 22 May 1951; PRO, FO371/91184/E1024/30G, Dudgeon minute, 31 May 1951.

13 PRO, FO371/90129-90151/JE1051/File.

next 20 months, the MEC and a subsequent proposal, the Middle Eastern Defence Organisation (MEDO), were submitted to Arab countries without reward. The plan depended on the use of the Suez Canal Base, which could only be guaranteed with an Anglo-Egyptian settlement.

The U.S. never regarded the MEC or MEDO as military organisations but as political pacts to link Middle Eastern countries with British defence planning, and many American and British officials subsequently questioned the plans' value;¹⁴ however, just as the Tripartite Declaration brought Anglo-American consultation over the Middle East, discussion of MEC ensured U.S. involvement in the region. The Americans even considered formal machinery for co-operation with Britain. In October 1951, the State Department suggested joint appreciations by American and British missions in the Middle East followed by meetings at the level of Assistant Secretary. The Foreign Office noted the U.S. was...

...clearly ready to play an important part [in the Middle East]....This can only be beneficial to British interests, provided that the somewhat exaggerated respect which they have hitherto tended to display towards Middle Eastern nationalistic movements can be modified by experience.¹⁵

The initiative failed for several reasons. McGhee left his post in late 1951 to become Ambassador to Turkey. Iran and Egypt became 'crises' that required ad hoc

14 Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri, U.S.A. (hereafter referred to as HST), Acheson Papers, Princeton Seminars, Box 80, 15-16 May 1954 Discussions.

15 PRO, FO371/91182/E1022/12, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1108 Saving, 27 October 1951, and E1022/14, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1146 Saving, 7 November 1951, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/91200/E1057/8, Eastern Department memorandum, 29 October 1951.

attention. The greatest deterrent was the Foreign Office's resources. Extra personnel needed for formal liaison could not be provided, and overworked officials in the British Embassy in Washington, notably Bernard Burrows and Denis Greenhill, continued informal consultations with the State Department.¹⁶

Cooperation continued at a high level throughout 1952, however, and an *ad hoc* body discussed a joint Anglo-American policy on Middle Eastern oil. From October 1950, a British Embassy official liaised with the State Department on 'information policy,' an euphemism for covert and overt propaganda operations. Relations between the Pentagon and the British Joint Services Mission remained close.¹⁷

While British and American officials tried to coordinate general Middle Eastern policy, they differed in their approaches to the 'crises' of Iran and Egypt. In April 1951, the Iranian Government, led by Mohammed Mossadegh, nationalised the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). British officials and Ministers feared that McGhee, who made his fortune in the Texas oil business, and other State Department personnel privately welcomed the challenge to Britain's oil interests. Several Ministers, including Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison, favoured military force to regain control of the Iranian oilfields and installations, and war was only averted by Prime Minister Attlee's warning that the Americans would

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ FRUS 1950 V, p. 289; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 585ff.; United States National Archives (hereafter referred to as USNA), Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files, 611.41 Series.

not support military intervention. The election of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister in October 1951 did not ease tensions. Acheson cabled McGhee that British intransigence...

...starts from Churchill with the roar of a wounded lion, becomes more articulate with [Foreign Secretary Anthony] Eden, as he remembers twitting the Laborites for weakness during the campaign, and is fully rationalized by the civil servants....The new ministers are depressingly out of touch with the world of 1951, and they are being advised by the same officials who have allowed the government to follow the AIOC meekly into disaster.¹⁸

When Churchill visited Washington in January 1952, an argument between Acheson and Eden over Iran wounded Eden's feelings. Conciliatory letters healed any rift and the two sides compromised to make a joint approach to Mossadegh in August 1952, but Acheson's dislike of British policy was unabated.¹⁹ Secretary of Defence Robert Lovett, supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote:

The risks of continuing our present policy have become unacceptable, and...it must be discarded in favor of a policy of action to prevent Iran from falling to communism. Such a policy would involve a willingness, if necessary, to displace British influence and responsibility in Iran as has occurred in Greece, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia....Every effort should be made to obtain British cooperation in this policy, but with or without British cooperation, I believe we must move promptly along these lines before it is too late.²⁰

The State Department responded by presenting London with a

18 George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), pp. 329ff.; PRO, FO371/91184/E1024/15G, Boswall to Bowker, 29 March 1951; PRO, CAB128/19, C.M.51(51), 12 July 1951; HST, President's Standard File, Subject, Box 180, Iran, Paris to State Department, Cable 5189, 10 November 1951.

19 HST, Acheson Papers, Princeton Seminars, Box 80, 15-16 May 1954 Discussions.

20 USNA, RG 330 (Secretary of Defence), Office of the Administrative Secretary, Box 316, Lovett to Bruce, 16 August 1952, and Lovett to Acheson, 18 November 1952.

package for the production and distribution of Iranian oil, warning the British that the U.S. would proceed unilaterally if the proposals were rejected. The Foreign Office agreed to the package.²¹

The threat of high-level Anglo-American conflict was not as apparent in the case of Egypt. Until 1952, the Americans gave unqualified support to Britain in its negotiations with Egypt, and Eden praised the State Department and the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo, Jefferson Caffery. When mobs rioted in Cairo in January 1952, burning British-owned buildings and killing eight Europeans and Canadians, Caffery's representations prevented Egypt from breaking diplomatic relations with Britain.²²

The riots forced the State Department to re-evaluate Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. Acheson observed, 'The "splutter of musketry" apparently does not stop things as we had been told from time to time that it would.' If the British position could not be held by force, a negotiated settlement was imperative. On Caffery's advice, the State Department asked the British to recognise King Farouk of Egypt as King of the Sudan. Britain refused to compromise. Churchill, supported by backbench Conservative opinion, insisted Britain's Middle Eastern role depended on the maintenance of her position in Egypt, and the Foreign

21 PRO, CAB129/55, C(52)354, 'Persia: U.S. Ideas for a Settlement of the Oil Dispute,' 23 October 1952.

22 PRO, FO371/90150/JE1051/518, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 6098, 14 December 1951; PRO, FO371/96920/JE1052/69, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 166, 26 January 1952; PRO, FO371/96921/JE1052/85, Foreign Office to Queen Mary, Cable 27, 27 January 1952; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 641.74/1-2752, Cairo to State Department, Cable 1158, 27 January 1952.

Office claimed recognition of Farouk betrayed the Sudanese, who had been promised self-determination and self-government.²³

In July 1952, Britain and the U.S. nearly quarrelled publicly when King Farouk threatened to replace Prime Minister Hilali Pasha, whom the British considered fair and honest in negotiation. Eden wished to tell Farouk that the change would 'lead to disaster for him and Egypt.' Acheson, acting on Caffery's advice that 'any carrying out of British proposals...would be the beginning of the final evacuation of the British from the Middle East and of the eventual evacuation of our own interests,' withheld his support.²⁴

State Department officials noted on 21 July, 'It is becoming more and more difficult to give support to the British in the measure they desire since we are less and less convinced of the correctness of this position.' If Egypt proceeded with negotiations over the Suez Canal Base and Middle Eastern defence, the U.S. would recognize Farouk as 'King of the Sudan' and aid Egypt's armed forces. Days later, plans were upset when a group of Army and Air Force officers toppled the Egyptian Government and forced Farouk's abdication on 26 July. General Mohammed Neguib was installed as the leader of the ruling junta, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC).²⁵

23 Author's interviews with Lord Franks, and George McGhee; HST, Acheson Papers, Memoranda of Conversations, Box 67, Acheson and Franks, 27 January 1952; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 1758.

24 PRO, FO371/96876/JE1018/189, Strang minute, 2 July 1952; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 1826-1833; USNA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 641.74/7-1152, Cairo to State Department, Cable 64, 11 July 1952.

25 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 1838.

The coup averted high-level Anglo-American differences in the short term, but it allowed State Department and CIA representatives in Cairo to shape American policy and establish American independence of Britain in the Middle East.²⁶

CIA operations in Syria in the late 1940s failed to establish a stable regime, but the Agency, supported by the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, soon identified Egypt as the optimal target for intervention. Economic aid could develop the agricultural and industrial potential of the country, provided it was accompanied by social and political reform, and a stable Egypt could be prosperous enough to lead the Arab world. Before this occurred, the U.S. had to bring a new regime to power, as King Farouk was 'no more than a reactionary landowner' and leaders of the ruling party, the Wafd, were more concerned with 'making personal fortunes rather than introducing social reform.'²⁷

The CIA acquired an important ally in 1949 when Caffery, U.S. Ambassador in France since 1946, was transferred to Egypt. McGhee allowed him freedom of action, and the Ambassador became formally involved in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. When Washington expanded the Embassy's staff between 1950 and 1952, Caffery obtained several young, ambitious associates for his 'diplomacy' with the Egyptians and British.²⁸

²⁶ See Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969).

²⁷ M.A.W. Sayed-Ahmed, Nasser and American Foreign Policy, 1952-1956 (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1987), p. 59 and p. 69; FRUS V 1949, p. 187.

²⁸ Author's interviews with George McGhee, Sir John Wilton, and Miles Copeland; Copeland, pp. 52ff.

Egypt's new military training program in 1950, which planned to send 300 officers to the U.S., gave the CIA its opportunity. Promising candidates were identified, and personal contacts were established which could be developed in Cairo. Of the more than 50 officers who studied in the U.S., at least six, including RCC members Hassan Ibrahim and Abdel Latif Baghdadi, were in the Free Officers' movement, the core of the July 1952 coup. Another RCC member, Gamal Salem, spent several months in the U.S. undergoing medical treatment. Shortly before the Revolution, Ali Sabri, the Chief of Air Force Intelligence and a secret supporter of the Free Officers, attended a six-month intelligence course, normally reserved for NATO officers, in Colorado. Sabri hinted later, 'The attendance of many Egyptian officers at U.S. service schools during the past two years had a very definite influence upon the coup d'etat in Egypt.'²⁹

In late 1951, after a CIA report identified anti-Western nationalism, rather than Communism, as the chief threat to American interests in the Middle East, Acheson convened an interdepartmental committee to study problems in the region. The report of the committee, chaired by Kermit Roosevelt, one of the CIA's Middle Eastern specialists, acknowledged, 'Whatever the U.S. can do to bolster both generally and locally the power and prestige of the U.K. will assist the U.K. in maintaining stability in the area and will reduce the need for direct action by the U.S. or other Allied powers.' However, the committee endorsed the CIA's Middle Eastern strategy for the Middle

²⁹ Sayed-Ahmed, pp. 84ff.

East:

Our principle should be to encourage the emergence of competent leaders, relatively well-disposed toward the West, through programs designed for this purpose, including, where possible, a conscious, though perhaps covert, effort to cultivate and aid such potential leaders, even they are not in power.³⁰

The committee's identification of Egypt as the primary target for operations coincided with Acheson's concern after the Cairo riots, and Roosevelt launched an operation in February 1952. The primary objective was a 'peaceful revolution,' hopefully led by Farouk, to defuse extremist opinion and encourage economic and social development. If Farouk was uncooperative, Roosevelt would look for 'other possibilities.'³¹

'Other possibilities' were the Free Officers. In October 1951, Ahmed Hussein, later Egyptian Ambassador to Washington, put Roosevelt in contact with the group. By March 1952, Roosevelt was meeting Free Officers' spokesmen in Cyprus. The contacts were carefully chosen. Sabri was trusted by Farouk, Abdel Moneim el-Naggar was related to Queen Narriman, and Colonel Abdel Moneim Amin was a wealthy member of the Court. The meetings with Roosevelt fostered exchanges between the Officers and the U.S. Embassy, notably the Assistant Air Attache, Lieutenant-Colonel David Evans, and the Political Secretary, William Lakeland.³²

In May, Roosevelt, after consulting Caffery, cabled

³⁰ Geoffrey Aronson, From Sideshow to Centre Stage: U.S. Policy Towards Egypt, 1946-1956 (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienne, 1986), p. 51; USNA, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, 1947-1953, Box 14, National Security Council staff study, 18 January 1952.

³¹ Copeland, pp. 47ff.; Sayed-Ahmed, pp. 61ff.

³² Sayed-Ahmed, p. 74 and p. 80.

Acheson that the 'popular revolution' favoured by the State Department was not feasible, and only the Army could cope with Egypt's problems.³³ In June 1952, the State Department told Britain, when it requested American support to prevent Hilali Pasha's replacement, that the Department did 'not believe that the U.S. should involve itself in Egyptian domestic political crisis.' The ploy worked: for the Free Officers, the choice of the discredited Hussein Sirry to replace Hilali symbolised the corruption of King Farouk and his advisors. On 13 July, Lieutenant-Colonel Evans was told that the rebels would act within the next few days. A week later, Caffery issued a statement discreetly condoning the forthcoming revolution: 'The policy of the U.S. is not to interfere in the domestic politics of another country and this policy has been strictly adhered to in this embassy.'³⁴

The coup swept away the 'old guard,' on whom the British relied for information and influence, in favour of the Free Officers, with whom Britain had few links.³⁵ Significantly, the first assurances by the Free Officers during the coup were not given to the British but to Evans by Sabri. Evans had to arrange a meeting between a spokesman of the new ruling group, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), and a British Embassy official. The State Department warned the British Embassy in Washington that 'foreign intervention,' including a British military

³³ Copeland, pp. 52ff.

³⁴ FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 1826ff.; HST, HST Series, Naval Aide Files, State Department Briefs, Box 24, July-August 1952, 16 July 1952 Summary.

³⁵ PRO, FO371/96877/JE1018/204, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1060, 23 July 1952; PRO, FO371/96932/JE1052/398G, Eden minute, 5 August 1952.

operation, 'would be disastrous.'³⁶

Between July and October, the RCC dealt exclusively with the Americans. Evans was consulted almost daily by Sabri or el-Naggar, and Lakeland established a channel to Nasser through Mohammed Heikal, a journalist for the newspaper Akhbar el-Yom, owned by Mustafa Amin, another CIA contact. Evans was promoted to Air Attache, and a new Army Attache, Colonel H.R. Greenlee was appointed to work with the RCC. Through Evans, the Egyptians offered 'an unofficial committee to fight communist activities and propaganda,' with Egyptian military representatives and the American, British, and French Military Attaches. The RCC also proposed that a U.S. expert 'maintain contacts with civilian authorities' on matters such as land reform. The State Department accepted both proposals.³⁷

By September, the Egyptian situation provoked differences between Britain and the U.S. The Americans encouraged the RCC's program for land reform, despite the doubts of the civilian Prime Minister, Ali Maher, about the plan, and Acheson publicly praised 'encouraging developments in Egypt...including the reform program.' When the RCC forced Maher to resign on 7 September, the State Department, on Caffery's advice and without consulting the British, issued a supportive statement:

The Department sees no basic alteration of policies in this development, since the program of the Egyptian Government remains based on principles rather than personalities.

36 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.00/7-2552, Cairo to State Department, Cable 182, 25 July 1952; Sayed-Ahmed, p. 95.

37 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.00/8-952, Cairo to State Department, Cable 315, 9 August 1952, and subsequent minutes.

The Foreign office was enraged. Eden asked the State Department to reconsider its 'encouragement [of the] more extreme elements in Egypt' and minuted privately, 'Caffery could not be worse. Ought we not to tell the Americans what we think of him?' The immediate crisis passed with the mediation of the British Ambassador to Egypt, Ralph Stevenson, and Caffery finally persuaded the RCC to establish contact with the Foreign Office through the British Embassy.³⁸

The U.S. Embassy was now the dominant Western influence. Its independence of the British was illustrated by an incident in January 1953. Since October, U.S. Minister Robert McClintock conferred with RCC members about Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, Middle Eastern defence, and the supply of American arms to Egypt. At one meeting, probably on 12 January 1953, McClintock, under British surveillance, gave the Egyptians details of top-secret discussions between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade and the Foreign Office. London demanded McClintock's immediate recall from Egypt. Despite Egyptian protests, the Minister returned to Washington in March. A British officer in Cairo wrote:

I am struck by the damage the Americans have done here, in their attempts to woo the Egyptians, by communicating to them details of

38 PRO, FO371/96880/JE1018/33G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1279, 27 August 1952; HST, HST Series, Naval Aide Files, State Department Briefs, Box 24, September 1952, 9 September 1952 Summary; USNA, 774.00/9-752, Cairo to State Department, Cable 593, 7 September 1952, and 774.00/9-852, Washington to State Department, Cable 1334, 8 September 1952; PRO, FO371/96896/ JE10345/14, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1715, 8 September 1952, and JE10345/18, Cairo to Foreign Office, 9 September 1952, and subsequent minutes; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 1857.

what we had hoped to achieve in our negotiations....If we fail to get an efficient base, it is at least arguable that it would be largely the Americans' fault.³⁹

To the extent that American policy was directed from Washington, the Truman Administration moved towards Anglo-American 'alliance' in the Middle East. Acheson did not want to confront Britain, even over Iran and Egypt, at the height of the Korean War and the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Moreover, the British lead in the Middle East relieved the U.S. of the financial and military burden of defending the region.

American policy was not produced by one source, however. CIA and State Department representatives in the Middle East saw no reason to use the same methods as their British counterparts. The British supported existing leaders in the region while encouraging economic and social reforms, but the Americans preferred to encourage nationalist movements and cultivate leaders who would work with the U.S., since they doubted that pashas and monarchs would ever adopt the policies needed for economic development and political stability. A revised National Security Council policy in April 1952 yielded to these views. The U.S., through aid and propaganda, would 'support or develop those leadership groups in the area which offered the greatest prospect of establishing

³⁹ PRO, FO371/96896/JE10345/27, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1493, 9 October 1952; Wilbur Eveland, Ropes of Sand (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), p. 262; USNA, RG 84, Cairo Embassy Records, 1949-1954, 320.1 Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations, Cairo to State Department, Cable 1990, 5 March 1953; The Times, 14 January 1953; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 641.74/1-1453, State Department to Cairo, Cable 1401, 14 January 1953; PRO, FO371/102731/JE10345/1, Strang minute, 29 January 1953, and JE10345/14, Hankey to Bowker, 23 June 1953.

political stability oriented toward the free world.,⁴⁰

⁴⁰ FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 222.

CHAPTER 2

1953-1954: DIVISION AND RECONCILIATION

With the accession to power of the Eisenhower Administration on 20 January 1953, coordination of Middle Eastern policy between Washington and London was no longer standard practice. President Dwight Eisenhower represented the Republican Party's 'internationalist' wing, and his Administration, like Truman's, was fervently anti-Soviet and committed to the NATO 'partnership' in Europe. It did not, however, equate the Atlantic alliance with unconditional cooperation with Britain in areas such as the Middle East. In the future, 'alliance' with Britain would be on a case-by-case basis, undertaken only when it fulfilled specific American objectives.

Eisenhower had a great respect and admiration for the legend of Winston Churchill, writing, '[Churchill] comes nearest to fulfilling the requirements of greatness in any individual I have met in my lifetime,' but the Churchill of legend was not the Prime Minister who returned to power in 1951. When Churchill visited Washington in January 1953, emphasizing 'that he would like to reestablish with General Eisenhower the sort of relationship which existed between President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill,' Eisenhower replied, 'Of course he wished to have the closest possible relationship with Mr. Churchill but...the making of decisions must go through regular channels.' The President wrote in his diary, 'The two strongest Western powers must not appear before the world as a combination of forces to compel adherence to

the status quo.¹

The President endorsed the 'anti-colonialist' rhetoric, increasingly pointed at Britain, of his officials. Writing in mid-1954, after France's defeat in Vietnam, Eisenhower's resentment surfaced:

The British always think their colonialism is different and better. Actually, what they want us to do is go along to help keep their empire.

The President wrote to Churchill in July:

Colonialism is on the way out as a relationship among peoples. The sole question is one of time and method.

Eisenhower suggested a speech by Churchill that would 'deal with the need for education and announce the cooperative purpose of great nations in the Western World to bring educational opportunities to all peoples we are able to reach,' so they 'achieved political, cultural, and economic standards to attain their goals' within the next 25 years. Churchill's reply was dismissive:

The sentiments and ideas which your letter expresses are in full accord with the policy now being pursued in all the Colonies of the British Empire. In this I must admit I am a laggard. I am a bit skeptical about universal suffrage for the Hottentots even if refined by proportional representation.²

1 Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas, U.S.A. (hereafter referred to as DDE), Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 8, DDE Diary, December 1954 (2), Eisenhower to Hazlett, 8 December 1954; DDE, Pre-Presidential Series, Princeton File, Box 72, Robert A. Lovett (1), Lovett to Eisenhower, 24 January 1952; PRO, PREM11/89, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 7, 6 January 1953; Robert Ferrell, The Eisenhower Diaries (London: W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 222.

2 William Ewald, Eisenhower the President (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1981), p. 95; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 3, DDE Personal Diary, January-November 1954 (2), Eisenhower to Churchill, 22 July 1954; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 8, DDE Diary, August 1954 (1), Churchill to Eisenhower, 8 August 1954.

As early as May 1953, Eisenhower's advisers tried to convert rhetoric into policy. Preparing for the Bermuda summit between Eisenhower, Churchill, and French Premier Joseph Laniel, Eisenhower's 'special assistant,' C.D. Jackson, advised:

[Britain] must be persuaded, through a solemn conference called for that purpose alone, that if they are to have any hope of preserving their commercial advantage through their crumbling world, they must allow us occasionally to take a front position....Out of Bermuda must emerge tripartite unity, but at the apex of the triangle there must be the U.S., in the person of President Eisenhower. This role should not be sacrificed because of a very human feeling of decency and generosity towards an opinionated old gentleman who is still sufficiently sharp and selfish to grab every advantage with bland assurances of unwavering esteem.³

The CIA suggested:

Bermuda might show concern about a general issue like colonialism and invite someone ([Indian leader Jawaharlal] Nehru, Neguib) to come to Bermuda or submit his views by wire. The appearance of other statesman in Bermuda, or Bermuda exchanges of view with them, would turn Bermuda into a world forum, instead of a Big Three Western Atlantic club.⁴

In the State Department, the NEA asked that the conference communique avoid reference to the Near East, Africa, or South Asia:

The U.S. is trying to use its influence to further a solution of the various disputes of the area. To be successful, the U.S. must secure an independent position,⁵ in order to give confidence in its efforts.

3 DDE, C.D. Jackson Series, Papers, Box 37, General Robert Cutler, Jackson to Cutler, 11 May 1953.

4 DDE, C.D. Jackson Series, Records 1953-1954, Box 2, Bermuda Conference Briefing Book (5), CIA, 'Political and Psychological Warfare Exploitation of Bermuda,' undated.

5 DDE, C.D. Jackson Series, Records 1953-1954, Box 2, Division of Near East and Africa Affairs, 'Communique of the Bermuda Conference,' undated.

The U.S. would support Britain's traditional position if and only if that support prevented the expansion of Soviet influence. As early as 1946, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, argued that the Soviet Union sought social revolution throughout the world and compared Stalin's Problems of Leninism with Hitler's Mein Kampf. In the 1950s, he unveiled the strategy of a 'counter-offensive' against Communism, based upon the material, moral, and spiritual advantage of the U.S. over the Soviet Union. For Foster Dulles, American leadership, rather than the Anglo-American 'alliance' or international organisations, would secure peace and protect the Free World.⁶

As soon as Eisenhower took office, the policy of cooperation with Britain in the Middle East and Iran was reviewed. Ironically, re-consideration of Iran brought U.S. agreement with Britain on the need for stronger action against the Mossadegh Government. In November 1952, the British asked the Truman Administration to join covert operations to overthrow Mossadegh, but no action was authorised. In contrast, the NSC in January 1953 accepted the estimate of the U.S. Ambassador in Iran, Loy Henderson, that an Anglo-Iranian settlement was no longer possible and that Mossadegh would eventually be replaced by the Tudeh, the Communist Party of Iran. Officials from Britain's foreign intelligence service, MI6, twice visited Washington in February to discuss details of a coup. Patrick Dean, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence

⁶ Louis Gerson, John Foster Dulles (New York: Cooper Square, 1967), p. 28 and p. 72.

Committee and the head of the Foreign Office's Permanent Undersecretary's Department, attended the second set of talks. After Foreign Secretary Eden's visit to Washington in March, the NSC approved Operation AJAX, a coup to be planned, funded, and supported by the CIA and MI6. In August 1953, Mossadegh was overthrown and the Shah of Iran was restored to power.⁷

The review reached far different conclusions on Egypt. In early January 1953, Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade and the Foreign Office had agreed upon the joint presentation to Egyptian President Neguib of proposals on the Suez Canal Base, Middle Eastern defence, and American economic and military aid for Egypt. In essence, the Americans were actively supporting the British.⁸

Eisenhower and Dulles retreated from the agreement. They feared that the RCC, dissatisfied with the slow progress of the Anglo-Egyptian discussions, would turn against Britain. The President told Eden, when he visited Washington, that American involvement now depended upon Egyptian willingness to receive an Anglo-American presentation. When the RCC rejected the initial approach by the British and American Ambassadors, Caffery and Stevenson, Eisenhower, to Churchill's horror, refused

⁷ Christopher Woodhouse, Something Ventured (London: Granada, 1982), p. 123; Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 120; Nigel West, The Friends: Britain's Post-War Secret Intelligence Operations (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 90; PRO, FO800/739, Foster Dulles-Eden and Foster Dulles-Eden-Eisenhower meetings, 6 March 1953; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 4, 132nd NSC meeting, 18 February 1953, and 136th NSC meeting, 11 March 1953.

⁸ PRO, FO371/102795-102796/JE1192/File.

further American participation:

If the U.S. walks into a conference with [Britain], against the wishes of the Egyptian Government, then the only obvious interpretation would be that our two governments, together, are there to announce an ultimatum. 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.⁹

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo, supported by the State Department, now argued that the five points of the package agreed in January were not interdependent. The U.S. might push Britain into a settlement on the Suez Canal Base without ensuring Egypt's commitment to the Middle Eastern Defence Organization.¹⁰

Foster Dulles' Middle Eastern tour in May 1953, in which he visited six Arab countries, Israel, Turkey, and Pakistan, was the catalyst for the change in general American policy. Foster Dulles was especially shaken by his stop in Cairo, where he met Neguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and other RCC members over two days. Nasser told Foster Dulles that MEDO was the 'perpetuation of occupation' and added:

I can't see myself waking up one morning to find that the Soviet Union is our enemy....I would become the laughing-stock of my people if I told them they now had an entirely new enemy, thousands of miles away and that they must forget about the British enemy occupying their territory.¹¹

Foster Dulles cabled the State Department:

From talks with the Egyptians, I believe that,

9 PRO, PREM11/486, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 479, 6 March 1953, and Eisenhower to Churchill, 19 March 1953.

10 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 2032.

11 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 27ff; H.W. Brands, 'The Cairo-Tehran Connection in Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East,' International History Review, August 1989, p. 451.

while they realize chaos and destruction of their regime would inevitably be an aftermath of open hostilities, they will choose that rather than make concessions to the British, which they consider would publicly be looked upon as infringing Egyptian sovereignty. Their emotions are so great they would rather go down as martyrs than concede.

The RCC was sponsoring guerrilla operations against British troops in the Canal Zone; the British were planning the reoccupation of Cairo and Alexandria. Thus, the U.S. 'must abandon [its] preconceived ideas of making Egypt the key country in building the foundations for a military defence of the Middle East.'¹²

Foster Dulles was also depressed by other regional problems. After discussions with Arab leaders and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion of Israel, he was convinced that a formal Arab-Israeli settlement was not possible. The U.S. would 'have to move step by step upon segments of [the] problem that [would] reduce tension,' including the question of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, assurances against Israeli aggression, and distribution of American aid. Syria offered 'some promise' as an emerging Arab country under the firm control of General Adib Shishakli, but it was 'very unpopular with its neighbours' and 'no adequate substitute for a stable Egypt.' Even the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia was insecure: 'Given the temperament and age of King Ibn Saud, it was quite possible that he would decide to throw away his alliance with U.S., conclude the oil concession and the [U.S. rights to the Dhahran] air base, and throw in his lot with some other nation which he might feel was a more

¹² FRUS 1952-1954, IX, pp. 25ff. and p. 379.

faithful ally.'

In the short term, Foster Dulles recommended that the U.S. reaffirm the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, reassuring Arabs that Israeli aggression would not be tolerated, and improve relations with Syria and Saudi Arabia. Britain would be urged to enter discussions to end the Anglo-Saudi dispute over boundaries on the Arabian Peninsula, especially the Buraimi oasis.

Foster Dulles' most significant proposals were long-term measures asserting American independence of British policy. First, the U.S. would end unqualified support of Britain in the Anglo-Egyptian discussions and ask the British to compromise over the status of the Suez Canal Base. Second, Foster Dulles abandoned MEDO, as Egypt's instability made the pact 'a future rather than an immediate possibility.' Instead he proposed the 'Northern Tier' defence system of Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran. Turkey was securely in NATO; Iraq, with a 'forward-looking' government, was the Arab country 'most plainly concerned with the Soviet threat'; Pakistan, with its 'martial and religious characteristics, ...could be made a loyal point' for the U.S.; even Iran could be an asset if the U.S. could 'concentrate on changing the situation there.'¹³

Foster Dulles had indicated that the U.S. would no longer guarantee support of British policy. If British actions jeopardised American interests, then the Administration would form its own policy. The Secretary announced on television that the peoples of the Near East

¹³ FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 379ff.

and South Asia were...

...suspicious of the colonial powers. The U.S., too, is suspect because, it is reasoned, our NATO alliance with France and Britain requires us to try to preserve or restore the old colonial interests of our allies....The day is past when [nationalist] aspirations can be ignored.¹⁴

The tripartite Bermuda summit in June was postponed when Churchill suffered a stroke. With Eden out of office because of gall bladder problems, the Acting Foreign Minister, Lord Salisbury, met Foster Dulles in Washington in July. The talks were sometimes acrimonious, especially over the Anglo-Egyptian discussions. The Americans thought British rigidity over provisions for the Suez Canal Base ensured failure of the discussions, while the British were angered that the U.S. Embassy in Cairo conferred with the Egyptians without consulting the British. After several days of bargaining, Salisbury and the British military representative, General Brian Robertson, were more optimistic. Although the U.S. refused to underwrite new British proposals for operation of the Base, they agreed to their 'underlying principle.' Eisenhower even wrote to Neguib, urging him to consider the new British offer carefully.¹⁵

Salisbury and the British Cabinet did not know that the Americans were already mediating the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. The 'Egyptian' proposals presented to British in early July were based upon a State Department draft passed to Cairo. American 'support' for Salisbury's proposals was

14 PRO, FO371/104257/E10345/23, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1174, 2 June 1953. C.f. USNA, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, 1947-1953, Box 14.
 15 PRO, FO371/102731-102732/JE10345/File.

given after British assurances that the only outstanding issues were the availability of the Base in wartime, the agreement's duration, and a reference to free transit of the Suez Canal. Without revealing the source of the 'Egyptian' proposals, Foster Dulles told Salisbury that they were favourable on the first two of these points. When Caffery reported Robertson's belief that the Washington talks had revived U.S. support for the British position, Foster Dulles replied:

Robertson's statement reflects wishful thinking. We are not "backing" either Britain or Egypt. In certain respects we share the British position, in other respects we share the Egyptian position, and in many respects we strongly backed the Egyptian viewpoint in our talks here with the British.¹⁶

The Americans refused to accept British policy on two other Middle Eastern issues. Salisbury, seeking U.S. support in the Anglo-Saudi dispute over the Buraimi oasis, proposed that the area be placed under international supervision pending arbitration. The U.S., recognising that the idea would involve a loss of face for King Ibn Saud, declined. On Foreign Office advice that it was 'inexpedient to join issue with the Americans on this question at a time when we were seeking to reach agreement with them on matters of much greater moment,' the Cabinet agreed not to press the point.¹⁷ Second, the U.S. announced that it would forge a Northern Tier defence grouping, with or without Britain's help. Foster Dulles informed U.S. missions on 30 July and announced that \$50

16 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 2108 and p. 2124; USNA, RG 59, Central Decimal Files (CDF), 641.74/7-2253, State Department to Cairo, Cable 96, 22 July 1953.

17 CAB128/26, C.C.42(53), 13 July 1953.

million for military aid was available as a lever for the cooperation of the Northern Tier states.¹⁸

Anglo-American relations deteriorated further over Egypt. An agreement was imminent in late September, with the Egyptians compromising on Suez Canal transit and the agreement's duration, when talks stalled over military uniforms for British technicians remaining at the Base. The State Department suspected that the British introduced the uniform issue to sabotage the talks. Foster Dulles warned Eden, who had just returned to the Foreign Office, that the U.S. might break publicly with Britain.¹⁹

Eden was in a near-impossible position. A negotiated settlement with Egypt was opposed by many backbench Conservative MPs, and the Suez Group was formed by Colonel Charles Waterhouse and Julian Amery in 1953 to unite the opposition. No Ministers joined the Group, but some senior figures, including Churchill, were privately sympathetic.²⁰ The Prime Minister and Eden quarrelled about the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations periodically from April 1952, and they had bitter exchanges in early 1953 when Eden and the Egyptians agreed on the status of the Sudan, Churchill complaining that he never realised 'that Munich was situated on the Nile.'²¹

The Cabinet refused to concede the demand that British technicians wear military dress, and a frustrated

¹⁸ FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 379 and p. 466.

¹⁹ PRO, FO371/102818/JE1192/568G, Eden-Foster Dulles meeting, 17 October 1953.

²⁰ PRO, DEFE4/56, COS(52)121st meeting, 26 August 1952; Author's interview with Julian Amery.

²¹ Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, Volume VIII: Never Despair, 1945-1965 (London: Heinemann, 1988), pp. 719ff. and pp. 795ff.

Foreign Office found a scapegoat in Ambassador Caffery. They accused him of saying, privately but widely, 'that the British have bungled negotiations from the start' and refusing to affirm that British proposals on availability of the Base had U.S. support. The Permanent Undersecretary, Sir William Strang, formally protest to the U.S. Embassy in London, and Eden, speaking to General Alfred Gruenther, the commander of NATO forces, 'made several rather uncompromising remarks about Caffery's attitude.' Foster Dulles put the onus on Britain over the issue: if they formally requested the recall of Caffery, he would consider it.²²

In fact, Foster Dulles had no intention of transferring Caffery, the 'mediator,' while the Anglo-Egyptian discussions were in progress,²³ the dispute over the Ambassador was superseded by the question of U.S. aid to Egypt. In January and May 1953, the Americans approved the delivery of \$11 million of military equipment, but vehement British protests postponed the shipments. On 14 November, Foster Dulles warned Eden:

This settlement has dragged out to a point where we cannot continue much longer without very grave effect upon all our Arab relationships. If you felt that it was likely there would soon be new moves in the Suez matter which might produce agreement, we could still hold up briefly but our time is fast running out.

At the Bermuda summit, rescheduled for December, Foster Dulles virtually gave Eden an ultimatum, insisting that

²² PRO, CAB128/26, C.C.60(53), 22 October 1953; PRO, FO371/102818/ JE1192/560G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1449, 23 October 1953, and subsequent minutes.

²³ PRO, FO800/774, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2373, 3 November; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Chronological, Box 5, November 1953 (5), Foster Dulles memorandum, 3 November 1953.

the British put the points agreed with the Egyptians into writing to ensure that new arguments would not be introduced into the talks, as had occurred with the uniform question. If Britain did not comply, the U.S. would proceed with economic aid to Egypt.²⁴ A 'transatlantic essay contest,' with four messages between Churchill and Eisenhower and one from Eden to Dulles, followed, as the Prime Minister threatened to 'go it alone' in Egypt and withdraw support for the U.S. policy on Communist China.²⁵ Finally, the British retreated and consented to a draft Heads of Agreement setting forth points of agreement and difference in the Anglo-Egyptian talks.²⁶

Eden barely survived the crisis. Twelve members of the Suez Group wrote Churchill that Britain had to retain full control of Base facilities and 'British combatant units strong enough to make effective our right to reinforce the base in case of necessity.' On 17 December, the Commons debated a Suez Group motion condemning the Government's negotiations with Egypt. Churchill, privately critical of the Foreign Office, supported Eden before the 1922 Committee of Conservative backbenchers and the Commons; however, the Prime Minister told the Cabinet at the end of December that the negotiations should be abandoned if agreement was not reached in the near-

24 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 1958ff.; PRO, PREM11/395/File; PRO, PREM11/699/File; PRO, FO371/102843/JE11345/9G, Dixon minute, 16 December 1953; PRO, PREM11/484, Boothby minute, 18 December 1953.

25 PRO, PREM11/699, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5334, 19 December 1953.

26 PRO, PREM11/701, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 86, 13 January 1954.

future.²⁷

Meanwhile, the U.S., without consulting the British, proceeded with the Northern Tier's formation. In September 1953, the State and Defence Departments agreed in principle to \$30 million in military grants for Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, and the Lebanon, with \$50 million to be set aside for Egypt and Pakistan. In November, after visits to Washington by Pakistani leaders, President Eisenhower approved the provision of military aid. The Joint Chiefs of Staff went further:

The time might be propitious for encouraging Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and possibly Iraq or a combination thereof to form a defense association of indigenous forces under an indigenous command advantageously located with relation to the current threat.²⁸

Preoccupied with Egypt and unable to provide sufficient aid to meet Pakistani demands, the Foreign Office agreed that if the 'Americans [decided] to make the offer, we would not wish to stand in the way.' Only on 4 December did Eden have second thoughts, writing:

We are not at all clear what it is the Americans are proposing, and I think our main objective should be to find out what they have in mind. If it is a question of American bases in Pakistan, then I think we should warn them that this might seem provocative to the Russians.... There would also be no harm in telling them about the message we have had from [Indian Prime Minister] Nehru [objecting to the plan].²⁹

27 PRO, FO371/102766/JE1052/148, Amery to Churchill, 7 October 1953; PRO, CAB128/26, C.C.79(53), 14 December 1953, and subsequent meetings.

28 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 416ff. and p. 433; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 1, November 1953, Foster Dulles memorandum, 10 November 1953. C.f. Ayesha Jalal, 'Towards the Baghdad Pact: South Asia and Middle Eastern Defence in the Cold War, 1947-1955,' International History Review, August 1989.

29 PRO, FO371/106935-106936/FY1192/File; PRO, FO371/106937/FY1192/ 66, Eden minute, 4 December 1953, and subsequent minutes.

Eden voiced his fears to Foster Dulles at Bermuda, but the Foreign Office did not press the objections and the State Department acted with unexpected speed. On 28 December, the Turks agreed to the American suggestion of a Turkish-Pakistani Pact, and the U.S. Ambassador in Karachi consulted the Pakistanis the next day. Only then did Washington inform the British Embassy of its efforts. Eden wrote, 'This is rather startling, and I have considerable doubts,' but was unable to halt the Americans.³⁰

On 5 January, Eisenhower agreed to grant aid for Pakistan. At the Berlin Conference of Foreign Ministers, Foster Dulles told Eden that he and Eisenhower had decided 'they must go ahead' despite Indian objections. Eden gave way. His hope was a British role in the Northern Tier through Iraqi participation.³¹

Eden's view reflected a significant change of policy by the Foreign Office and the military: Britain would no longer base her Middle Eastern position upon Cairo but upon Baghdad and Amman. Caught between American pressure for concessions in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and right-wing pressure to stand firm, the Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff concluded that the only alternatives to an agreement with the Egyptians were complete withdrawal or indefinite occupation of the Canal Zone against Egyptian opposition. Eden considered a coup against the Neguib

30 FRUS 1952-1954 IX, pp. 439ff.; PRO, FO371/106937/ FY1192/94, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2793, 29 December 1953, and subsequent minutes.

31 DDE, John Foster Dulles, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 1, Meeting with the President 1954 (4), Foster Dulles memorandum, 5 January 1954; PRO, FO371/112315/DY1192/47, Eden to Foreign Office, Cable 7, 24 January 1954.

Government, but Ambassador Stevenson replied, 'There is no [political] alternative for Egypt: assassination of Neguib would lead to one of Neguib's lieutenants, presumably Nasser.'³²

The Foreign Office also wanted a strategy to block further U.S. intrusion upon Britain's Middle Eastern position. In autumn 1953, the Iraqi Government requested the reequipping of two Army divisions and the creation of a third, approaching the U.S. as well as Britain, the traditional supplier of their military. The State Department drafted a 'memorandum of understanding' with the British Embassy in Washington to permit a 'readily identifiable' U.S. contribution to Iraq while maintaining the British position. The British Embassy in Baghdad did not trust their American counterparts, however, and some Foreign Office officials agreed.³³

The idea of an Iraqi-Jordanian axis was not a new one. In March 1953, Eden approved British military plans, stemming from the 1952 Global Strategy Paper and the subsequent Radical Review, to base Middle Eastern defence upon Iraq and Jordan. The Foreign Secretary was content for plans to evolve slowly until the American initiative in Iraq and the collapse of the Anglo-Egyptian talks. Simultaneously, Jordan requested the build-up of British forces with the stationing of an armoured squadron in

³² W.R. Louis, 'The Tragedy of the Anglo-Egyptian Settlement of 1954,' in W.R. Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 46ff. and p. 64.

³³ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 787.5-MSP/11-2553, State Department to Baghdad, Cable 302, 25 November 1953; Jalal, p. 430; PRO, FO371/ 104676/EQ10345/3, Troutbeck to Eden, 1 December 1953.

Ma'an in southern Jordan.³⁴

On 12 January 1954, Eden drew these elements together into a new policy:

[We] should make it plain that our positions in Iraq and Jordan are clearly related....If we are to have any position in Middle East, our authority must be based on close relations with Jordan and Iraq....The chances of Egyptians becoming our friends are slight. Israel cannot fulfill our purpose. Iraq and Jordan are friendly and could be made more so.³⁵

The Chiefs of Staff modified the 'inner ring' concept to redeploy forces at British bases in Libya, which signed a 20-year treaty with Britain in 1953, Jordan, Iraq, Cyprus, and Aden. British troops, supported by air cover, would push out from the 'inner ring' around Jordan and the Lebanon to defend Iraq. The Cabinet agreed. The RAF base at Amman was reopened, with a fighter squadron permanently stationed there, and an armoured squadron was sent to the port of Aqaba.³⁶

With the new defence policy established, the Foreign Office agreed to operate the Suez Canal Base with civilian technicians. Nasser, pressed by the Americans, accepted British re-entry into the base in event of war or threat of war against an Arab state or Turkey, and the U.S. promised aid to Egypt after a settlement was reached. Churchill was still doubtful, but the persistence of the Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff and the advent of the hydrogen bomb forced him to reconsider the value of 'digging in.' Heads of Agreement for an Anglo-Egyptian

34 PRO, FO371/104236/E1197/14, Eden minute on BMEQ to Cairo, Cable F233, 27 March 1953; PRO, CAB128/27, C.C.62(53), 29 October 1953.

35 PRO, FO371/110819/V1193/8, Eden minute, 12 January 1954.

36 PRO, FO371/110819-110821/V1193/File.

Treaty were initialled on 27 July 1954 and the Treaty was signed on 19 October.³⁷

Meanwhile, the Turks and Pakistanis, prompted by the U.S., announced their intention to form a pact on 19 February and signed the document on 2 April. The U.S. and Iraq reached a military aid agreement on 21 April, and the U.S. and Pakistan on 19 May. British representatives in the Middle East still believed that U.S. resources would overwhelm any British plans. The Foreign Office had decided, however, that American military and economic aid to the Northern Tier was established and Britain's task was to regain political leadership of the area through revision of the 1932 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.³⁸

Pursuing its 'independence' in the Middle East, the Eisenhower Administration attempted to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, using the 'step-by-step' approach suggested by Foster Dulles in June 1953. When Israel attempted in September 1953 to divert water, claimed by Syria, from the Jordan River, the Eisenhower Administration, believing that the Truman Administration's favouritism of Israel had prevented successful American mediation, implemented a policy of 'impartiality.' Economic aid to Tel Aviv was suspended until the Israelis ceased diversion on 27 October. Eisenhower then appointed a special emissary, Eric Johnston, to negotiate an amicable division of the Jordan River. When this was achieved, issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the

37 PRO, FO371/108413-108445/JE1192/File.

38 PRO, FO371/112316/DY1192/62, Ankara to Foreign Office, Cable 57, 2 February 1954; PRO, FO371/112314-112322/DY1192/File.

settlement of Arab refugees, and the elimination of trade boycotts could be addressed. On 17 November, Johnston reported that the Arabs and recommended a second visit in early 1954 to pursue the initiative.³⁹

The second Johnston mission was overshadowed by disturbances on the Arab-Israeli borders and an attempt by Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade and NEA, resisted by Foster Dulles, to check Israeli 'expansionism.'⁴⁰ In contrast, the third Johnston mission in June 1954 renewed hope for a settlement. Johnston was 'much encouraged at the prospect of obtaining Arab cooperation,' especially from Egypt, and the chairman of the Arab committee claimed, 'Apart from a few technical points, agreement is complete between Johnston and us.'⁴¹

In July 1954, the NSC reviewed the progress of its Middle Eastern policy. With the Anglo-Egyptian problem resolved, the NSC linked the progress of a Northern Tier pact to an Arab-Israeli solution. Initially, the pact would be indigenous, with Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq as members. Before the U.S. joined, Arab-Israeli tension had to decrease significantly. Failing this, the State Department was in an impossible position. The U.S. Congress, with its large pro-Israeli lobby, would demand

39 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 5, Phone Calls, July-December 1953 (1), Eisenhower minute, 8 October 1953; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Administration, Box 22, Eric Johnston (1), 'Report to the President on Middle Eastern Mission,' 19 November 1953.

40 See FRUS, 1952-1954 IX, p. 1406 and p. 1502; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Chronological, Box 7, April 1954 (2), Foster Dulles to Byroade, 10 April 1954; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 2, July-August 1954 (1), Foster Dulles to Nixon, 13 August 1954.

41 USNA, RG 84, Cairo Embassy Records, 1953-1955, Box 1, 322.2 TVA-Jordan Valley Project, Johnston minute, 26 June 1954.

an American guarantee of Israeli borders before approving accession to a pact with Arab membership, but a guarantee of Israel in advance of an Arab-Israeli settlement, would indicate American favouritism of Israel.

To reduce border tensions and improve chances for a wide-ranging settlement, the NSC took steps to deter an attack by Israel or the Arab States. U.S. economic aid would be cut off, and trade sanctions would be imposed to force an 'attacking state to relinquish any territory seized.' The establishment of a naval blockade upon the aggressor and additional military steps would be considered. Other countries would be urged to take similar measures, and U.N. support would be sought.⁴²

The Arab-Israeli issue forced the NSC to recognise the need for Anglo-American cooperation. While 'independent' action had brought results, especially in the Northern Tier, the U.S. could not advance towards an Arab-Israeli settlement without the help of Britain, who still retained the diplomatic lead in Iraq and political and military dominance in Jordan. Moreover, the Anglo-Egyptian agreement might renew British prestige in Cairo. The NSC acknowledged that, as British support for the Northern Tier was an 'important factor' in determining its success, 'efforts should be made to overcome the doubts now held by the U.K., particularly regarding the inclusion of Iran,' and the initiative for an Arab-Israeli settlement should be defined 'in collaboration with the U.K.'⁴³

42 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 7, 207th NSC meeting, 22 July 1954.

43 Ibid.; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 506.

Military cooperation over Middle Eastern policy had continued since 1953 through Anglo-American staff conferences in Washington. Meetings in December 1953 considered the stationing of Allied air forces in Cyprus, Libya, the Persian Gulf, and Jordan and, with the Turks, the use of railways and prestocking of equipment in southern Turkey to supply the Middle Eastern theatre in wartime.⁴⁴ In June 1954, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff unexpectedly requested detailed planning studies on the Middle East. Discussions between Britain, the U.S., and Turkey would be followed by Anglo-American discussions to establish the concept of operations for Middle Eastern defence and to draft plans to secure lines of communication between Egypt, the Persian Gulf, and one major oil-production complex.

At the tripartite talks in January 1955, general agreement was reached on the concept of operations. Differences about the forces required from each country, the amount of petroleum and oil available in wartime, and requirements for the prestocking of materials were left for Anglo-American talks. Meanwhile, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to consider provision of American-controlled nuclear weapons for Middle Eastern defence.⁴⁵

With the NSC offering renewed Anglo-American diplomatic cooperation, the Foreign Office hastened to

44 PRO, FO371/104238/E1197/71G, War Office to Bruce, 13 October 1953, and E1197/83G, Scott-Fox to Hood, 16 December 1953; PRO, FO371/110826-110827/V1195/File.

45 PRO, FO371/110822/V1193/79G, COS(54)212, 'Coordination in Middle Eastern Defence Planning,' 25 June 1954, and subsequent minutes; USNA, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Geographical Files, 1954-1956, 381 EMMEA (11-19-47), S. 22, Joint Strategic Plans Committee report, 11 August 1955.

unite London and Washington on the Arab-Israeli question. On 2 October, Eden broached the idea to Foster Dulles of a joint demarche to the Arab States and Israel, followed by negotiations in which one side and then the other would be consulted by Anglo-American mediators. On 17 November, the State Department accepted the British suggestion, and Foster Dulles and Eden agreed that Assistant Undersecretary Evelyn Shuckburgh, supervising Middle Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office, would visit Washington in January 1955 to meet Foster Dulles' special representative, Francis Russell. Project ALPHA had been launched.⁴⁶

The reconciliation between the two Governments on Middle Eastern policy limited differences between American and British representatives in the field. Foster Dulles and his brother Allen, the director of the CIA, coordinated the implementation of NSC policy and both, unlike their predecessors, were closely involved in American action in the Middle East. Thus, the NSC's renewed emphasis on cooperation with Britain was translated, through directives from Washington, into consultation between American and British Embassies.

Even the operational independence of the Americans, most significant in areas where British influence was limited or declining, did not precipitate prolonged Anglo-American conflict. The CIA station was in close contact with the Syrian dictator, General Adib Shishakli, but his fall in February 1954 and the return of instability renewed Anglo-American interest in preventing the loss of

⁴⁶ FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 1662, p. 1683, and p. 1693.

Western influence in Damascus. On the Arabian Peninsula, the Trucial Sheikhdoms of Abu Dhabi and of Muscat and Oman, supported by British advisors, subsidies, and troops, continued to vie with Saudi Arabia and the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) for control of the Buraimi oasis. After repeated requests from the Eisenhower Administration, however, Britain submitted the question of Buraimi's status to a five-member tribunal, establishing a temporary accord between Washington and London.⁴⁷

Egypt was still the most significant theatre for American intervention. With the British departure from the Suez Canal Base, American aid could be used to usurp Britain's traditional position in Cairo. On 28 July 1954, the day after Britain and Egypt initialled the Heads of Agreement, Foster Dulles authorised Ambassador Caffery to discuss economic and military assistance with the RCC, and \$40 million in economic aid was earmarked for Egypt. Covertly, the CIA continued to develop Egypt's military intelligence and internal security forces.⁴⁸

The possibility of American dominance in Egypt through aid never arose, however. Under the Military Defence Assistance Act (MDAA), any country receiving military aid had to accept a U.S. military mission, but Nasser told the U.S. Embassy that he could not accept foreign troops on Egyptian soil so soon after an agreement

47 PRO, FO371/104258/E10345/40, Pelham to Bowker, 5 July 1953; PRO, FO371/114874/ES1051/File; Leonard Mosley, Dulles (New York: The Dial Press, 1978), p. 348.

48 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.5-MSP Series, State Department to Cairo, Cable 144, 28 July 1954, Eisenhower minute, 12 August 1954, and State Department to Cairo, Cable 382, 4 September 1954; Christopher Simpson, Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and its Effects on the Cold War (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), pp. 249ff.

to end the British 'occupation.' Foster and Allen Dulles tried to circumvent the MDAA. Of the \$40 million in economic aid, \$5 million would be diverted to arms purchases, and an additional \$3 million from Eisenhower's 'executive' budget would be offered for 'certain morale-building items of military equipment such as uniforms and staff transportation.' CIA and Defence Department officials, including Kermit Roosevelt, presented the package to Nasser, but he refused to divert any money from the package of economic aid, despite the \$3 million 'sweetener,' which he and his advisors considered a personal bribe. Nasser used the \$3 million to build a monument to the CIA: an ostentatious tower in Cairo, known locally as 'Roosevelt's Erection.'⁴⁹

The real threat to renewed Anglo-American cooperation came, outside the 'alliance,' from action by Middle Eastern leaders, notably efforts by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri es-Sa'id to establish leadership of the Arab world through Iraq's position in Northern Tier and Middle Eastern defence pacts. In September 1954, after a failed attempt at rapprochement with Egypt, Nuri suggested replacement of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, due to expire in 1957, with a multilateral system, with Britain continuing to have the use of bases in Iraq. The Foreign Office was hesitant, since Nuri had tabled vague schemes

49 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.5-MSP/9-2754, Cairo to State Department, Despatch 545, 27 September 1954, and subsequent minutes; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 3, September-October 1954 (2), Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 27 October 1954; Copeland, p. 123; Eveland, p. 91; Mohammed Heikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents (London: New English Library, 1972), p. 52.

in the past without results, and Eden and Shuckburgh suspected that Nuri's real motive was Iraq's long-standing wish for union with Syria. If Nuri was serious, however, and his plan led to revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, the proposal could be 'an ingenious one.' Eden and the Foreign Office agreed to take a 'wait-and-see' attitude.⁵⁰

London's caution appeared to be justified after Iraqi talks with Turkey in mid-October. Nuri's ideas were still imprecise, and it was merely agreed that Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes would visit Baghdad in January 1955. The most that the Turks expected from the January talks was clarification of Nuri's intentions and progress towards a future agreement.⁵¹

At first, the Turkish-Iraqi talks did not threaten Anglo-American cooperation. A new Ambassador, Waldemar Gallman, was sent to Baghdad in September to encourage the Iraqis, and Washington urged Turkey to bring Iraq into the Turkish-Pakistani Pact.⁵² However, Britain and the U.S. supported the Northern Tier for different reasons. The U.S. sought a combination of countries oriented against the Soviet Union, the British an 'umbrella' for their Middle Eastern treaty commitments. With events developing quickly and haphazardly, the two sides never coordinated their views. The Foreign Office never perceived the American emphasis on an 'indigenous' grouping free of overt Western participation, while the State Department

⁵⁰ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 780.5/9-2754, London to State Department, Despatch 876, 27 September 1954; PRO, FO371/110788/V1073/57, Falla minute, 2 October 1954, and subsequent minutes; Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), p. 237.

⁵¹ PRO, FO371/110787-110788/V1073/File.

⁵² Ibid.

never appreciated the British priority of revision of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty.

The uncertain position of Egypt also hindered Anglo-American relations. The 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty ended open hostility between London and Cairo, but it did not bring the 'new era of cooperation and mutual understanding' sought by the Foreign Office. When Anthony Nutting, Minister of State in the Foreign Office, asked Nasser about Egypt's participation in Middle Eastern defence, the Egyptian Prime Minister was evasive. Nutting reported optimistically, '[Egypt are] reluctant to take any overt steps in this direction at present, although they expressed hope of being able to do so in [the] not too distant future,' but Caffery warned:

The greatest mistake the British (or we) could make at this moment would be to attempt to force the Egyptian pace towards participation in area security arrangements including the Western powers. I am convinced that this will come to pass, but the Egyptians, and only the Egyptians, must decide when the time is ripe.⁵³

Both Britain and Egypt were soon diverted from the matter, Britain by Nuri's proposals for regional defence, Nasser by an assassination attempt upon him by the Moslem Brotherhood and his subsequent removal of General Neguib from the Presidency. Most importantly, Nasser told British representatives that Egypt could not consider military cooperation until an Arab-Israeli settlement was arranged. Shuckburgh minuted in early December, 'I am not at present convinced that we want to press the Egyptians over defence arrangements. It would be more useful if they would help

⁵³ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 641.74 Series, London to State Department, Cable 2506, 25 October 1954, and Cairo to State Department, Despatch 761, 21 October 1954.



us over Israel.' Eden endorsed the statement.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ PRO, FO371/108485/JE11932/5, BME0 to Foreign Office, Cable 614, 9 December 1954.

CHAPTER 3

FEBRUARY - SEPTEMBER 1955: SEEDS OF CONFLICT

On 20 February 1955, Foreign Secretary Eden visited President Nasser in Cairo, ostensibly to exchange congratulations over the new Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. In fact, Eden's primary objective Egyptian cooperation with Britain in a Middle Eastern defence system.

Within nine days, that vision was shattered. Egypt refused military ties with the West, and the Anglo-Egyptian rapprochement was replaced by distrust. The Arab world was polarised between Egypt and Iraq, and secret Egyptian-Israeli negotiations for peace were replaced by preparations for long-term conflict. By the end of February, the chain of events leading to the Suez Crisis had been established.

Contrary to later legends, the deterioration was not due to animosity between Eden and Nasser. Eden reported to Prime Minister Churchill:

I was impressed by Nasser, who seemed forthright and friendly although not open to conviction on the Turkish-Iraqi [Pact]. No doubt jealousy plays a part in this, and a frustrated desire to lead the Arab world.

Clarissa Eden wrote that her husband 'had a good talk with Nasser except regarding the Turkish-Iraqi Pact, upon which [Nasser] was very bitter.' Nasser was baffled by Eden's aristocratic manner did not dislike the Foreign Secretary. It was Eden's wife Clarissa who found Nasser's informal dress and casual manner rude and insulting.¹

¹ PRO, FO371/115492/V1073/289, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 269, 21 February 1955; Robert Rhodes James, Anthony Eden (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), p. 398.

The centrepiece of the visit was a dinner at the British Embassy.² The conversation centred upon Egyptian-Iraqi relations and the Turkish-Iraqi defence pact, which had been initialled on 12 January. Eden argued that a united defence as far north as possible was in Egypt's interest, reinforcing the point with a 15-minute presentation by General Sir John Harding, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Nasser agreed that Middle Eastern defence against the Soviet Union should link Iraq with Arab states to the west and south, but he argued that this should be under a unified Arab command free of foreign 'influence.' He reminded Eden that Israel, not the Soviet Union, was the main concern of the Arab States. Eden, however, refused to oppose the final signature of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact.³

Despite their inability to compromise over Middle Eastern defence, the two men parted amicably, but their 'friendship' was now the hostage of events outside Britain and Egypt. The announcement by Turkey and Iraq that they intended to conclude a defence pact had surprised the Foreign Office. The previous day, before the announcement, the British Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad, Robin Hooper, reported that Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id was not seeking a formal agreement. At most, Turkey and Iraq would

² For accounts of the meeting, see Mohammed Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986), pp. 60ff.; Carlton, Anthony Eden (London: Allen Lane, 1981), p. 365; Anthony Nutting, Nasser (London: Constable, 1967), p. 89; Kennett Love, Suez: The Twice-Fought War (London: Longman, 1970), p. 199.

³ PRO, FO371/115583/V1193/31G, Bangkok to Foreign Office, Cable 146, 23 February 1955; PRO, FO371/115866/VR1076/28G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 278, 22 February 1955; PRO, FO371/115492/V1073/289, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 269, 21 February 1955; Love, p. 199.

arrange for staff conversations and free transit for military material through their countries. Assistant Undersecretary Shuckburgh summarised, 'I am doubtful whether this is really a problem which cannot very well wait.'⁴

The Foreign Office worried about the effect of a Turkish-Iraqi agreement upon Egypt, but it was forced into a decision. Egyptian support of the Northern Tier was the optimal solution, but failing that, Britain had to choose between a defence strategy centred upon Cairo and one centred upon Baghdad. The redeployment of British forces in the Middle East, begun in 1953, and Nasser's refusal to allow foreign troops in Egypt in peacetime precluded the former option. Without a satisfactory revision of the 1932 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, due to expire in 1957, the latter would be lost as well.⁵

On 14 January, Eden wrote Nuri that he was 'much encouraged' by the Turkish-Iraqi announcement and implied that an Anglo-Iraqi arrangement should follow. Advised by Michael Wright, the British Ambassador in Baghdad, that an Anglo-Iraqi treaty under cover of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact was 'as solid a basis [of agreement] as it is possible to secure,' the Foreign Office authorized military talks with the Iraqis. On 10 February, without waiting for Cabinet

4 PRO, FO371/115484/V1073/11, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 25, 11 January 1955; PRO, FO371/115485/V1073/56, Hooper to Shuckburgh, 12 January 1955; PRO, FO371/115484/V1073/2, Shuckburgh minute, 6 January 1955. See also H.F. Eilts, 'Reflections on the Suez Crisis: Security in the Middle East,' in Louis and Owen, p. 350.
5 PRO, FO371/115484/V1073/26, Shuckburgh minute, 11 January 1955. See also Avon Papers, University of Birmingham (hereafter cited as AP), AP20/23, Bowker to Eden, 1 March 1956.

authority, the Foreign Office advised Iraq and Turkey that Britain was prepared to accede to the Pact. Anglo-Iraqi military talks on British requirements successfully concluded on 22 February, two days before the final signature of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact.⁶

Meanwhile, a period of calm on the Egyptian-Israeli border was suddenly dashed by changes in the Israeli government and its security policy. Between 1952 and February 1955, Egyptian and Israeli leaders, including Nasser and Moshe Sharett, Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister of Israel, secretly sought a peace settlement. In August 1952, Israeli and Egyptian diplomats met in Paris, and discussions about a possible settlement began in early 1953. According to Gideon Raphael of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israeli officials met Nasser in July 1954 to 'reassure him of Israel's understanding of his aspirations and its keen interest in negotiating a peaceful settlement with him.' The talks were 'intimate and intense,' although they 'did not yield significant political results.' After the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, endorsed negotiations with Egypt in September, Israeli officials discussed the resolution of specific issues, including Israeli transit through the Suez Canal, with special envoys from Cairo.⁷

6 PRO, FO371/115484/V1073/33, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 45, 14 January 1955; PRO, FO371/115488/V1073/175, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 153, 5 February 1955; PRO, FO371/115490/V1073/229, Foreign Office to Ankara, Cable 199, 10 February 1955.

7 Shimon Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project ALPHA,' in Louis and Owen, pp. 73ff.; Sayed-Ahmed, pp. 195ff. and pp. 206ff.; Stephen Green, Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel, 1948-1967 (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 101ff.; Nutting, Nasser, p. 93; USNA, RG 84, Cairo Embassy Records, 1949-

Sharett faced continuous opposition within the Israeli Government to the peace initiatives. Although Sharett's predecessor, David Ben-Gurion, 'retired' in 1953, he maintained close contact with key members of the Government, including Defence Minister Pinhas Lavon, and the Chief of Staff, General Moshe Dayan. Ben-Gurion had always advocated a policy of 'reprisals' against the Arab States - from November 1951 to November 1952, while 39 Israelis were killed in border incidents, 394 Arabs were slain in Israeli raids - and the policy continued during his 'retirement.' Just before Ben-Gurion left office, Dayan became Chief of Staff, and Force 101, a special commando unit, was established for reprisals, carried out its first operation. In October 1953, over the objections of Foreign Minister Sharett, Force 101 attacked Qibya in Jordan, killing 53 people. Nine major raids were carried out during 1954, often without the approval of the Prime Minister's Defence Committee.⁸

Israeli policy was complicated in June 1954 when Israeli military intelligence, without Sharett's knowledge, activated a spy ring in Cairo. Attempting to poison relations between Egypt and the West and ruin

1954, Box 5, To Department, July 1952-June 1953, Cairo to State Department, Cable 1819, 10 February 1953.

⁸ The following section on Israeli policy is based upon Avi Shlaim, 'Conflicting Approaches to Israel's Relations with the Arabs: Ben-Gurion and Sharett, 1953-1956,' Middle East Journal, Spring 1983, pp. 180ff.; Michael Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), pp. 217ff.; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/5-2055, Tel Aviv to State Department, Despatch 728, 20 May 1955; W.S. Lucas, 'Israeli Foreign Policy and Civil-Military Relations, 1953-56,' paper presented at Political Studies Association conference, Durham, United Kingdom, April 1990; Ariel Sharon with David Chanoff, Warrior: An Autobiography (London: MacDonald, 1989), pp. 83ff.

Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, the ring set off explosions in British- and American-owned buildings. The saboteurs were arrested in summer 1954 by the Egyptians, provoking a government crisis which led to the resignations of the head of military intelligence and Defence Minister Lavon in February 1955.⁹

Sharett won a victory with the removal of the 'hard-liner' Lavon, but he lost the battle when Ben-Gurion, who succeeded as Defence Minister, wrecked the Egyptian-Israeli contacts. Although the situation was 'comparatively quiet in the Gaza Strip area,' Ben-Gurion and Dayan demanded a strike against Egypt. Reluctantly, Sharett approved a modest raid, but Ben-Gurion and Dayan turned it into a large-scale attack on a military camp in Gaza on 28 February. Thirty-eight Egyptians were killed.¹⁰

Sharett, misled by Dayan, who estimated that 10 Egyptians would be killed, confronted Ben-Gurion at a Cabinet meeting about reprisals. In reply, Ben-Gurion defined a new Israeli policy. Irregardless of Arab attitudes, the raids were necessary to display Israel's military superiority over the Arabs and to bolster the confidence of the Israeli public and army. He dismissed the opposition of the United Nations and Western countries to the reprisals, since Arab resources would always prevent others from supporting Israel's case.¹¹

Gaza was a turning point in Arab-Israeli relations, as Sharett was eclipsed by the hard-liners. In March, he

⁹ See Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv, Imperfect Spies: The History of Israeli Intelligence (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989), pp. 64ff.

¹⁰ Shlaim, p. 188; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 217.

¹¹ Shlaim, p. 188; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 218.

narrowly prevented adoption of Ben-Gurion's proposals for occupation of the Gaza Strip and abrogation of the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement, but after a loss of seats for Mapai, the dominant party in the Government coalition, in elections in July, Ben-Gurion was asked to form a government. Sharett remained as Foreign Minister, but only for the sake of Western opinion toward Israel and the unity of Mapai. After Gaza, Nasser abandoned a policy of restraint on the border and agreed to organisation of fedayeen, commando units to carry out raids into Israel. He renewed efforts to acquire arms from the U.S. and Britain, and discontented Egyptian Army officers in the Egyptian Army demanded approaches to other sources, notably the Soviet bloc.¹²

Gaza also spurred the development of a Franco-Israeli 'alliance.' Evicted from Syria and the Lebanon during World War II and excluded from Anglo-American discussions of the Middle East between 1950 and 1955, the French sought an outlet for a Middle Eastern role. Israel, anxious for arms and refused large deliveries by London and Washington, provided the opportunity.

The appointments of French Ambassador Pierre-Eugene Gilbert to Israel and Israeli Ambassador Jacob Tsur to Paris in 1953 improved cultural and diplomatic contacts, and military talks led to a visit by Dayan and Shimon Peres, the Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, to France in June 1954 and talks in August between the French Secretary of Air, Jacques Catroux, and

¹² Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 219, Nutting, Nasser, p. 93; Donald Neff, Warriors at Suez (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 33.

Peres. The French agreed to sell 155-millimeter guns, AMX-13 tanks, and 30 fighters, including six Mystere II jets, to Israel, and in January 1955, Catroux informed Tel Aviv of France's willingness to supply the Mystere IV, one of the most advanced jet fighters in the world. Delivering the weapons to Israel, France circumvented the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee, established by Britain, the U.S., and France in 1952 to supervise the Middle Eastern 'balance of arms israeli secret services provided intelligence on nationalist movements in North Africa to the French, and France supplied information on nuclear research and development to Israel.¹³

Finally, Gaza sounded the death knell for Egyptian accommodation with the Turkish-Iraqi Pact, which was directed against the Soviet Union rather than Israel. If other Arab countries, such as Syria, Jordan, and the Lebanon, joined the Pact, the Egyptians might be isolated against the Israelis. To prevent this, Nasser sought an Arab defence pact linking Egypt and Syria, with support from Saudi Arabia and later accessions by Jordan and the Lebanon. On 6 March, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement for military cooperation.¹⁴

From this point, no Anglo-Egyptian compromise was possible. Military cooperation, tentatively discussed by

¹³ See Sylvia Crosbie, A Tacit Alliance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Michael Bar-Zohar, Suez Ultra-Secret (Paris: Fayard, 1964), pp. 58ff.; Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israeli Foreign Policy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 262ff.; Melman and Raviv, p. 99.

¹⁴ PRO, FO371/115495/V1073/399, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 350, 5 March 1955, and V1073/406, Damascus to Foreign Office, Cable 91, 7 March 1955; PRO, FO371/115496/V1073/407, Jedda to Foreign Office, Cable 56, 7 March 1955.

Lord Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, and Nasser in December 1954, was abandoned in February when General Sir Charles Keightley, the Commander-in-Chief of Britain's Middle Eastern forces, discovered that the Egyptian Chief of the General Staff, General Hakim Amer, was no longer interested. On 5 March, Nasser suggested to British Ambassador Stevenson that Britain serve as the 'coordinating factor' with inter-Arab pacts led by Egypt, but the British Ambassador to Jordan, Charles Duke, argued that British acquiescence would be a 'letdown of Jordan' and suggested that Britain disrupt the Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian agreement, for example, by inviting the Jordanians to join the Turkish-Iraqi Pact. Nutting wrote, 'I think this is right. We cannot reverse or appear to reverse our fears now.' Eden minuted, 'Excellent.'¹⁵

On 15 March, the Cabinet approved, in principle, negotiation of a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and accession to the Turkish-Iraqi Pact. The only recorded objection came from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, R.A. Butler, who was concerned about the expense of British arms supplies to Iraq and states who subsequently joined the Pact. On 5 April, Britain's formal accession turned the Turkish-Iraqi Pact into the Baghdad Pact.¹⁶

The speed of events temporarily separated London and Washington in their Middle Eastern policies. Before the Turkish-Iraqi statement of 12 January, the Americans worried about British hesitancy over the Northern Tier. A

¹⁵ PRO, FO371/115496/V1073/408, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 95, 7 March 1955, and subsequent minutes.

¹⁶ PRO, CAB128/28, C.C.24(55), 15 March 1955; PRO, FO371/115751-115759/VQ1051/File.

U.S. Embassy official told Shuckburgh that, even if Nuri's actions...

...should result in a breakup of the Arab League,...the Northern Tier would provide an alternate centre of attraction around which the Arab States might group themselves and this would not, in their opinion, be a bad thing.

Shuckburgh commented after the meeting:

If the American policy succeeds, it may be a great success, but I think it is risky and may well fail. We must avoid blame for its failure.¹⁷

On 27 January, Shuckburgh informed the State Department of the Foreign Office's change of heart: the Turkish-Iraqi Pact should be welcomed as a step 'toward an arrangement which we hoped would maintain for us our basic defence requirements.' The State Department responded, 'Mr. Dulles' preliminary reaction was that he would favour eventual U.S. association with the Pact provided...the U.S. would only be involved in the event of aggression from outside the area.' On certain questions, notably Iranian accession, the U.S. was still more eager than Britain for rapid development of the Pact.¹⁸

Over next fortnight, the State Department reversed its attitude. The catalyst was Nuri's proposal of 27 January, endorsed by the Turks, that the U.S. and Britain be invited to join the Pact. When the Foreign Office asked for its views, the State Department replied that, while quick conclusion of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact was essential, U.S. Embassies in Baghdad and Ankara were not to imply that the U.S. was willing to join. Accession was difficult

¹⁷ PRO, FO371/115484/V1073/2G, Shuckburgh minute, 11 January 1955.

¹⁸ PRO, FO371/115469/V1023/3G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 631 Saving, 28 January 1955.

because of the opposition of pro-Israeli groups in Washington. Eden informed the Cabinet on 15 March that the 'U.S. are unlikely to accede [to the Pact] in the immediate future' but they 'might... consider acceding to it at an appropriate time.'¹⁹

In late March, the State Department put the question of American accession to rest. It informed the British Ambassador in Washington, Roger Makins, that problems with Congress were anticipated because of a draft provision in the Pact that disputes between signatories were to be settled within the framework of the United Nations Charter. According to pro-Israeli lobbyists, the provision implied that a dispute between a signatory of the Pact and a non-member, e.g., between Iraq and Israel, did not have to be resolved within the Charter's framework. The Foreign Office noted that this legal point was 'extremely poor' but missed the political point of the argument. Israeli opposition, inside and outside Congress, was an insuperable obstacle to U.S. accession.²⁰

While the U.S. and Britain disagreed on the Northern Tier's development, they coordinated their policies on the related issue of an Arab-Israeli settlement. Shuckburgh's first journey to Washington established the method of approach to Egypt and Israel, and visits by Francis

¹⁹ PRO, FO371/115487/V1073/115, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 68, 27 January 1955, and V1073/133, Ankara to Foreign Office, Cable 69, 31 January 1955; PRO, FO371/115488/V1073/161, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 332, 4 February 1955; PRO, FO371/115489/V1073/176, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 387, 9 February 1955; PRO, CAB128/28, C.C.24(55), 15 March 1955.

²⁰ PRO, FO371/115502/V1073/568, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 649, 24 March 1955, and subsequent minutes.

Russell, the chief American negotiator, to London in March and April, produced guidelines for the settlement. Egyptian-Israeli agreement would be sought on the American plan for division of the Jordan River. Israel would cede some territory in the Negev desert to Egypt to establish an Egyptian-Jordanian border and, with an international loan, compensate Palestinian refugees displaced from their homes by the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. The U.S., besides contributing \$200 million toward the international loan, would provide \$395 million in economic and military aid for the Arabs and, with Britain, guarantee Arab-Israeli borders. The first approach with the proposal would be made by the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo, Henry Byroade, to Nasser. Eisenhower approved the package on 6 May.²¹

If Nasser had cooperated on the Arab-Israeli question, Anglo-American organization of Middle Eastern defence might have proceeded smoothly, but the spectres of Gaza and the Baghdad Pact haunted the Egyptian President. After the Afro-Asian conference at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, Nasser complained to Ambassador Stevenson about reports that the British Embassy was spreading propaganda against his government. Nasser also alleged that U.S. personnel in Egypt and Arab States were spreading rumours about the RCC's instability, that the American representative in the Sudan was conspiring

21 PRO, FO371/115964-115867/VR1076/File; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Special Assistants, Chronological, Box 7, February 1955 (3), Hanes to Russell, 15 February 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 3, Meetings with the President (4), MacArthur to Foster Dulles, 5 May 1955, and enclosed memoranda.

against Egypt, that the U.S. was sabotaging foreign support for the High Aswan Dam and undermining the Egyptian economy through its cotton policy, and that the Americans intended to pressure Egypt into making peace with Israel. The State Department had second thoughts about the approach to Nasser and considered alternative initiatives with Jordan and Lebanon, but under Foreign Office pressure, it authorised the State Department the Ambassador to speak to Nasser on 9 June.²²

However, ALPHA had been eclipsed by the question of arms supplies to Cairo. The increase in military aid promised for Egyptian signature of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty never materialised. In January 1955, Britain agreed to release 30 fighters, on order since 1949, and 16 of 64 Centurion Mark III tanks purchased in 1951, but it would not consent to further releases or offer current equipment such as the Centurion Mark VII.²³

After his trip to Cairo and the Gaza raid, Eden, anxious 'about the effect of military and political defeats upon Nasser's regime,' suggested the release of the remaining Centurion Mark IIIs and immediate supply of six of the 30 released fighters, but the Foreign Office Minister of State, Nutting, objected, since such releases might cause a 'dangerous explosion in Israel,' and

²² PRO, FO371/113591/JE1022/7, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 633, 17 May 1955, and JE1022/8, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 641, 19 May 1955; PRO, FO371/115868/VR1076/85G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 609, 10 May 1955; PRO, FO371/115869/VR1076/105G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1244, 31 May 1955; Aronson, p. 126; PRO, FO371/115870/VR1076/112G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 727, 9 June 1955.

²³ PRO, FO371/113680/JE1194/368, Trevelyan to Foreign Office, 24 October 1955; PRO, FO371/113669/JE1194/File.

Shuckburgh's compromise of the release of 16 additional Centurions and immediate supply of six fighters was finally accepted.²⁴

On 10 March, Nasser gave Byroade a list of \$27 million in necessary equipment. Eisenhower labelled the request 'peanuts' and authorised a first installment of \$11 million, but the deal foundered over the method of payment. Short of foreign exchange, Nasser had to obtain the arms on credit or trade Egyptian cotton for them. Egypt's refusal to accept a U.S. military mission precluded the former, and the U.S., because of domestic cotton surpluses, had no wish to pursue the latter.²⁵

While the Americans dithered, Nasser learned of France's arms agreement with Israel. Pressed by his Army to prevent further Israeli 'aggressions,' he approached Chou En-Lai, the Chinese Premier, at the Bandung Conference with a request for arms. Chou replied that China was dependent on Soviet supplies but promised to pass Nasser's inquiry to Moscow. On 19 May, the Soviet Ambassador to Egypt, Daniel Solod, told Nasser that the Soviet Union would supply Egypt with arms in exchange for later payment in cotton and rice.²⁶

When Byroade met Nasser on 9 June, the Egyptian

24 PRO, FO371/113669/JE1194/35, Shuckburgh minute, 10 March 1955, and subsequent minutes, and JE1194/36, Shuckburgh minute, 15 March 1955.

25 PRO, FO371/115497/V1073/445, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 378, 11 March 1955, and V1073/446, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 380, 11 March 1955; Love, p. 88; Heikal, Nasser, p. 56; Lyon, p. 682; Hoopes, p. 323; Eisenhower, The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961 (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 24.

26 Heikal, Nasser, pp. 69ff.; Channel 4, The End of Empire: Egypt (1985), interview with Ali Sabri; Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 324; Love, p. 90.

President warned:

I beg you to understand that this is the last time I shall ask for arms from the U.S. If I do not get them from you, I know where I can and [I] will ask the Soviets for them.

Trying to intimidate Egypt, the Foreign Office instructed Stevenson to tell Nasser that acceptance of arms from the Soviets would 'be considered a very serious act.' Nasser bluntly replied:

I have tried my utmost to obtain from you the arms required for the defence of my country, but I have not been successful. I cannot stand with folded arms in the face of Israel. I consider what you have just said as a threat which I am not prepared to accept. You are free to do whatever you like and I am free to do as I please.²⁷

Some Foreign Office officials, anticipating Nasser's position, had recommended increased aid to Egypt. T.E. Bromley of the African Department wrote on 3 June:

If this kind of policy [reconciliation with the West] was in Nasser's mind, it received a severe jolt from the rather sudden conclusion of the Turkish-Iraqi pact and from our subsequent accession to it....The various border incidents around Gaza and Egyptian dissatisfaction with U.N. efforts to control them may have also contributed to this drift.

He concluded that 'no defence arrangements in the Middle East [could] be really solid without at least the acquiescence of Egypt.' Shuckburgh concurred on 8 June.²⁸

An Egyptian arms mission was lingering in London, but Eden, now Prime Minister, had turned against Nasser. Incensed by Egyptian propaganda, which supported the Saudi Arabian case in the dispute over the Buraimi oasis, Eden

²⁷ PRO, FO371/113675/JE1194/190, BBC Monitoring Report, 8 October 1955; Love, p. 90; Neff, p. 81; Heikal, Nasser, pp. 72ff.; Hoopes, p. 324.

²⁸ PRO, FO371/113608/JE1057/5, Bromley minute, 3 June 1955, and subsequent minutes.

scribbled in bright red ink across telegrams from Cairo. On one he wrote, 'If these representations [for the cessation of Egyptian propaganda] have no effect, what do we do next? Anything in our powers to hurt Egypt without hurting ourselves?'; on another, 'This is gross impertinence by [the Egyptians] who are likely to be attacked and destroyed by Israel before long. I hope we give them no help.'²⁹

Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan wrote the Prime Minister, 'We may well have to consider such measures [to hurt Egypt]...but I do not want it to come to this if I can possibly help it,' but Eden continued to treat minor incidents as a challenge to the British position. When the Egyptians passed a routine report on Buraimi to the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Eden wrote:

This kind of thing is really intolerable. Egyptians get steadily worse....They should surely be told firmly no more arms deliveries while this goes on, or at least warned that we will take this position publicly unless they stop.

Shuckburgh stood firm:

The plain fact is that, however, disappointed we may be in the attitude of Colonel Nasser and his colleagues, we can see no alternative Egyptian Government in sight which would be any better....We have an interest therefore in giving him such support as is necessary to maintain him in power which includes providing a certain amount of toys for his armed forces.

Macmillan chose a new method to deal with Eden: 'I don't think we need answer Prime Minister's minute at all.' However, other Ministers, notably Minister of Defence Selwyn Lloyd, urged Macmillan to defer any shipments to

²⁹ PRO, FO371/113608/JE1057/7, DeZulueta minute, 22 June 1955, and subsequent minutes, and JE1057/8, DeZulueta to Graham, 8 July 1955, and subsequent minutes.

Cairo, and the Foreign Secretary had neither the time nor the motivation to press his point in Cabinet.³⁰

Meanwhile, Nasser sent another list of equipment, valued at less than \$10 million, to Washington. When the State Department did not reply, Nasser agreed to Soviet Ambassador Solod's suggestion that Soviet Foreign Dmitri Shepilov visit Cairo on 22 July to discuss arms supplies from the Eastern bloc to Cairo.³¹

The State Department had information, through the CIA station in Cairo and Israeli sources, that an Egyptian-Soviet deal was imminent, and Foster Dulles asked Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev about the reports at the Geneva Four-Power Summit in July. Khrushchev firmly denied any sale of arms, but Foster Dulles told Eisenhower on 5 August that he 'planned to notify Nasser that we would sell certain military equipment to Egypt as desired by him' to preclude an Egyptian deal with the Soviets. However, the Secretary added the crippling proviso that the U.S. 'would have to be in a position to sell to Israel also' to maintain impartiality. When Eisenhower suggested telling the Israelis of American plans, Foster Dulles retreated from an immediate commitment, 'This might be useful but it had better be deferred until we discovered whether in fact the Egyptians would buy [American arms].'³²

The ALPHA negotiations diverted Foster Dulles from

30 Ibid.; PRO, FO371/113608/JE1057/10G, Lloyd to Macmillan, 4 August 1955, and subsequent minutes.

31 PRO, FO371/113670/JE1194/File; Love, p. 90; Hoopes, p. 324; The End of Empire: Egypt, interview with Ali Sabri.

32 Copeland, p. 148; Neff, p. 81; Mosley, p. 386; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Chronological, Box 12, Foster Dulles memorandum, 5 August 1955.

the immediate crisis with Egypt. In February, the Israeli Ambassador to Britain, Eliahu Elath, surmised that Britain and the U.S. were planning an Arab-Israeli settlement with territorial concessions by Israel, especially to Egypt.³³ By late May, the State Department, fearing that the Israelis would expose ALPHA, suggested a speech by Foster Dulles clarifying the Anglo-American position on the Arab-Israeli question.³⁴

After initial opposition,³⁵ the Foreign Office agreed that an American statement was necessary. However, the British explicitly linked ALPHA to the Baghdad Pact and Middle Eastern defence. In exchange for British support of Foster Dulles' statement, the Americans would promise to join the Baghdad Pact as soon as an Arab-Israeli settlement was completed. Meanwhile, the U.S. would finance the supply of British Centurion tanks to Iraq and give military support to Britain if fighting erupted in the Middle East because of Foster Dulles' statement.³⁶

By mid-August, the Americans agreed to the Cabinet's conditions. The U.S. would pay for 10 Centurions to Iraq if the British paid for two, and more tanks would be shipped in 1956. Foster Dulles would make a very general statement in early September, identifying the problems of Arab-Israeli borders, Palestinian refugees, and division

33 Israeli State Archives, 2382/9, Elath to Foreign Ministry, February and April 1955.

34 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/5-2855, State Department to Cairo, Cable 2069, 28 May 1955.

35 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/5-3055, London to State Department, Cable 5222, 30 May 1955.

36 PRO, FO371/115871/VR1076/131G, Shuckburgh to Kirkpatrick, 8 July 1955, and subsequent minutes, and VR1076/128G, Macmillan to Eden, 12 July 1955; PRO, CAB128/29, C.M.23(55), 14 July 1955.

of the Jordan Waters, without mentioning ALPHA and Anglo-American consultations. Twenty-four hours later, Macmillan would issue a supporting statement.³⁷

All was not settled, however. By 19 August, the State Department and CIA had evidence of a Soviet arms offer to Egypt. Fearing that exposure of Moscow's support for Cairo would force the U.S. to abandon 'impartiality' and back Israel, Foster Dulles moved his speech from 8 September to 26 August. Eden wrote:

The Americans are behaving disgracefully. This is their third change of plan over this operation....We should hold the Americans responsible for any flareup which may occur in the area.

As late as 25 August, the Prime Minister threatened to ask Eisenhower to cancel the speech. Macmillan minuted, 'It's no good trying to call it off now.'³⁸

The statement was an anti-climax. Stripped of any reference to ALPHA, it issued general platitudes about the need for a comprehensive settlement that would solve 'the tragic plight of the 900,000 [Palestinian] refugees,' the 'pall of fear' over Israeli expansion and Arab aggression, and 'the lack of permanent fixed boundaries.' The Israelis, while being 'restrained and sympathetic,' warned against any concessions of territory. Nasser complained

37 PRO, FO371/115871/VR1076/134G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 3338, 19 July 1955; CAB128/29, C.M.27(55), 28 July 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 3, Meetings with the President (2), Foster Dulles memorandum, 11 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115586/V1193/97G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1902, 16 August 1956.

38 PRO, FO371/115873/VR1076/177G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1938, 19 August 1955, and subsequent minutes; U.S. DDRS, US83 001051; PRO, FO371/115874/VR1076/200G, Graham to Macmillan, 25 August 1955.

about the lack of specific proposals. Iraq, the Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan withheld reaction until the Arab states could discuss the matter.³⁹

Neither the British nor the Americans comprehended that Foster Dulles' statement had been superseded by other events. In Israel, Ben-Gurion agreed on 12 August to form a Cabinet, heralding a more aggressive Israeli policy. On 22 August, Israeli patrols crossed the Egyptian border and occupied positions in the Gaza strip. Nasser responded with fedayeen raids into Israel, and only desperate intervention by the U.S. Embassy prevented RCC authorisation of a large-scale attack. In turn, Ben-Gurion requested an assault upon Egyptian positions at Khan Yunis on 31 August. Sharett opposed the raid but gave way when Ben-Gurion and Dayan threatened to resign. Thirty-six Egyptians were killed.⁴⁰

Before the attack on Khan Yunis, Nasser told American contacts that he would accept a cease-fire if Israel withdrew from Gaza,⁴¹ but he now faced further Israeli attacks and France was reportedly offering Mystere IV fighters to Israel while suspending arms deliveries to Egypt. Most importantly, the State Department, preoccupied with Foster Dulles' speech, continued to ignore the

³⁹ U.S. Declassified Document Reference System (hereafter cited as US DDRS), US86 000218; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 4, September 1955 (2), Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 1 September 1955; CAB129/77, C.P.(55)127, 'Palestine,' 20 September 1955; PRO, FO371/115875/VR1076/208, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 291, 28 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115879/VR1076/306G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1286, 20 September 1955; PRO, FO371/115876/VR1076/218G, Arthur minute, 30 August 1955.

⁴⁰ Shlaim, pp. 191ff.

⁴¹ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Lawson, 31 August 1955.

Egyptian arms request of 30 June. Until late August, Assistant Secretary George Allen, the Director of NEA, mistakenly thought a reply had been made to Nasser.⁴²

The State Department was also confused because it could not verify the completion of the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal. On 15 August, the Egyptian Ambassador in Washington, Ahmed Hussein, visiting Cairo, told Byroade and CIA station chief James Eichelberger that the Soviets had offered Egypt 100 MIG fighters, 200 tanks, and jet bombers, but he added that Nasser had not made a definite reply. Two days later, Foster Dulles told Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, that 'he did not know how seriously we should take the Russian proposals about Egypt,' and only on 29 August did the CIA meet Foster Dulles' request 'to work up information on some of the things these people might be doing about offering arms to the Arabs, etc.'⁴³

Nasser's probably decided to complete the deal after renewed Israeli attacks on the border, notably at Khan Yunis. The CIA concluded:

Prime Minister Nasser is impressed with the weakness of his position and feels strongly that he must secure arms and economic help at the earliest possible date. Whether he would, if unable to secure this type of aid elsewhere, accept Soviet military and economic assistance is not at the moment entirely clear, but there is a serious risk that, for internal political reasons, he might feel himself driven to this.⁴⁹

42 Love, p. 98 and p. 142; Abel Thomas, Comment Israel Fut Sauve (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), pp. 19ff; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 227ff.; Erskine Childers, The Road to Suez (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1962), p. 133; Hoopes, p. 136; Copeland, p. 132.

43 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.56/8-1556, Cairo to State Department, Cable 234, 15 August 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 17 August 1955, and Foster Dulles to Cabell, 29 August 1955; U.S. DDCS, US76 224G.

49 U.S. DDCS, US76 182E.

Despite the report, the State Department refused on 15 September to meet Egypt's arms requests, citing the 'severe practical difficulties' of financing the purchases and insisting, 'Positive steps by [Nasser] such as a start in exploring Secretary's statement [of 26 August] would bolster greatly case for accommodating Egypt on financing.' Byroade protested, but the State Department repeated its position on the 20th.⁵⁰ On 21 September, Nasser confirmed to Byroade that Egypt would receive approximately \$80 million in arms from the Soviet bloc, with submarines, 100 tanks, and 200 planes, including MIG-15 fighters and IL-28 bombers. Soviet technicians would be in Cairo for three months to set up the equipment and train Egyptian forces to use it.⁵¹

Developments in Egypt coincided with difficulties in Anglo-American discussions over the Middle East. Politico-military talks between Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr., and British Ambassador Makins brought professions that 'the U.S. Government continues to regard the Baghdad pact as the best foundation on which to build the defence of the area' but no further evidence of American support. Eden resented Foster Dulles' lead on ALPHA and minuted on 29 August, 'Our long-standing credit in the area is not receiving the credit it deserves.' Two days later, he added, 'Mr. Dulles started all this, and if

⁵⁰ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86 Series, State Department to Cairo, Cable 515, 15 September 1955, Cairo to State Department, Cable 485, 16 September 1955, and State Department to Cairo, Cable 537, 20 September 1955.

⁵¹ Neff, p. 89; PRO, FO800/669, Macmillan to Eden, 22 September 1955; PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/149, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1315, 25 September 1955, and JE1194/151, Shuckburgh minute, 22 September 1955.

he has got himself into trouble [with Arab or Israeli reaction], it is not for us to help him out.' With the precarious balance in the Middle East about to be upset, the omens were not good for Anglo-American cooperation.⁵²

⁵² PRO, FO371/115518/V1073/998, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1945, 19 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115521/V1073/1066G, Morris to Hadow, 29 September 1955; PRO, FO371/115585/V1193/94G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 456 Saving, 13 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115586/V1193/97G, Eden to Macmillan, 19 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115877/VR1076/272G, Graham minute, 29 August 1955; PRO, FO371/115876/VR1076/218G, Eden minute 31 August 1955. See also AP, AP20/1, Eden diary entry, 30 August 1955.

CHAPTER 4

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1955: THE SEARCH FOR AN EGYPTIAN
POLICY

The Americans' immediate objective, upon confirmation of the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal, was to block its announcement. However, the CIA, for unknown reasons, had little confidence in Ambassador Byroade, and the State Department suspected that Byroade was too close to Nasser to be objective. On 20 September, he cabled Washington with bitterness:

I find it impossible to understand why I have not been informed of Department's reasoning in turning down repeated and increasingly urgent recommendations....By our unwillingness to manipulate a few million dollars, we are permitting the situation to deteriorate to a point where a chain reaction of nature that will constitute a major defeat for U.S. policy in the Middle East, as contrasted to that of the Soviet bloc, is highly probable.

Undersecretary of State Hoover told Foster Dulles the same day:

Apparently there are misunderstandings and difficulties with respect to our man [Ambassador Byroade] who is there, and [I] would not feel satisfied we had done everything in our power unless [the CIA's] Kim [Roosevelt] could go himself and talk with [Nasser]. That would probably raise an explosion on the part of our man [Byroade] there...but enough is involved, if it is true, that we should not let it stand in our way.¹

Foster Dulles agreed, and Roosevelt, accompanied by Miles Copeland, a CIA official who served in Cairo from 1953 to 1955, met Nasser on 23 September. Roosevelt, realizing that the arms deal was a fait accompli, surprised Nasser by suggesting that its announcement contain a gesture of

¹ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles and Foster Dulles to Hoover, 20 September 1955.

peace towards the Israelis. Nasser assented, and an American-Egyptian working party began drafting the speech.²

Foster Dulles reported to Eisenhower, who was at the 'Western White House' in Denver, Colorado, 'It seems to be authentic that [the Soviets] are giving a massive lot of arms to the Egyptians, theoretically to be paid for by cotton --- it is \$100 million worth.' Foster Dulles considered a propaganda offensive against the deal but dismissed the idea: 'The Army will overthrow him [Nasser] if he refuses to take it. [I don't] think he is happy about it but he is held in power by the Army.' He did not mention the Roosevelt mission to the President.³

The following day, Eisenhower suffered a major heart attack. He was cut off from all business for two weeks and only received a general account of events until his return to Washington in early November. Foster Dulles was left in command of American policy.⁴

The British, who were not told about the Roosevelt mission and knew nothing of the impending Egyptian-Soviet deal until Byroade informed them of his conversation of 21 September with Nasser, were in disarray. Assistant Secretary Shuckburgh recommended a 'vigorous effort' to persuade Egypt to abandon the deal but could only suggest an approach by Byroade and British Ambassador Trevelyan to Nasser. Francis Russell, in London to discuss ALPHA with Shuckburgh, suggested American accession to the Baghdad

² Copeland, pp. 132ff.

³ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 23 September 1955.

⁴ Sherman Adams, First-Hand Report (London: Hutchinson, 1962), pp. 182ff; Author's interview with General Andrew Goodpaster.

Pact and guarantee of Israel's frontiers, but Shuckburgh rejected the guarantee as 'fatal to the Western position' with the Arabs. He continued, 'We must somehow keep Egypt on our side even to the extent of paying a very heavy price which may well include having to abandon Israel.'⁵

Deputy Undersecretary Harold Caccia, reviewing the Shuckburgh-Russell talks, had another idea: 'We may have to get rid of Nasser, especially if he becomes publicly committed to the contract.' Macmillan's only immediate response was to berate the new Egyptian Ambassador, but the Foreign Secretary privately seethed, 'We really cannot allow this man, who has neither the authority of a throne nor of a Parliament, to destroy our base and threaten our rear.'⁶

The British did not realise that the matter was in the hands of the CIA, who had no desire to be rid of Nasser. On 26 September, Roosevelt, Copeland and Nasser discussed the draft announcement of the arms deal, including the passage offering an Egyptian-Israeli detente. According to Copeland, 'Nasser liked it and said he could easily work it into his speech.'⁷ A duty officer interrupted to say that Trevelyan had requested a meeting with Nasser. Roosevelt advised Nasser to tell Trevelyan that the arms were being supplied not by the Soviet Union but by Czechoslovakia, then he and Copeland

⁵ AP, AP20/22, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2582, 25 October 1956; PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/151G, Shuckburgh minute, 22 September 1955, and subsequent minutes.

⁶ PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/152G, Caccia minute, 23 September 1955, and JE1194/156G, Macmillan minute, 23 September 1955; Alistair Horne, Macmillan: Volume I, 1894-1956 (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 368.

⁷ Copeland, pp. 134ff.

went upstairs.⁸

Trevelyan issued Macmillan's warning that the deal could 'not be allowed to go on.' Nasser replied that the deal was done. It had been completed '10 or 12 days ago' after he had 'waited for months and got nothing' from the West. His only consolation was that, as 'the British had dominated Egypt for 70 years,...he had no intention of substituting Russian for British domination.' Meanwhile, 'it was all very cheerful [upstairs],' according to Copeland, with 'jokes about what would have been the look on the British Ambassador's face had Kim or I interrupted his meeting with Nasser to ask, "Excuse me, Gamal, but we're out of soda."' ⁹

After Trevelyan left, Nasser and the Americans drove to the residence of a relative of Ahmed Hussein, the Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S. There they met Byroade, Eric Johnston, Eisenhower's 'special emissary' for the Jordan Waters negotiations, and Eichelberger, the CIA station chief in Cairo. The meeting was congenial until a 'tired and emotional' Byroade complained about the beating of the U.S. Embassy's Labour Attache by Egyptian workers in the Suez Canal Zone. Nasser replied that the Attache 'was spying and provoked some of the workers.' Byroade, losing all sense of diplomacy, criticised the 'Egyptian

8 Ibid.

Roosevelt's suggestion may have been superfluous. The Soviet Ambassador to Egypt, Daniel Solod, had told Nasser that 'the transaction could be disguised as a deal between Egypt and Czechoslovakia.' (PRO, FO371/113673/JE1194/134, Trevelyan to Shuckburgh, 23 August 1955)

9 Copeland, pp. 134ff.; PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/163, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1330, 26 September 1955, and JE1194/182, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1340, 28 September 1955.

police state' and described the RCC as 'a lot of juvenile delinquents.' When he added, 'One of my men is badly beaten and you try to make excuses for those who did it. I don't understand it,' Nasser replied, 'All right. If you don't understand it, we had better leave until you do.'¹⁰

Byroade and Nasser were used to speaking 'frankly' with each other, and the Egyptian President soon dismissed the incident. The argument, however, worsened the tenuous relations between the CIA and Byroade, and Roosevelt and Johnston asked Washington to recall the Ambassador because of his 'extraordinary behaviour.' Learning of the cable the morning after his outburst, Byroade telephoned the CIA man at a 'safe house' and demanded to see the message. When Roosevelt hesitated, the Ambassador warned, 'If you don't bring that Goddamn cable here, I'm coming over with my Marine guard and taking it.' Roosevelt gave in. An embittered Byroade cabled the State Department:

Neither I nor any member of the embassy staff under my control have taken any part in encouraging Nasser to make a statement....Neither were messages which apparently have been available to you from Cairo on this subject shown to me or my staff.¹¹

The situation was further complicated when Foster Dulles and Macmillan, in New York for the opening of the U.N. General Assembly, 'got more and more worked up' as they discussed Egypt.¹² The next day, Foster Dulles told Hoover:

¹⁰ Neff, p. 91; Copeland, pp. 136ff.; Heikal, Nasser, p. 76; PRO, FO371/113675/JE1194/190, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1350, 27 September 1955; Author's interview with Miles Copeland.

¹¹ Neff, p. 92; Copeland, p. 138; Eveland, p. 148; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/9-2855, Cairo to State Department, Cable 590, 28 September 1955.

¹² Shuckburgh, p. 281.

We have a lot of cards to play with Nasser although they are mostly negative. The waters of the Upper Nile --- we can strangle him if we want to. We can develop the Baghdad group and ruin the cotton market. We can switch this year's economic aid from Egypt to Iraq.¹³

In a personal letter, Foster Dulles threatened Nasser with the consequences of his actions, 'It is possible that you may not have realized fully the seriousness with which such a transaction will be viewed in the U.S. and the consequent difficulty of preventing it from marring the existing good relations between our two peoples.' Noting that the U.S. had assisted Egypt in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, provided economic and military aid, and revised its cotton policy to prevent damage to the Egyptian economy, Foster Dulles implied that American policy could be reversed at any time.¹⁴

Tensions increased when the Foreign Office leaked information of the arms deal to British newspapers, who published the story on 27 September. Outraged, Nasser removed Copeland's paragraph on detente with Israel, replaced it with an anti-American passage, and reserved radio time for his speech. An emergency meeting with Roosevelt softened Nasser's rhetoric, but it did not restore Copeland's paragraph.¹⁵

The Americans had failed to ease the blow of the arms deal, and the Roosevelt mission had disrupted the work of

13 PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/180, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 844, 27 September 1955, and JE1194/178, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 847, 27 September 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Hoover, 27 September 1955.

14 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Chronological, Box 12, Foster Dulles letter to Nasser, 27 September 1955.

15 Humphrey Trevelyan, The Middle East in Revolution (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 90; Copeland, pp. 140ff.

the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. On 28 September, Foster Dulles told Hoover that Byroade should be recalled for consultations. Hoover agreed but noted that Byroade was supposed to deliver Foster Dulles' warning letter to Nasser. He pondered, 'Johnston and Kim [Roosevelt] cannot do it. On the other hand, we might send [Assistant Secretary] Allen there.' Foster Dulles agreed. Allen would also 'find out re the relationship between Byroade and Nasser....It [was] impossible to have a crisis and no recourse to the head of government.'¹⁶

The plan backfired, however. Nasser perceived that Foster Dulles the Secretary was circumventing Roosevelt, just as the CIA had circumvented Byroade, because the policy of confrontation had triumphed in Washington. He warned Roosevelt, 'I will throw [Allen] out' if he delivered an ultimatum. Roosevelt appealed to Washington for 'no leaks to press of message Allen is bringing in.'¹⁷

When Allen arrived at Cairo Airport on 30 September, Byroade boarded the plane and warned him, 'If you say anything about an ultimatum, your ass is out of here right now.' General Hassan Touhami, an associate of Nasser and a CIA contact, followed Byroade with a similar message from Roosevelt and Johnston. Allen told waiting reporters that his trip was a routine visit to a Middle Eastern country. Few believed him, but the veneer of goodwill was intact.¹⁸

When Nasser finally received him the next day, Allen

¹⁶ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Hoover to Foster Dulles and Foster Dulles to Allen, 28 September 1955.

¹⁷ Neff, p. 94; Heikal, Nasser, p. 79; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 29 September 1955.

¹⁸ Neff, p. 95; Author's interview with Miles Copeland.

did not present Foster Dulles' 'ultimatum' but read extracts, changing 'I' to 'we' throughout and covering Foster Dulles' signature. In reply, Nasser stressed 'the change in the Israeli situation last February' and reminded Allen that the U.S. had not replied to numerous Egyptian arms requests. Allen was given no chance to expand on the contents of Foster Dulles' message. A second meeting on 3 October was equally futile.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office and State Department reviewed long-term policies concerning Egypt. British officials considered Caccia's idea of removing Nasser from power. Even Shuckburgh, who advocated conciliation because of ALPHA, wrote, 'We must first try to frighten Nasser, then to bribe him, and if neither works, get rid of him.' Bromley of the African Department suggested that the Foreign Office first suspend arms shipments to Egypt and increase aid to Jordan, but it 'might in the last resort have... to try to overthrow Nasser...to stop the rot, since once Russian technicians are in Egypt, there is no knowing how far the damage may extend.' However, A.J. Wilton, the desk officer for Egypt, pointed out the flaw in the policy:

No outstanding military figure or group...[can] consolidate the loyalty of the armed forces....A Syrian-pattern situation would most probably develop with rival military figures rising and falling rapidly.

The Wafd, the party that dominated Egyptian politics before the 1952 revolution, might try to reorganise itself

¹⁹ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.56/10-155, Cairo to State Department, Cable 632, 1 October 1955, and 774.56/10-355, Cairo to State Department, Cable 654, 3 October 1955.

or ally with a military group, but this would be difficult because the Wafd did 'not command any particular emotional loyalty.'²⁰

Shuckburgh travelled to Washington to continue the search for an alternative. CIA Director Allen Dulles asked 'whether [the British] thought [former Egyptian President General] Neguib would be a possible alternative.' The idea was dismissed because Neguib, under house arrest since an attempt on Nasser's life in October 1954, had faded from public view and commanded little support within the Egyptian armed forces. The State Department 'had various suggestions for "squeezing" Egypt by cutting off economic aid, etc., and...mentioned again the alternative policy of joining the Northern Tier and trying to get other Arab States in.' Other possible measures included a refusal to help Egypt in the international cotton market and pressure on the World Bank to withhold funding for the Aswan High Dam.²¹

Following the State Department's lead, the Foreign Office concluded that a far-reaching regional policy, rather than direct action against Nasser, was the best option. Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Undersecretary, might have persisted with plans to overthrow Nasser, as he was convinced that the Egyptian leader was controlled by the Soviets,' but he was on vacation. Caccia cabled Macmillan on 30 September, '[The] main object should not be to oust Nasser or, far less, to damage Egypt.' Instead,

²⁰ Shuckburgh, p. 281; PRO, FO371/113676/JE1194/248, Bromley minute, 27 September 1955, and subsequent minutes.

²¹ PRO, FO371/113678/JE1194/289G, Shuckburgh record, 29 September 1955.

Britain should stop or limit the arms deal and demonstrate to other Arab countries that Egypt's policy would not benefit her in the long run. The U.S. should be brought into the Baghdad Pact, military aid should be increased to Iraq, and the Sudan should be pressed to announce her independence, precluding any possibility of Egyptian control of her affairs.

Caccia linked a comprehensive program against Egypt to the eventual downfall of Nasser. It 'might even discredit Nasser to the point where he was removed by Egyptian processes alone....If this came about, it would have happened without our direct interference in Egyptian politics.' He concluded:

We should prefer to see the effects of the positive acts...before a decision is taken that we, i.e, the Americans and ourselves, must try to oust Nasser. It may come to that later. Even then we should be careful not to damage our best candidate by too obvious or too early sales-promotion.²²

The 'best candidate' was the septuagenarian Ali Maher, former Prime Minister in the 1940s and 1950s. Although he was in contact with the American and British Embassies, he was a questionable choice. Dismissed by the military as Prime Minister in September 1952, he was unlikely to command the support of a new junta and, as an 'independent' politician, he could not count on the political machinery of the Wafd.²³

Even this long-term program against Nasser was soon

²² PRO, FO371/113678/JE1194/286G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cables 2339 and 2340, 30 September 1955, and subsequent minutes.

²³ Interview with Sir John Wilton; USNA, RG 84, Cairo Embassy General Records, 050 Prominent Persons, Cairo to State Department, Despatch 1957, 13 April 1955.

reconsidered. The CIA station in Cairo, recovering its role in American policymaking, convinced Foster Dulles 'that Nasser did not want to go over to the Communist side' but hoped to play a neutralist role in the Middle East. Conferring with Macmillan on 3 October, Foster Dulles recommended caution until the size of the arms deal was confirmed. It was 'not a very attractive policy but ...[there was a] lack of a better alternative.' Macmillan agreed:

We must accept this diplomatic defeat and try to narrow and limit it....We should now talk to Nasser more in sorrow than in anger and tell him that he must endeavour to reduce his commitment with the Soviet bloc.²⁴

Reverting to his initial reaction to the arms deal, Foster Dulles told Allen Dulles that it was 'difficult to be critical of countries which, feeling themselves endangered, seek the arms which they sincerely need for defense.' On 22 September, the Israelis occupied the demilitarised zone of El Auja, only withdrawing after U.N. protests. In a speech on 2 October, Nasser displayed French documents indicating that 120 aircraft, 115 tanks, and 100 armoured cars had been supplied to Israel and a British intelligence report of May 1955 stating 'there was every reason to believe that Egypt had no aggressive intentions of any kind.' Both documents were later verified as authentic by British officials.²⁵

24 PRO, FO371/113676/JE1194/260G, Record of Anglo-American meeting, 3 October 1955; USNA, RG 59, 774.56/10-355, Wilkins memorandum, 3 October 1955. Also see Horne, p. 369.

25 Neff, p. 103; Love, p. 109; PRO, FO371/113675/JE1194/206, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1368, 2 October 1955, and JE1194/207, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1369, 3 October 1955; PRO, FO371/113676/JE1194/251, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 391 Saving, 5 October

Moreover, Eden offered no opposition to Soviet arms shipments to Cairo, as he was occupied with the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers and East-West cooperation. Apart from asking Macmillan for 'an estimate from our Ambassador in Cairo as to Nasser's present position, the extent of his support, and the chances of any rival, e.g. AM [Ali Maher],'²⁶ he left the question of dealing with Nasser to the Foreign Office and concentrated on reaching an accommodation with the Soviet Union. To achieve this goal, he was willing to accept the arms deal.

Trevelyan concluded on 26 September:

I see no reason that [Nasser] would not have preferred to get arms from the West and [he] only decided to accept the Soviet offer when he felt he could wait no longer in the face of increased tension on the Gaza frontier and internal pressure....A thorough reversal of our policy of friendship to Egypt could hurt her to a certain extent but would extensively damage our own interests here and endanger our interests elsewhere.

Eden commented, 'I am much impressed by [Trevelyan's] force and cogency. We must not cut off our noses.' As for the Soviets, Britain had 'nothing to hide and it [was] surely better that the Four Powers should discuss the situation than we should embark on arms competition.' By 29 September, Eden was anxious to send a personal message to Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin.²⁷

The State Department were concerned that Eden's

1955.

26 AP, AP20/20, Eden to Macmillan, 12 October 1955.

27 PRO, FO371/113608/JE1057/11, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1326, 26 September 1955; PRO, FO371/113674/JE1194/161, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1325, 26 September 1955, and JE1194/162, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1326, 26 September 1955; PRO, FO800/669, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1283, 27 September 1955; Shuckburgh, p. 284.

initiative would set the precedent of consulting the Soviets on Middle Eastern matters, and Shuckburgh's discussions in Washington indicated that a four-power conference on the Middle East 'would meet with a very strong reaction from the United States.' Macmillan agreed with the Americans, and in several days of debate with Eden via cable, requested a delay in the dispatch of the message to Bulganin.²⁸

Eden wanted to ignore Macmillan, but he finally decided to obtain Cabinet approval on 4 October. To pursue his initiative, he was willing to sacrifice Anglo-American cooperation:

Our interests in the Middle East were greater than those of the U.S. because of our dependence on Middle Eastern oil and our experience in the area was greater than theirs. We should not, therefore, allow ourselves to be restricted overmuch by reluctance to act without full American concurrence and support. We should form our own policy in the light of our interests in the area and get the Americans to support it to the extent we could induce them to do so.

While the message to Bulganin did not propose a four-power conference, it asked the Soviet Union to consider the 'special responsibilities' of the Great Powers.²⁹

Eden's personal venture did not override long-term Foreign Office policy, however. The Cabinet of 4 October noted that it was...

inadvisable to subject the Nasser regime to overwhelming pressure. It was doubtful whether such pressure could be made effective and a rebuff would be bad for our prestige in the Middle East.

Instead, Egypt should be isolated in the Arab world

²⁸ AP, AP20/22, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1304, 28 September 1955, and subsequent minutes.

²⁹ PRO, CAB128/29, C.M.34(55), 4 October 1955.

through increased arms supplies by Britain to her Arab allies. Macmillan also received Cabinet agreement to offer arms to Iran to bring her into the Baghdad Pact and to offer the Sudan immediate independence.³⁰

Two days later, the NSC, chaired by Vice-President Richard Nixon but led by Foster Dulles, evaluated American policy. Foster Dulles recommended increased military aid to Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia but rejected an Iraqi-Syrian merger because of Saudi fears of 'Greater Iraq.' The NSC agreed.³¹

The immediate task was to reestablish coordination of British and American policies. Foster Dulles and Macmillan had established a close working relationship, but the crisis atmosphere surrounding ALPHA and the Egyptian-Soviet deal played into the hands of Eden and American representatives in the Middle East who questioned the need to consult Britain. Furthermore, some British officials wanted strong and decisive action, including expansion of the Baghdad Pact and 'protection' of British-supported rulers, even if this conflicted with American objectives. Ambassador Makins summarised:

We have advanced ahead of the Americans on three fronts, the Russian, the Persian, and the Iraqi....While I fancy that [Foster] Dulles has taken this in good part, there is a risk (perhaps not too great) that they may not come up to us, or go off at a tangent, and that we may find ourselves out on one of these various limbs.³²

The first point of contention was Iranian accession

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 7, 260th NSC meeting, 6 October 1955.

³² PRO, FO800/678, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2433, 9 October 1955.

to the Baghdad Pact. British qualms about the cost of strengthening Iranian forces, strongly expressed by Eden and shared by Macmillan,³³ were removed by the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal. On 3 October, Macmillan cabled Eden, 'One of the cards we may want to play in offsetting the Egyptians' arms deal with Czechoslovakia may be general strengthening of the Baghdad Pact.' At a Ministerial meeting two days later, the Chiefs of Staff cited the strategic advantages of Iranian accession. Eden, noting Iraqi support of the measure, agreed.³⁴ Foster Dulles was now hesitant, however, telling Allen Dulles, 'Russia might regard it as a reprisal against Egypt and any hopes of quietening the situation would disappear and it would lead to a step against us and things would be worse.' Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff favoured Iranian accession as a riposte to the Soviets, Foster Dulles complained to Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson about the cost of rearming the Iranians.³⁵ Foster Dulles finally decided that he would not risk breaking U.S. ties with Iran. When the Iranians announced on 11 October their intention to join the Baghdad Pact, the State Department followed the Foreign Office's lead in publicly welcoming the news.³⁶

33 See AP, AP20/23, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4074, 3 September 1955, and AP20/22, Eden minute on Tehran to Foreign Office, Cable 589, 23 August 1955, and Eden minute on New York to Foreign Office, Cable 865, 28 September 1955.

34 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.56/9-2755, New York to State Department, Cable DULTE 2, 27 September 1955; AP, AP20/23, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2365, 3 October 1955, and GEN507/1st meeting, 5 October 1955.

35 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles and Wilson to Foster Dulles, 6 October 1955.

36 PRO, FO371/115522/V1073/1089, Hadow minute, 24 September 1955, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/115523/V1073/1108, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable

Meanwhile, the NSC reviewed the guidelines set for American policy in July 1954. The commitments to act against any aggressor, Arab or Israeli, were restated, as was the intention to collaborate and develop plans 'with the U.K., and to the extent desirable and feasible, with France and Turkey.' Specific economic and military actions, including suspension of aid, a trade embargo, and naval blockade, would be considered with the British. Foster Dulles would inform the Arabs and Israelis privately that the U.S. would 'seek to prevent resort to armed aggression by either Israel or the Arab States and, if it should occur, seek to stop it quickly.'³⁷

The British carried out their own review. A report by the Foreign Office's Robert Belgrave noted that Britain spent, apart from its obligations under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty and to the United Nations Relief and Works Administration, less than £2.25 million per year in the Middle East, although most of the 300 percent increase in British consumption and production of oil over the next 20 years would come from the region. Most of the additional oil would come from the Middle East. The Cabinet approved the principle 'that our position in the Middle East is vital to the economy of the U.K. and that Her Majesty's Government should be prepared to spend in the area on a scale more closely related to our essential interests there.' A working party was established to draft recommendations for expenditure.

2473, 13 October 1955.

37 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 1, Record of Actions by NSC 1954, Action 1421, 27 October 1955.

Macmillan also presented the Foreign Office's formula to counter the Soviet Union's 'deliberate policy of opening up another front in the Cold War':

We should adapt a policy of moderation in our dealing with Egypt and we should endeavour to persuade the Americans to do the same. We should concentrate on helping other Arab States who behaved loyally, while at the same time demonstrating that there were limits to the extent to which we could be provoked.

Eden agreed but, like Foster Dulles, considered the possibility of wooing Cairo back to the West. In particular, funding for the Aswan High Dam 'could be a trump card.' The Cabinet agreed.³⁸

The construction of the Dam had been a dream of the Egyptian junta since October 1952. In spring 1953, the Egyptians appointed consulting engineers from Britain, Sweden, Italy, and the U.S., and Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank, endorsed the Dam's construction. Byroade, then Assistant Secretary of State, and Eisenhower also recommended the initiative, but financial constraints forced Foster Dulles to reject American assistance for the project.³⁹

The Egyptians continued to negotiate with a private Anglo-German consortium, but plans were in the preliminary stages when the Soviets offered in October 1955 to finance the Dam. This prompted Eden to set aside his wish for 'independence' of the Americans in the Middle East, and on 21 October he asked the U.S. Ambassador, Winthrop Aldrich,

38 CAB129/78, C.P.(55)152, 'Middle East Oil,' 14 October 1955; CAB128/29, C.M.35(55), 18 October 1955, and C.M.36(55), 20 October 1955.

39 Nutting, Nasser, p. 130; FRUS 1952-1954 IX, p. 1908; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.5-MSP/4-2853, Byroade to Smith, 28 April 1953, and subsequent minutes.

to raise the issue of the Dam with the State Department immediately.⁴⁰

On 26 October, Macmillan and Foster Dulles met to reconcile the developing policies. Macmillan was optimistic about the discussion. Foster Dulles apparently wanted 'to try to get the Aswan Dam for a Western group,' and the Americans agreed to send political and military observers to the first meeting of the Baghdad Pact Council in November. Foster Dulles also hinted at accommodation with the British policy on Jordan and Syria. According to Macmillan:

Mr. Dulles asked me whether we could not bring pressure upon Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact. He thought it would be a fine thing if they did.

Foster Dulles was 'ready for counteraction in Syria,' believing that it 'was the nearest thing in the Middle East to a Soviet satellite.' Although the U.S. was wary of Iraqi-Syrian union, Macmillan maintained that Foster Dulles 'was moving in the direction of being less averse to, if not wholly favouring, a coup d'etat by the Iraqis.'⁴¹

However, as Macmillan met Foster Dulles, unilateral British action again threatened the formation of an Anglo-American policy. The dispute over the Buraimi oasis, claimed by Saudi Arabia and by the British-supported Trucial Sheikhdoms of Abu Dhabi and Muscat and Oman, had plagued Eden since August 1952, when a Saudi envoy with 40

⁴⁰ Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 391.

⁴¹ PRO, FO371/115469/V1023/14G, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 419 Saving, 26 October 1955, and V1023/15G, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 421 Saving, 26 October 1955; PRO, FO371/115387/V1193/149, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 420 Saving, 26 October 1955; Macmillan, Tides of Fortune, 1945-1955 (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 642.

horsemen established a base in one of the oasis's eight villages. Buraimi's oil resources were negligible, but the Saudis needed it for easy access to the Persian Gulf, while the British wanted it 'to consolidate the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula into a single political entity.'⁴²

Britain and Saudi Arabia finally agreed in early 1955 to arbitration by an international tribunal, but the proceedings degenerated, each side accusing the other of bribing local tribes and maintaining military forces in the oasis. In September, Shuckburgh ordered the British representative on the tribunal, Sir Reader Bullard, to leave the proceedings after Bullard reported that Britain would lose its case.⁴³ On 18 October, the Cabinet approved the abandonment of arbitration and seizure of Buraimi. British-sponsored troops occupied the oasis on 26 October, allegedly discovered documents indicating that Saudi Arabia and the American oil company, ARAMCO, were plotting to occupy the disputed territory.⁴⁴

Foster Dulles expressed disdain for the British occupation to Macmillan on 26 October but was not 'unduly concerned' or 'unpleasant.' Within days, however, State Department officials revealed anger and irritation. Hoover told Makins that...

...he had been taken aback by [the British] action....He hoped that, in the future, we would not think it necessary to "do that kind of

⁴² USNA, RG 59, CDF, 780.001 Series.

⁴³ C.f. USNA, RG 59, CDF, 780.001 Series, Geneva to State Department, Cable 737, 17 September 1955, and Newsom memorandum, 10 October 1955.

⁴⁴ Shuckburgh, p. 289; PRO, CAB128/29, C.M.35(55), 18 October 1955; PRO, FO800/678, Kirkpatrick to Eden, 25 October 1955.

business with one another" and that we would be able to "to play it together from now on."⁴⁵

Renewed Egyptian-Israeli conflict further hindered Foster Dulles and Macmillan. The State Department reconciled itself to the Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian Defence Pact, formally concluded on 27 October, but an intelligence report of 31 October warned that the atmosphere on the Egyptian-Israeli border was...

...extremely tense, with an outbreak of fighting likely at any time. [U.S.] Embassy Tel Aviv sees the possibility of wider hostilities.

Israel was expected to purchase \$50 million of arms 'with heavy concentration on French jet planes and tanks.' On 2 November, Ben-Gurion, formally taking office as Prime Minister, told the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, that he would meet Arab leaders to discuss a settlement, but that evening an Israeli military force attacked the Egyptian village of El-Sabha, killing at least 50 people and taking 40 prisoners.⁴⁶

On 2 November, Nasser told Byroade that he was 'ready to discuss Palestine on a strictly confidential basis' and promised that 'he would not interfere with the Northern Tier if nothing new happened, meaning if neither the U.S. nor any other Arab States should join it.'⁴⁷ El-Sabha overtook this statement. The State Department warned the Israeli and Egyptian Ambassadors that it would support

45 AP, AP20/1, Geneva to Foreign Office, Cable 3, 26 October 1955; PRO, FO371/115954/VY10393/10G, Hoover-Makins meeting, 27 October 1955. Also see FRUS 1955-1957 XIII, p. 285.

46 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 4, October 1955; Goodpaster to Adams, 31 October 1955; Shlaim, p. 193.

47 PRO, FO371/115468/V1023/20, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1609, 2 November 1955.

U.N. action against any aggressor in the area, and Byroade and the U.S. Ambassador in Tel Aviv, Edward Lawson, were instructed to deliver demarches, preferably with their British and French colleagues, supporting the U.N. plan for a truce. Israeli Chief of Staff Dayan was undeterred. He called for 'an early confrontation with the Egyptian regime, which is striving toward a war for the destruction of Israel, in order to bring about a change of regime or a change in its policy' and presented Ben-Gurion with a plan to capture the Straits of Tiran at the southern edge of the Egyptian-Israeli border. Ben-Gurion requested postponement of the plan, but only because Foreign Minister Sharett was in the U.S. seeking economic and military aid.⁴⁸

The renewed fighting pushed Eden, whose note to Bulganin produced no results, into another unilateral initiative. Shuckburgh concluded, 'Every day the weight of Israel round our necks draws us further down into the mud,' but Eden decided that his intervention would save the situation. Shuckburgh commented:

It has occurred to [Eden] that with Eisenhower sick, [West German Chancellor Konrad] Adenauer sick, Macmillan and Dulles engaged with Molotov in Geneva, there is only one great man left in the world capable of giving a lead and that is himself.⁴⁹

Coincidentally, G.G. Arthur of the Foreign Office had just examined new approaches to the Arab-Israeli problem and concluded:

48 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, November 1955 (2), Goodpaster to Whitman, 4 November 1955, and Minnich to Goodpaster, 7 November 1955; Shlaim, p. 194; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 223.

49 Shuckburgh, p. 296.

I can only see one possibility: that we should move towards some acknowledgement of the validity of the [1947] U.N. resolution on Palestine....[This] would be a blow to the Israelis, but we must face the fact that, if we are ever to bring about a Palestine settlement, we shall have to be nasty to the Israelis at some stage.

Eden seized upon the idea as the cornerstone of his annual speech at the Guildhall dinner on 9 November, suggesting a settlement on the basis of 'the 1947 and other United Nations resolutions.'⁵⁰

Although Eden mentioned 'other United Nations resolutions,' his reference to the 1947 resolution commanded attention. In the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War, Israel gained territory beyond the 1947 boundaries, including the Negev desert. Therefore, Eden's speech was welcomed by Egypt, which sought part of the Negev, but criticised by Israel. Nasser called the speech the 'first constructive declaration since the Palestine War,' but Ben-Gurion insisted that it had 'no legal, moral, or logical basis' and that it was likely to increase Arab aggression and lead to the Israel's dismemberment.⁵¹

More importantly, Eden's venture undermined ALPHA. Foster Dulles was not notified of the Prime Minister's initiative until 24 hours before the speech,⁵² and the Americans were preoccupied with Israeli Foreign Minister

⁵⁰ PRO, FO371/115880/VR1076/331G, Arthur minute, 4 November 1955.

⁵¹ PRO, FO371/115881/VR1976/350G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1706, 12 November 1955, and VR1076/383, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 475, 16 November 1955. For Israeli reaction, see Israeli State Archives, 325/6, Eytan to Elath, 12 November 1955; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86 Series, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 501, 14 November 1955, and Cable 508, 16 November 1955.

⁵² AP, AP20/22, Geneva to Foreign Office, Cable 124, 9 November 1955.

Sharett's visit to the U.S. Fearing that Sharett would appeal to the American public, forcing the Administration to bow to public pressure and assist the Israelis, the White House issued a statement on 9 November:

While we continue willing to consider requests for arms needed for legitimate self-defence, we do not intend to contribute to an arms competition in the Near East because we do not think such a race would be in the true interest of any of the participants....True security must be based upon a just and reasonable settlement [i.e., Foster Dulles' speech of 26 August].⁵³

Antagonising the Israelis, the Guildhall speech made the Americans' task more difficult. By 11 November, Eden, worried about press reaction to his speech, abandoned his independent stance and sought American support. He wrote Foster Dulles, 'I am sure that we must persevere and that we have the essentials of an agreement here.' The long-term damage was done, however. The Israelis, who knew of secret Anglo-American discussions since the spring, always linked Guildhall with ALPHA. To them, Eden's speech meant that British desire to return the Negev to the Arabs had triumphed over the general call for negotiations in Foster Dulles' statement. Eden's protests that the speech was not a commitment to the 1947 borders were dismissed by the Israelis, and the Prime Minister and Shuckburgh added to the furor, telling Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Elath that 'if Israel would not accept Eden's proposals, she would damage herself.'⁵⁴

⁵³ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, November 1955 (2), State Department to Adams, Cable TODEN 18, 8 November 1955, and November 1955 (1), Eisenhower statement, 9 November 1955.

⁵⁴ PRO, FO371/115881/VR1076/357, Foreign Office to Geneva, Cable 392, 11 November 1955; Shuckburgh, p. 299; Israeli State Archives, Shuckburgh-Elath meeting, November 1955.

However, the most damaging blow to Anglo-American planning in late 1955 was Britain's attempt in December 1955 to obtain Jordanian accession to the Baghdad Pact, made in defiance of American warnings that the project was ill-timed. Moreover, the project could not be dismissed as Eden's whim, as it was a mission sanctioned by the Foreign Office, the British military, and the Cabinet.

The genesis of the mission was a visit to Amman by the Turkish President, Celal Bayar, to request Jordanian accession to the Pact. Eden minuted to Macmillan on 14 October that the idea was 'worth considering' as Britain 'must tie to [its] Treaty all Arab States we now can.' Initially, the British were hesitant about proceeding, Makins telling Hoover that Britain did not believe that Jordan could be persuaded to join the Pact 'but they did not want to discourage the Turkish Government.' Meanwhile, Foster Dulles' suggestion of 26 October to Macmillan that Britain encourage Jordanian accession remained American policy.⁵⁵

As Foster Dulles' anger over the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal cooled, the Secretary listened to officials who opposed an approach to Jordan. The result was a harmful ambivalence in American policy. On 1 November, a U.S. Embassy official told the Foreign Office that the U.S. Ambassadors in the Lebanon and Jordan would tell those Governments that accession to the Pact was undesirable at

⁵⁵ AP, AP20/23, Eden minute on Ankara to Foreign Office, Cable 734, 14 October 1955; PRO, FO371/115954/VY10393/10G, Makins-Hoover meeting, 28 October 1955; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, October 1955, Goodpaster to Adams, 31 October 1955.

the moment, and two days later, Makins warned London that Foster Dulles' apparent support of Jordanian accession depended upon an Arab-Israeli settlement. As late as 8 November, however, Russell informed Shuckburgh that the U.S. had no objection to Jordan's accession 'if the Turks could persuade her to do so.'⁵⁶

Amidst the uncertainty, the Foreign Office told the British Embassy in Amman that Turkey's efforts should be endorsed, despite the danger of Nasser's opposition, but advised against further pressure upon Jordan until it reacted to the Turkish initiative. On 9 November, King Hussein told British Ambassador Duke that Jordan was ready to join the Pact 'given the necessary backing.'⁵⁷

The same day Foster Dulles finally decided against Jordanian accession after Nasser confirmed to Byroade that, for Egypt to accept secret talks with Israel, the West must promise that no more Arab states would join the Baghdad Pact. Foster Dulles told Macmillan, 'The introduction into the Pact of Israel's neighbours presented a new problem and would make it more difficult for the U.S. to support the Pact. Unless Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan were ready to make peace with Israel (which he doubted), he rather wondered whether it was wise to bring them in.'⁵⁸

⁵⁶ PRO, FO371/115527/V1073/1220, Hadow minute, 1 November 1955, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/115527/V1073/1222, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2675, 3 November 1955.

⁵⁷ PRO, FO371/115527/V1073/1224, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 460, 6 November 1955, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/115528/V1073/1246, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 480, 9 November 1955.

⁵⁸ PRO, FO371/115649/V1023/20, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1609, 2 November 1955, and V1023/24, Macmillan-Dulles meeting, 9 November 1955; PRO,

The decision to proceed rested with Macmillan. Eden, concerned with the Guildhall speech...

...was beginning to wonder whether it was wise to press Jordan hard to join the Pact. This might rile the Egyptians, who were showing signs of being reasonable.

He also worried that, as 'Israel might be contemplating a preventive war in Jordan,' Jordanian accession might pull Britain into a conflict with Tel Aviv. However, Macmillan, supported by Ambassador Duke and General Sir John Glubb, the commander of Jordan's army, the Arab Legion, concluded that the need to strengthen the Baghdad Pact and support King Hussein outweighed the risk of upsetting Nasser, especially after the completion of the Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian Defence Pact. The next day, Macmillan instructed Duke to tell Hussein that Britain welcomed 'early' Jordanian adherence to the Pact. The British would provide 10 Vampire fighters as a 'gift' and would consider further supplies of equipment when 'Jordan had...taken her place in a Middle Eastern defence organisation.'⁵⁹

Macmillan's opinion was reinforced at the Baghdad Pact Council by the Turks, who argued that Jordanian and Lebanese accession would be 'giving a positive example to all the countries of the Middle East.' Ambassador Duke suggested that Britain double her annual subsidy of £10 million, providing an extra army division, if Amman joined the Pact. Shuckburgh, after conferring with Macmillan and

F0371/115533/V1073/1370, Morris to Hadow, 2 December 1955.

59 PRO, F0371/ 115529/V1073/1222, Stark minute, 11 November 1955; AP, AP20/23, DC(55)14th meeting, 8 November 1955, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 507, 18 November 1955, and Foreign Office to Amman, Cable 778, 19 November 1955.

Templer, recommended an offer of tanks and guns, reaffirmation of the British guarantee under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, and more RAF fighters at Amman and Mafrag.⁶⁰

Upon his return from the Baghdad Pact Council, Macmillan wrote Eden:

I very much fear that, if we do not get Jordan into the Baghdad Pact now, she will drift out of our control....We should...present this to [the Jordanians] and more or less compel them to come in. In the final result, we may have to say that we cannot continue our financial and military support for a country which will not stay on our side in grave issues and then the Israelis will get them.

Shuckburgh noted on 25 November, 'Prime Minister is understood to have agreed with the policy considered.' Five days later, Macmillan approved Shuckburgh's idea that General Sir Gerald Templer, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, visit Jordan to arrange the accession.⁶¹

The Templer mission, which lasted from 7 to 14 December, was a diplomatic disaster. Although the King supported accession, the British overestimated the commitment of the Jordanian Government to the Pact. The resignation of four Palestinian ministers from the West Bank toppled the Government. The formation of a new Cabinet under the pro-Pact Hazza al-Majali lifted Foreign Office hopes, at least for a Jordanian statement of intent to accede, but public demonstrations against the Pact persuaded Hussein to abandon the negotiations. Reluctantly, he dissolved the Jordanian Parliament to try

⁶⁰ PRO, FO800/678, Macmillan-Menderes meeting, 22 November 1955; PRO, FO37/115532/V1073/1342, Hooper to Rose, 24 November 1955.

⁶¹ PRO, FO371/115532/V1073/1336G, Shuckburgh draft, 24 November 1955, and subsequent minutes.

to restore order.⁶²

Foster Dulles warned Macmillan on 6 December that, because of ALPHA, the U.S. would not support the Templer mission :

We need to keep in mind our present plans to make another try through Egypt towards an Arab-Israeli settlement. An immediate move to expand the Baghdad Pact would probably deny us Nasser's cooperation.

Templer's failure particularly upset Eisenhower, who wrote, 'The British never had any sense in the Middle East....[I am] a little "afraid" of the results of the Baghdad Pact.'⁶³

If the crises over Buraimi, the Guildhall speech, and the Templer mission had occurred during 1953-54, as the U.S. was pursuing an 'independent' policy in the Middle East, they might have produced open conflict between Washington and London. However, Britain's acceptance of American 'independence' and the recognition by most American officials of British influence in the region preserved, in large part, the 'alliance' at the end of 1955. Foster Dulles and Macmillan respected and admired each other, while Shuckburgh and Russell, who had become close friends, expanded the ALPHA discussions to other issues.

On the day of the Guildhall speech, Shuckburgh and Russell drafted a paper defining Anglo-American cooperation. The two countries would 'not write off Egypt' for the moment but 'if...Egypt [was] clearly lost to

62 PRO, FO371/115656-115658/ VJ1051/File.

63 PRO, FO371/115469/V1023/28G, Aldrich to Macmillan, 6 December 1955; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 7, December 1955 (3), Eisenhower minute, 16 December 1955.

Western influence, [they] should have to consider policies which would minimise the harm which she could do to Western interests.' The U.S. would 'maintain liaison with the Baghdad Pact Council and...give material support to its members.'⁶⁴ American diplomatic and military observers subsequently participated in the Council's first meeting in November.⁶⁵

If the Americans had abandoned ALPHA after the Guildhall speech, British hopes for an Anglo-American foundation to the Baghdad Pact would have been dashed, but the Shuckburgh-Russell discussions continued, and the Egyptian reaction to the Guildhall speech was more positive than Washington expected. Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi indicated that Egypt would start negotiations with Israel on border changes to provide an Egyptian-Jordanian frontier, some repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their homes in Israel with full compensation for the rest, and free transit through the Suez Canal. Nasser confirmed this on 27 November.⁶⁶

Foster Dulles, still upset with Sharett's visit to the U.S., told him that a settlement was essential for Israel's survival. The settlement might involve territorial adjustments by Israel, including part of the Negev, but its value to Israel was 'incomparably greater' than the cost of the concessions. Foster Dulles warned

64 PRO, FO371/115469/V1023/23G, Shuckburgh minute, 10 November 1955, and subsequent minutes.

65 PRO, FO371/115531/V1073/1317, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 669 Saving, 23 November 1955.

66 PRO, FO371/115882/VR1076/391G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 174 Saving, 17 November 1955; PRO, FO371/115884/VR1076/456G, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1813, 28 November 1955.

Sharett that Israeli refusal to compromise would 'put us all in great peril' and 'would be forcing us to make a very grave choice.'⁶⁷

The State Department was anxious to begin Egyptian-Israeli talks before the first Soviet arms shipment reached Cairo, forcing the U.S. to consider increased aid to Israel. A special peace mission was first suggested in late October, and Hoover, on 28 November, proposed to Eisenhower that a mediator visit Cairo. A further exchange with Sharett on 6 December convinced Foster Dulles that, despite the Foreign Minister's outward intransigence, Israel would accept a mediator and consider some territorial changes.⁶⁸

On 8 December, Eisenhower endorsed a mission to Cairo and Tel Aviv. Informed by the State Department, the Foreign Office were hesitant about the use of a special envoy but deferred to the American lead, and Shuckburgh and Russell continued to confer over the settlement's details. The State Department and the CIA approved Robert Anderson, a Texas oil man, close confidant of Eisenhower, and former Secretary of the Navy, as the envoy.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ PRO, FO371/115883/VR1073/421G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2839, 21 November 1955, and subsequent minutes, and VR1076/422G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2840, 21 November 1955.

⁶⁸ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86 Series, State Department to Paris, Cable TEDUL 12, 25 October 1955, and Paris to State Department, Cable DULTE 11, 26 October 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Hoover memorandum, 28 November 1955; PRO, FO371/115885/VR1076/485G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2983, 6 December 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Allen Dulles to Foster Dulles and Foster Dulles to Allen, 6 December 1955.

⁶⁹ PRO, FO371/115887/VR1076/504G, Arthur minute, 8 December 1955, and VR1076/524G, Shuckburgh minute, 16 December 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 4, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 23 December

The continuation of ALPHA encouraged Britain and the U.S. to woo Nasser through funding of the Aswan High Dam.

On 26 November, Eden wrote Eisenhower:

If the Russians were to succeed in this [aid to Egypt], they would, of course, be ruthless with the Sudan and abuse their control of the Nile waters. The outlook for Africa would be grim indeed.⁷⁰

Eisenhower asked Foster Dulles if there was 'any reason not to go out for the Dam in Egypt.' Foster Dulles wondered if 'Nasser [was] trying to get a bid and then let the Russians better the terms' but concluded, 'It is a risk we are taking but [I] think we have to.'⁷¹

The NSC debated the issue on 1 December. Foster Dulles argued:

If the Egyptians accepted [aid for the Dam], it would certainly be impractical for Egypt to switch to a Soviet satellite status, at least while the project was in the course of construction. Moreover, the presence of so many engineers, technicians, and other people from the Free World in Egypt would constitute a strong influence in keeping Egypt on the side of the Free World.

Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey vigorously opposed the extension of foreign aid, but Eisenhower's intervention was decisive. He supported Foster Dulles and dismissed Humphrey's fears of creeping socialism through nationalised projects and of increased Egyptian cotton production competing with U.S. output. The NSC agreed that the U.S. would provide 80 percent and Britain 20 percent of the West's \$200 million contribution to the project,

1955.

70 PRO, FO371/113739/JE1423/269G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5631, 26 November 1955.

71 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 29 November 1955; PRO, FO371/113739/JE1423/275G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2907, 30 November 1955.

matching the \$200 million loaned by the World Bank. Egypt formally accepted the offer of the World Bank and the Western countries on 17 December. The World Bank, Britain, and the U.S. would send aide-memoires to Egypt explaining the detailed conditions for provision of the assistance.⁷²

Eisenhower was also amenable to Eden's request, in his message of 26 November, for a summit in Washington on Middle Eastern questions. Foster Dulles worried that the summit would 'give a crisis atmosphere; [the British] will talk about the Baghdad Pact and making it into a second NATO,' but Eisenhower declared:

It might show after all we are people others like to come see. It is possible that by letting them come now, it will show a position of influence [for the U.S.].

The next day, Eisenhower and Foster Dulles scheduled the meeting for late January, the President concluding:

We should have a frank talk with Eden on this whole situation --- the Baghdad Pact, etc....[I] would like to know why they give Egypt a dam and then make him [Nasser] furious on the other hand.⁷³

Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East was still under threat, however. The Americans accepted British fait accomplis on Buraimi and the Templer mission, but they would not tolerate threats to their interests, notably their oil concession and rights to air bases in Saudi Arabia. Eden's obsession with the 'threat' that Saudi Arabia posed to the British-backed Trucial

⁷² DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 7, 268th NSC meeting, 1 December 1955; PRO, FO371/113740/JE1423/File.

⁷³ PRO, FO371/113739/JE1423/269G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5631, 26 November 1955; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 28 and 29 November 1955.

Sheikhdoms was fed by officers of MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence service, who wanted to topple the Saudi monarchy, by Foreign Office officials, who feared Saudi expansion throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id, who was anxious to remove Saudi opposition to Iraqi-Syrian union. Nuri suggested to Macmillan on 20 November that the U.S. withhold Saudi royalties from oil revenues for six months to prevent Saudi funding of 'anti-Western' and 'anti-Iraqi' forces in Syria and Egypt.⁷⁴

On 25 October, Foster Dulles had privately passed CIA information, of which even his advisers were unaware, to Macmillan that the Egyptians were supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, who paid with ARAMCO revenues. Using this information and Nuri's allegations, Macmillan suggested a joint study of possible measures by American and British governments and oil companies. Foster Dulles' cautiously replied, 'I believe it would be useful for us to exchange information regarding Saudi activities but it will be difficult for us to reduce or control Saudi Arabia's income.'⁷⁵ On 15 December, at the NATO Council in Paris, Russell told Shuckburgh that 'some [State Department officials] were doubtful about the policy of giving way to the Saudis, but...all had the feeling that [Britain] tended to act without due consideration for American

74 PRO, FO800/678, Macmillan-Nuri Sa'id meeting, 20 November 1955; PRO, FO371/115532/V1073/1342, Hooper to Rose, 24 November 1955.

75 AP, AP20/22, Geneva to Foreign Office, Cable 3, 26 October 1956; PRO, FO371/115469/V1023/26G, Macmillan to Foster Dulles, 25 November 1955, and V1023/28G, Aldrich to Macmillan, 6 December, and subsequent minutes; Shuckburgh, p. 308.

interests.' He and Shuckburgh agreed that Shuckburgh would visit Washington in January 1956 to discuss the issue.⁷⁶

Macmillan also tried to convince Foster Dulles that British retreat from Buraimi would provoke the Trucial Sheikhdoms to turn to the Soviets for protection. Unconvinced, Foster Dulles stalled Macmillan, proposing a joint study during Shuckburgh's visit to Washington. The outlook was not favourable. The Foreign Office's Permanent Undersecretary, Ivone Kirkpatrick, cabled Shuckburgh, 'I made a fairly savage attack on the American Minister this morning [about Buraimi and the Arabian Peninsula], emphasizing that the Americans were playing the Russian game and violating justice!'⁷⁷

Finally, the Foster Dulles-Macmillan relationship was suspended in December when Eden moved Macmillan to the Treasury, replacing him with Selwyn Lloyd. Eden wrote in his diary in autumn 1955 that he 'thought Harold too woolly generally,' as he thought 'of too many things at once.' He complained, '[Harold] follows Dulles around like an admiring poodle and that is bad for Foster and worse for British interests in the Middle East.'⁷⁸ Although Lloyd was Minister of State in the Foreign Office from 1952 to 1954, he spoke no foreign languages and travelled little outside Britain. While he was a competent barrister, he was awkward in conversation and placid in temperament. Many inside and outside the Foreign Office suspected that Eden had replaced the assertive Macmillan

⁷⁶ Shuckburgh, pp. 311ff.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; PRO, FO800/678, Macmillan-Foster Dulles meeting, 15 December 1955.

⁷⁸ AP, AP20/1, Eden diary entries, 17 September and 3 October 1955.

with a Minister who could be controlled from Number 10.

The rising influence in British policymaking was MI6. Since November, an MI6 operative in Cairo, codenamed LUCKY BREAK, had sent reports to London from a source who was allegedly within Nasser's inner circle of advisers. The reports portrayed Nasser as an irrational dictator bent on leading the Arabs, Africa, and the Islamic World and devoted to the destruction of Israeli and British influence in the Middle East. To achieve this, Nasser, supported by the subservient Syrians and the anti-British King Saud of Saudi Arabia, would eagerly accept economic and military assistance from the Soviet Union, turning Egypt into a member of the Soviet bloc.⁷⁹

LUCKY BREAK's reports were used to justify MI6's objectives. Britain would no longer 'appease' Nasser but undermine his regime and those of his Arab allies until they were overthrown, while supporting Iraq as the leader of the Arab world. ALPHA would be shelved. Instead, Britain would cooperate with Israel to establish new governments in Egypt and Syria. With the Foreign Office assuming a lower profile under Lloyd, MI6, if it could convince Eden of the necessity of its policy, would direct British activities in the Middle East.

⁷⁹ CIA London Station to Director CIA, Cable LOND 7064, 1 April 1956 (copy in author's possession and available for consultation).

CHAPTER 5

JANUARY-MARCH 1956: PREPARING FOR A SHOWDOWN

Since 1953, Britain's long-term Middle Eastern policy was built upon the creation of the Iraqi-Jordanian axis. However, in its haste to bring Jordan into the Baghdad Pact, Britain ignored the U.S., alienated Egypt, and misread Jordanian public opinion. The miscalculation threatened to topple King Hussein and evict British forces from the country.

Hussein's dissolution of the Jordanian Parliament in late 1955 failed to quell 'nationalist' disturbances supported by money and propaganda from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. On 7 January, General Sir John Glubb, the British commander of Jordan's army, the Arab Legion, anxiously asked the Foreign Office for British and Iraqi reinforcements. Four days later, the Cabinet approved the despatch of two paratroop battalions to Cyprus, with another battalion on 48-hour notice in Britain. One wing of RAF aircraft was redeployed from Habbaniya in Iraq to Amman, and the British armoured regiment stationed near Aqaba, at the southern tip of Jordan, prepared to travel north to defend Hussein. British forces were authorised to take retaliatory air action against Saudi troops if they entered Jordan.¹

The immediate threat to Hussein was short-lived. By 12 January, the British Embassy reported that the

¹ PRO, FO371/121762/VJ105/19G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 57, 9 January 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.3(56), 11 January 1956; PRO, FO371/121463/VJ1015/44G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 72, 10 January 1956, and subsequent cables and minutes.

situation had stabilised. Nasser assured British Ambassador Trevelyan that Egypt would stop inciting Jordanian demonstrations if there was no further quest for Jordanian accession to the Baghdad Pact. Saudi troops did not cross the border, and the British battalions stayed in Cyprus.²

The crisis had long-term effects, however, as the British, tried to strengthen their position in Jordan without expanding the Baghdad Pact. Proposals, first made in early 1954, for the defence of Jordan against Israel were revived by the British Defence Coordinating Committee for the Middle East (BDCC) in December 1955. The BDCC argued that Jordanian forces would soon be overwhelmed by Israel in an Arab-Israeli conflict. Jordan could only be saved if Britain airlifted two brigades into the country and, using fighter squadrons in Jordan and fighters and bombers from Cyprus, neutralised the Israeli Air Force within 72 hours. The plan required more fighter squadrons in Jordan and the support of fighters and bombers from Cyprus. In January-February 1956, the Chiefs of Staff refined and approved the plan, codenamed CORDAGE.³

Paradoxically, the crisis over Jordan's accession to the Baghdad Pact increased Iraq's role in Anglo-Jordanian relations. Britain had linked the Templer mission with direct Iraqi-Jordanian cooperation, encouraging Baghdad's

2 PRO, FO371/121462/VJ1015/36G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 199, 12 January 1956, and VJ1015/57G, Jedda to Foreign Office, Cable 6, 11 January 1956; PRO, FO371/121241/V1071/19, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 53, 11 January 1956.

3 PRO, DEFE4/82, JP(55)100(F), 22 December 1955; PRO, DEFE4/83, COS(56)11th meeting, 24 January 1956, COS(56)12th meeting, 26 January 1956, and COS(56)22nd meeting, 21 February 1956.

proposals for economic agreements with Amman and persuading Iraq to promote its diplomatic mission in Amman to Embassy status.⁴ While the Templer missions failed, Hussein's need for support expanded Iraq's economic interest in Jordan into diplomatic and military initiatives. Replying to a letter from Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id encouraging him to stand firm, Hussein requested a meeting in Baghdad in the near-future. At the height of the riots on 9 January, Hussein asked that an Iraqi division stand by to enter Jordan. Although the subsidence of the emergency made this unnecessary, Hussein's talks with Nuri in mid-January led to military staff discussions on the long-term deployment of Iraqi troops in Jordan.⁵

Iraqi and British interests coincided: a strong Iraq controlling Syria and sharing the economic, political, and military supervision of Jordan with Britain. This would indirectly link Syria and Jordan with the Baghdad Pact and isolate Egypt and Saudi Arabia if they did not cooperate with London. To increase its influence in Syria, Iraq considered an increase in 'subsidies' for pro-Iraqi newspapers and politicians, visits by Syrian dignitaries and students to Iraq, and a new radio station transmitting from Baghdad throughout the region. The British Ambassador to Syria, John Gardener, met Iraqi officials in Baghdad to

4 PRO, FO371/115532/V1073/1353, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 558, 4 December 1955, and subsequent minutes.

5 PRO, FO371/115659/VJ1051/149G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1083, 30 December 1955; PRO, FO371/121462/VJ1015/27G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 59, 9 January 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121484/VJ10393/1G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 81, 18 January 1956.

suggest similar activities in Jordan and Lebanon.⁶

Preparing for the Eden-Eisenhower summit, Britain tried to include the Americans in plans for an Iraqi-Jordanian axis. A brief for Assistant Undersecretary Shuckburgh's talks in Washington argued that, while Britain obtained no direct advantage from her presence in Jordan, her departure would prompt Israel to annex the West Bank of the Jordan River, leaving the Saudis, Syrians, and Iraqis to fight for eastern Jordan. Any reduction in the British presence 'would have a serious, and perhaps decisive, effect on our position in Iraq.' Eden went further, suggesting that Britain openly endorse Iraqi union with Syria and/or Jordan.⁷

The Prime Minister, appealing to Eisenhower on 16 January, linked the Iraqi-Jordanian question to Britain's campaign against Egyptian and Saudi intrigue. Eden asserted that Saudi money was bribing officials, buying newspapers in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, and threatening to replace the British subsidy to Amman. Eden concluded:

It was increasingly clear that the Saudis, the Russians, the Egyptians, and the Syrians are working altogether, and...if we don't want to see the whole Middle East fall into Communist hands, we must back our friends in Jordan and in Iraq. If the Saudis have their way, there will be nothing left for anybody but the Bear [the Soviet Union].⁸

Shuckburgh discovered in Washington that not all State Department officials were as accommodating as Russell, his co-negotiator on ALPHA, and Foster Dulles.

6 PRO, FO371/121648/VQ1022/File; PRO, FO371/121870/VY10393/File.

7 PRO, FO371/121491/VJ1051/41, Arthur minute, 14 January 1956; Shuckburgh, p. 327.

8 PRO, FO371/121280/V1077/1G, Bishop to Resident Clerk, 15 January 1956.

Assistant Secretary Allen displayed a bad sense of timing and little knowledge of Anglo-American planning, recommending that Britain give up on Jordan and indicating that the State Department favoured Arab unity under Egyptian leadership in the long term. Shuckburgh pointedly asked Allen whether the West could reach an accord with Nasser without paying too high a price in Jordan, Libya, and the Sudan.⁹

Shuckburgh and Russell agreed to coordinate military action against any aggressor on the Arab-Israeli borders, but the British position on Buraimi and Saudi Arabia blocked any advance on regional policy and antagonised Hoover, Foster Dulles' deputy.¹⁰ The Americans advocated a resumption of arbitration over Buraimi despite British protests that this would undermine their support of the Trucial Sheikhdoms, but Lloyd had reiterated, in a Cabinet Paper of 9 January, that Britain 'must firmly resist any pressure to induce us to return to arbitration' or to negotiate directly with the Saudis. The State Department also asserted that Saudi opposition to the Iraqi-Jordanian axis was defensive, prompted by their fear of strong Hashemite regimes in Iraq and Jordan.¹¹ Concerned about

⁹ PRO, FO115/4548, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 33 Saving, 14 January 1956; Shuckburgh, p. 320.

¹⁰ Shuckburgh, pp. 321ff.

A trained geologist, Hoover had surveyed oil reserves in Saudi Arabia for American companies who eventually took the Saudi concessions from British firms. In 1954, he was the chief American negotiator on the Iranian oil settlement, which replaced the monopoly of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company with an international consortium in which British and American companies each held 40 percent of the shares. Hoover was convinced that Britain, clinging to imperial dreams, would never cooperate with the Arabs and the U.S. in the Middle East.

¹¹ PRO, FO371/121270/V1075/5G, Shuckburgh minute, 19

U.S. ambivalence towards Iraqi-Syrian union and closer Iraqi-Jordanian ties, Shuckburgh allegedly snapped, 'America might wake up and realize that Iraq represents the solution of the West in the Middle East.'¹²

Only Russell's intervention prevented a breakdown of the talks. He reminded Shuckburgh that Foster Dulles was more receptive than Hoover to British views and suggested a message from Lloyd to the Secretary of State. Discussion of Buraimi was adjourned while the State Department acknowledged the vital importance of Middle Eastern oil and transport routes, the Soviet threat to the region, and the necessity of Anglo-American defence of the area.¹³

Specifically, the Americans agreed to act under the Tripartite Declaration against Arab or Israeli aggression and to give all support to the Baghdad Pact short of accession. They would promote closer Iraqi-Syrian-Jordanian links, as long as they did not alienate Egypt. In return, Shuckburgh retreated from an aggressive policy for Iraqi-Syrian union and endorsed the State Department's reassertion of the need for reconciliation with Egypt:

For the time being, this will mean that we must show her that we are not trying to isolating her or to thwart her legitimate ambitions. We must do our best to help with the High Aswan Dam.

Egypt was expected to stop anti-Western propaganda, especially in Iraq and Jordan, and eventually seek a rapprochement with Iraq.¹⁴

The successful conclusion of the Shuckburgh talks was

January 1956; PRO, CAB129/79, CP(56)9, 'Buraimi,' 9

January 1956; FRUS 1955-1957 XIII, p. 310.

¹² Eveland, p. 160.

¹³ Shuckburgh, p. 323.

¹⁴ PRO, FO371/121270/V1075/5G, Shuckburgh minute, 19 January 1956.

soon overshadowed by Eden's petulance and pessimism. Besieged by press attacks in Britain claiming he was indecisive and lacked authority, beset with fears of a worsening economy, and pestered by his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Macmillan, Eden was not only embarrassed by the near-disaster in Jordan but also by a public row with the Labour Party over the shipment to Belgium of 'demilitarised' tanks which were armed and re-exported to Egypt. Shuckburgh wrote that Eden was 'very suspicious of American intentions and absolutely distrusts Nasser. He seemed thin, nervy, and, in a curious way, frivolous.' Eden complained at the limited time allocated for meetings with Eisenhower, a condition imposed by the President's doctors because of Eisenhower's recent heart attack. He told Lloyd:

I am not going to be treated like this. I will take the next boat home....It is no use talking to Dulles and the State Department, though you will do it very well, Selwyn dear; they cannot treat the British Prime Minister like this.¹⁵

Speaking to Ambassador Aldrich about Buraimi, Eden 'lost his temper and flared up bitterly about the U.S. wanting always to have Britain abandon its interests and give away its rights.'¹⁶

Fortunately for the Foreign Office, Eden despite his anger, could not change policy on Egypt and the Middle East. He had committed himself to the Aswan High Dam. The Iraqi-Jordanian axis was not yet established, and Nasser could not be abandoned while ALPHA still had hopes of success. A conference of British heads of Middle Eastern

¹⁵ Shuckburgh, p. 325, p. 327, and p. 330.

¹⁶ FRUS 1955-1957 XIII, p. 324.

missions, under Lloyd's auspices, concluded:

Although Nasser's regime has shown signs of being prepared to cooperate with U.K. since the conclusion of the Canal Zone Agreement, we see no reason why we should not come to some kind of working arrangement which would take the edge off Egyptian opposition to U.K. policies.¹⁷

Shuckburgh's deputy, G.G. Arthur, summarised:

Nasser is more likely to be able to help us get a settlement than any alternative government in Egypt. We should not therefore undermine Nasser until we are convinced that he will not help when it is reasonable for him to do so.¹⁸

At the first summit meeting on 30 January, Foster Dulles reviewed the policy on Egypt. He complained to Eden that Anderson's talks with Nasser were 'no good...the Egyptians were dragging their feet.' Eden replied that he 'did not know how long we can go along with Nasser. [He is an] awful fellow.' When Eisenhower joined the talks, Foster Dulles commented that 'little could be done until we knew more about what might be expected of Nasser in Egypt.' Eden noted:

It was difficult to know whether Nasser could be dealt with. If so, our course of action in the Middle East could go one way; if not, it should go another.

To Eisenhower's inquiry 'if they [the British] had lost confidence in him [Nasser],' Eden carefully answered, 'It was difficult to evaluate Nasser, who was a man of limitless ambition.' Foster Dulles retorted:

[He] did not mind ambition, which was a healthy thing that could be played upon. However, Nasser might have become a tool of the Russians.¹⁹

17 PRO, FO115/4548, Commonwealth Relations Office to U.K. High Commissioners, Circular Cable W15, 23 January 1956.

18 PRO, FO371/121271/V1075/39, Arthur memoranda, 7 January 1956.

19 The account of the summit meetings is based upon the records in DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 20, Eden Visit; AP, AP20/29/2, Records of Washington

As before, Foster Dulles' anger gave way to the assessment that, unless ALPHA was abandoned, accommodation with Nasser must continue. Eden and Lloyd agreed.

Once it was clear that Eden would accept the policy forged by Shuckburgh's talks in Washington, Anglo-American coordination was furthered on a range of issues. On the Arab-Israeli question, Eden came to Washington hoping 'to put teeth in the Tripartite Declaration.' Although Foster Dulles was hesitant about a public statement of intent to enforce the Tripartite Declaration, as U.S. military action required a Congressional resolution, he accepted Eden's suggestion of Anglo-American military studies. Eisenhower agreed to Foster Dulles' proposal that Britain and the U.S.....:

...make clearly evident our resolution to react to an outbreak of hostilities in order to forestall such an outbreak....We should consider a possible U.N. resolution and other steps in the U.N. to establish a basis for action if it should be required.

The next day, Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed, after talks with General William Whiteley, the head of the British Joint Staff Mission, Radford confirmed, 'Our naval forces alone could establish an effective maritime blockade of Israel, and with a few reinforcements in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, we could blockade Egypt also.' Eisenhower endorsed immediate steps that did not require Congressional consent, notably stationing of warships in the Eastern Mediterranean with visits by cruisers and destroyers to Middle Eastern ports.

Eden again sought a formal commitment by the Americans to the Baghdad Pact. In his memoirs, he castigated the U.S. reaction:

Having played a leading part to inspire the project, the U.S. held back while Britain joined it....The repeated hesitation perplexed and harassed our friends in Turkey and Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. They strengthened Russian and Egyptian will to destroy the Pact and overthrow the Governments which supported it.²⁰

Eden's recollection is misleading. Shuckburgh had accepted that American accession was not forthcoming, and Lloyd informed Foster Dulles of the British position, stressing 'the great importance attached by the British to American support for the Baghdad Pact even though it could not now join' and requesting increased American aid for countries in the organization. Eden supported Lloyd:

He understood U.S. difficulties which prevented its adherence. He hoped, however, [that] the communique following the current talks would give some support for the Pact.²¹

The Americans fulfilled the request. The final communique noted that the Baghdad Pact had 'an important part to play in the economic and political development of member countries' and served 'the interests of the area as a whole.' The State Department agreed to seek an increase in the number of Centurion tanks delivered to Iraq in 1956 and in economic aid for Iran.²²

The two sides even moved toward compromise on Buraimi. Foster Dulles and Eisenhower, deferring to

20 Anthony Eden, Full Circle (London: Cassell, 1960), p. 336.

21 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International Subseries, Box 20, Eden Visit, Foster Dulles-Eden meeting (ETW MC-1), 30 January 1956.

22 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, February 1956 (2), Washington Declaration, 1 February 1956.

British insistence that they could not return to arbitration, suggested that a high-ranking British representative meet King Saud and agreed to urge the Saudis not to take Buraimi to the Security Council. Although Britain refused any concessions on the status of the oasis, Foster Dulles and Eisenhower left the issue for direct Anglo-Saudi talks.²³

Lloyd and Eden again asked the Americans to cut off the Saudi royalties from oil sales. The Americans balked, as the royalties were a private transaction between Saudi Arabia and ARAMCO, and a cutoff risked Saudi retaliation against American oil concessions and use of the Dhahran Air Force Base. Instead, they suggested that King Saud be persuaded to devote revenues to social projects instead of 'expensive toys' like arms and 'air-conditioned Cadillacs by the gross.' Shuckburgh concluded, 'We thought all this not at all bad.'²⁴

The Iraqi-Jordanian axis and action against Syria were also reviewed. Foster Dulles noted that 'various plans had been put forward by the Turks and Iraqis to effect a change in Syria' but added that none of those plans 'seemed sufficient to warrant our support.' No immediate steps were agreed, but the U.S. linked the Iraqi-Jordanian axis and a coup in Syria to a future campaign against Nasser if the Egyptian leader did not cooperate over ALPHA. Eden agreed, 'We must decide later, not during this trip, where we should go in relation to

23 Shuckburgh, p. 324; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 20, Eden Visit, Foster Dulles-Eisenhower-Eden meeting (ETW MC-5), 31 January 1956.

24 Ibid.

Egypt, and what our attitude toward Nasser should be.'²⁵

The Eden-Eisenhower summit laid the foundations for an unprecedented Anglo-American concord on Middle Eastern policy. While British and American military staffs continued discussions, the U.S. and Britain conducted patrols of two destroyers off the Israeli coast, two off the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, and two in the Red Sea. On 22 February, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to Anglo-American military plans to enforce the Tripartite Declaration. The State Department and Foreign Office examined economic sanctions to be levied against the aggressor in a Middle Eastern conflict and discussed measures to safeguard the supply of Middle Eastern oil.²⁶

Meanwhile, the British proceeded with the development of Iraqi-Jordanian links. On 15 February, Jordan requested a British assurance of support in case of an Israeli attack upon an Arab state, and British intelligence reports indicated that the Israelis would take 'provocative action on or about 1st March.' The Chiefs of Staff refused to inform Amman of CORDAGE, the plan for the defence of Jordan, but they agreed to talks between the British Defence Coordinating Committee for the Middle East and British officers of the Arab Legion. On 28 February, the Cabinet approved a formal reply to Jordan: while Britain was not obliged under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ USNA, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Geographical File 1954-1956, Box 12, 381 EMMEA (11-19-47), S.26, JCS memorandum, 8 February 1956; PRO, FO371/121761/VR1076/54G, Rose minute, 18 February 1956, and VR1076/51G, Rose minute, 1 March 1956; PRO, FO371/121759/VR1076/9G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 351, 11 February 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, CAB134/1298, Middle East (Official) Committee Papers.

to aid Jordan if Israel attacked another Arab state, the Tripartite Declaration would bring Britain 'side-by-side with Jordan' to resist aggression, provided Jordan did not take precipitate action against Israel.²⁷

The persistent question was whether Eden would permit the Foreign Office to develop Middle Eastern policy. The Prime Minister plagued Lloyd with phone calls, tore up the Foreign Secretary's draft messages to Foster Dulles on Buraimi, launched verbal tirades against Nasser, and vetoed the despatch of messages to Jordan or Saudi Arabia without his personal approval. Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Undersecretary in the Foreign Office, noted, 'Selwyn's only ambition is not to get into trouble.'²⁸

Lloyd had to make a gesture to Eden or risk dismissal from his post. At the same time, the British received word that the Anderson mission for ALPHA was making little progress with Egypt or Israel. On 22 February, Lloyd, preparing for a Middle Eastern tour, proposed taking 'a firm line on Egyptian propaganda....[Our] objective would be to make it clear that Egypt could not expect further help from us unless she changed her policy towards us.' The Cabinet approved this line. Anglo-Egyptian relations were at breaking point.²⁹

27 PRO, FO371/121484/VJ10393/2G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 185, 6 February 1956; PRO, DEFE4/83, COS(56)21st meeting, 17 February 1956, and COS(56)22nd meeting, 21 February 1956.

28 Shuckburgh, p. 332, p. 334, and p. 337ff.

29 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.16(56), 22 February 1956.

CHAPTER 6

MARCH 1956: THE TURNING POINT

Until March 1956, confrontation with Nasser did not serve either American or British interests. Two events changed this. First, King Hussein's dismissal of General Glubb as commander-in-chief of Jordan's Arab Legion convinced the Eden Government that Nasser was determined to destroy Britain's Middle Eastern position. Second, the failure of the Anderson mission ended hopes for ALPHA. The Americans believed they could not proceed towards an Arab-Israeli settlement unless a new regime was installed in Cairo. An Anglo-American 'alliance' against Egypt was possible.

On 1 March, King Hussein summoned Glubb and asked him to leave the country within two hours. Eden's urgent appeal to Hussein was refused, although the deadline for Glubb's expulsion was extended to 24 hours.¹ The dismissal was prompted by disagreement between Hussein and Glubb over control of Jordan's internal affairs and the Arab Legion. In May 1955, when General Templer, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Britain's commander of Middle Eastern forces, General Charles Keightley, visited Jordan, Hussein complained that Glubb tried to keep all matters in his hands, would not cooperate with the Jordan Defence Ministry, and supported 'his own favourites.' Matters worsened when Glubb insisted that Wing Commander

¹ PRO, FO800/724, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 276, 1 March 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121540/VJ1201/8G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 280, 1 March 1956, and subsequent minutes, and VJ1201/11G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 280, 1 March 1956, and subsequent minutes.

Jock Dalglish, the Head of the Royal Jordanian Air Force since June 1953 and a good friend of Hussein's, should be replaced in February 1956.²

On 28 February, Prime Minister Samir Rifai, fearing British opposition, refused Hussein's request to transfer control of the Jordanian police from Glubb to the Ministry of the Interior. The next day, Glubb recommended the dismissal of 11 Jordanian officers and the transfer of 34 others to police or civilian departments. After an acrimonious meeting with Glubb, at which the King refused to endorse the General's proposals for the reinstatement of certain officers, the dismissal of the 'troublesome' ones, and the delay of 'Arabisation' of the Arab Legion until 1985, Hussein decided the commander would have to leave.³

On 9 March, the Foreign Office told the U.S. Embassy that it had no evidence of Egyptian or Saudi intervention in Jordanian affairs, and Lloyd later confirmed that the 'principal reason for Glubb['s] dismissal was King's resentment at taking guidance and advice from a man so many years his senior.' Moreover, Lloyd was optimistic about his talks with Nasser:

Although the Glubb incident was a bodyline ball in the middle of the innings....My general feeling is the talks were useful....An accommodation with him is not impossible to start on a tentative basis.⁴

² Richard Lamb, The Failure of the Eden Government (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987), pp. 186ff.

³ The End of Empire: Egypt, interview with King Hussein; Hoopes, p. 335; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 94; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 741.5274/3-1356, Amman to State Department, Despatch 311, 13 March 1956.

⁴ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 641.85/3-956, London to State Department, Cable 3834, 9 March 1956, and 780.00/4-1256, London to State Department, Cable 4604, 12 April 1956;

On 1 March, however, Eden and his Ministers were convinced that Nasser had prompted or forced Hussein to remove Glubb. Since January, Eden and the Foreign Office had collected reports of an Egyptian propaganda campaign against Glubb. Allegations that Glubb halted the advance of Iraqi and Jordanian armies towards Tel Aviv in 1948 were common.⁵

By an unfortunate coincidence, Lloyd arrived in Cairo on the day of Glubb's dismissal. At dinner, during a three-hour discussion, Nasser proposed a 'truce.' in Anglo-Egyptian sparring. If Britain would 'freeze the membership of the Baghdad Pact, with no more recruitment of Arab states,' Nasser would halt anti-British and anti-Pact propaganda and revive, with Iraq, the Arab Collective Security Pact, which might eventually be linked to the Baghdad Pact. Lloyd did not reject the proposal but stated that he must consult other Baghdad Pact members and the British Cabinet.⁶

Near the end of the dinner, a British Embassy official passed a note about Glubb's dismissal to Ambassador Trevelyan, who told Lloyd of the news upon their return to the Embassy. When Lloyd visited Nasser the next day, he believed that the Egyptian President, at worst, had engineered Glubb's removal and, at best, had

AP, AP20/24, Bahrain to Foreign Office, Cable 155A, 2 March 1956. See also PRO, FO371/ 127876/VJ1011/1, Johnston to Lloyd, 19 March 1957.

⁵ PRO, FO371/118861/JE1053/7G, Shuckburgh minute, 22 February 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121270/V1075/22, Arthur to Rose, 20 January 1956.

⁶ Selwyn Lloyd, Suez 1956 (New York: Mayflower, 1978), pp. 44ff.; Heikal, Nasser, pp. 84ff.; Love, pp. 210ff.; Trevelyan, pp. 64ff.; PRO, FO371/121243/V1071/85, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 413, 2 March 1956.

withheld the information from him. Nasser, however, did not learn of the news from Jordan until late evening on 1 March or early the next morning. Unaware of Hussein's motives, he believed the British asked Glubb to resign.

The result was farce. Lloyd asked Nasser, 'You are aware, Mr. President, of what has happened in Jordan?' Nasser replied 'Yes, it's good, isn't it?' to which Lloyd rebutted, 'What's good about it?' Nasser explained his assumption that Britain approved the change because it 'would improve the position in Jordan and strengthen [Hussein's] regime.' Lloyd, incensed at 'this pretence' of Nasser's, charged that Egypt had been responsible, through propaganda or direct action, for Glubb's removal and warned of the bad effect on Anglo-Egyptian relations. Proposals for an Anglo-Egyptian 'truce' fell by the wayside.⁷

The situation worsened when Lloyd left Cairo and arrived in Bahrain on the Arabian Peninsula. En route from the airport to the British Residency, Lloyd's motorcade encountered demonstrators protesting the lack of social reform and control of the country's policies by Sir Charles Belgrave, the British adviser to the Bahraini Ruler. Sand and pebbles were thrown at the procession, some cars were jostled, and one of their windows was broken. Lloyd cabled, 'I did not have as exciting a time in Bahrain as is described here,' but the incident heightened anger in London.⁸

7 PRO, FO371/121243/V1071/85, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 413, 2 March 1956; Lloyd, p. 47; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 97; PRO, FO371/121540/VJ1201/24G, Bahrain to Foreign Office, Cable 156, 2 March 1956.

8 Lloyd, pp. 49ff.; Nutting, No End of a Lesson (London:

The news of Glubb's removal convulsed Eden with fury. Anthony Nutting, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, was with the Prime Minister until 5 a.m. trying to calm him:

[Eden] put all the blame on Nasser and brushed aside every argument that mere personal considerations had in fact influenced Hussein's arbitrary decision....He decided that the world was not big enough to hold both him and Nasser.⁹

Nutting wrote that he pressed the need for deliberation:

[Eden] called me nothing but a Foreign Office clerk and said I didn't understand anything about politics and the implications of this dismissal for Britain and her Prime Minister. At one point he said, 'You won't accept any arguments against Nasser, you are in love with Nasser.'

About midnight, Eden called Shuckburgh at his home in Henley after the day's work at the Foreign Office, snapped, 'I thought you would be looking after your business,' and summoned him back to London.¹⁰

After Eden cabled that Glubb's removal could be 'disastrous for Anglo-Jordanian cooperation in the future,' Hussein publicly confirmed Jordan's friendship with Britain and respect for the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, but the Prime Minister was not pacified. Shuckburgh wrote that Eden, intervening constantly with phone calls and messages, was 'now violently anti-Nasser, whom he compares with Mussolini.' He ordered Shuckburgh to consider reoccupation of the Canal Zone Base by British troops.¹¹

With Lloyd absent and Eden in an aggressive mood, the Foreign Office was initially paralysed, and an Anglo-

Constable, 1967), p. 28; PRO, FO800/734, Delhi to Commonwealth Relations Office, Cable 361, 4 March 1956.

⁹ Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 17.

¹⁰ Shuckburgh, pp. 339ff.

¹¹ Shuckburgh, p. 341.

Egyptian showdown seemed inevitable. On 4 March, however, some officials began to counteract the rush towards conflict. Glubb met Eden, Nutting, Shuckburgh, and other officials and warned:

It would not be right to come down on Jordan like a ton of bricks....Do not pull out, do not cut the subsidy. Stop sending telegrams and let the dust settle down.

Ambassador Duke, wondered if he and London might have overreacted to Glubb's dismissal.¹²

That evening Eden convened a meeting at Chequers, attended by the Lord President, Lord Salisbury; the Minister of Defence, Walter Monckton; Templer; the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Dermot Boyle; Kirkpatrick; Nutting; and Shuckburgh. Eden insisted upon a tough line. Kirkpatrick lent support, calling for withdrawal of the British subsidy and denunciation of the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty. Everyone agreed that British officers of the Arab Legion should leave Jordan. The only sign of moderation was an attempt, probably led by Shuckburgh, to soften the tone of a statement to be made by Eden to the House of Commons the next day.¹³

This was the high-water mark of Eden's policy of reprisal, as Foreign Office officials mobilised support for a conciliatory line. Duke rejected withdrawal of the subsidy and denunciation of the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, since 'action against General Glubb might have been directed only against him personally and...the manner of

¹² Shuckburgh, p. 342; Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 30; PRO, FO371/121541/VJ1201/37G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 335, 4 March 1956.

¹³ Shuckburgh, p. 342; PRO, FO371/121541/VJ1201/41G, Foreign Office to Amman, Cable 403, 5 March 1956.

his dismissal might have been due to the awe in which he had come to be held in Jordan.' The Cabinet agreed that a wide-ranging statement should be considered further, and Eden's address to the Commons asked only for the relief of British officers from their commands in the Arab Legion.¹⁴

Shuckburgh and Nutting argued that Jordan would repair its relations with Britain 'if we could find a way of letting them back through the Iraqis.' Telegrams from Iraq indicated that Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id and the monarchy were 'waking up a little to the facts of life' and considering a meeting with Hussein. Shuckburgh and Nutting recommended that Britain suggest Iraqi assistance, through military forces and partial takeover of the British subsidy, to Amman.¹⁵

The Ministerial meeting to decide British policy occurred late on the evening of 5 March. Shuckburgh and Nutting found a sponsor in Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan. Over the dissent of Salisbury and the Lord Privy Seal, R.A. Butler, who wanted to jettison the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, the Chancellor obtained agreement to the policy of an Iraqi-Jordanian axis. He told Shuckburgh after the meeting, 'I have gained you a day or two to rescue the work of 40 years.' Apparently Macmillan had convinced Eden that the Iraqi-Jordanian front would block Nasser's hopes in the Middle East.¹⁶

¹⁴ Shuckburgh, p. 343; Eden, p. 350; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.18(56), 5 March 1956.

¹⁵ Shuckburgh, p. 343; PRO, FO800/734, Nutting to Eden, 5 March 1956.

¹⁶ Shuckburgh, p. 343; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.19(56), 6 March 1956.

Present were Eden; Salisbury; Macmillan; Butler; Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd; the Chief Whip, Edward Heath; Cabinet Secretary Norman Brook; Templer;

The next day the Cabinet approved the decisions of the Ministerial meeting, although Eden still spoke of Egypt as 'the main threat to [British] interests' in Iraq and the Persian Gulf,¹⁷ and cabled Lloyd that Nasser's hopes of an Anglo-Egyptian 'truce' over the Baghdad Pact were misplaced:

I am absolutely sure that we must do nothing to lead the members of the Baghdad Pact to think that we are considering limiting the membership. It could be fatal even to explore this with them at the present time.¹⁸

Eden, however, painted himself into a corner with his tough posturing. On the one hand, he assured the public that Britain would react firmly to Glubb's dismissal. He showed his resolve over the crisis in the British colony of Cyprus, where the guerrilla movement EOKA, supported by many residents, was demanding union with Greece, by ordering the jamming of Greek broadcasts to the island and the deportation of Archbishop Makarios, the leader of the Greek Orthodox community, to the Seychelles. On the other hand, the Cabinet had approved the Foreign Office's conciliatory approach towards Jordan, and Eden had been warned that public denunciation of Amman might inflame anti-British nationalists and topple King Hussein.¹⁹

With Eden unable to support his fighting talk with tough measures, the Opposition trapped the Prime Minister in a Commons debate on Jordan on 7 March. In his memoirs, Eden claimed that he had inadequate time to prepare his

Edward Boyle of the Treasury; Kirkpatrick; Nutting; and Shuckburgh.

17 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.19(56), 6 March 1956.

18 PRO, FO800/734, Foreign Office to Karachi, Cable 651, 7 March 1956.

19 Shuckburgh, p. 344.

winding-up speech, but Foreign Office staff, including Shuckburgh, spent all of 7 March drafting the statement, which was a concise summary of Britain's need to work with, rather than against, Jordan as part of a long-term strategy in the Middle East.²⁰

Eden's downfall was a loss of temper when the Opposition dared him to give an immediate sign of British strength. The Prime Minister strayed from his script to produce the image of Britain vigorously defending her interests against foreign threats. When he could not support the rhetoric with an aggressive policy, he tried to shout down his hecklers. He failed miserably, leaving the chamber 'pretty broken' and saying only, 'Noisy, noisy.' Drew Middleton of the New York Times wrote that Eden was 'subjected to a storm of vituperation and abuse beyond anything heard in the Commons since the last days of Neville Chamberlain's Prime Ministership.' A British columnist added:

Sir Anthony suffered a blow to his prestige that was clearly reflected in the silent, devastated ranks on the Conservative benches behind him....If the year goes on as it has begun, it will not be Sir Anthony but Mr Harold Macmillan who reigns in Downing Street in 1957.²¹

Press Secretary Clark wondered 'to what extent [Macmillan was] intriguing' to take advantage of Eden's position.²² Despite Eden's woesome performance, the Government had a majority of 60, a typical figure, in the division, but, humiliated by the Opposition, the Prime Minister now

²⁰ Eden, p. 352; Hansard, 7 March 1956.

²¹ Carlton, Anthony Eden, pp. 398ff.; William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 7 March 1956; Rhodes James, p. 432.

²² William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 7 March 1956.

sought total victory over Egypt.

The choice lay between Eden's wish for quick, decisive action and the Foreign Office's strategy of long-term 'isolation' of Nasser. On 10 March, Shuckburgh, learning of ALPHA's death, defined the situation:

The Tripartite Declaration [was] a mere stop-gap; its sole justification was that it held the ring while [an Arab-Israeli] settlement was sought. This is a situation of grave national emergency. If the Jews attack, then perhaps we can find means of saving ourselves by falling upon them [but] unless the Israelis commit an aggression, we are daily becoming more committed to go to war against a Soviet-armed Arab world as soon as they fell strong enough or fanatical enough to attack Israel.²³

Stressing the need for consensus within the Commons and with the Americans, Shuckburgh posed six questions, answering the first two himself. There was no alternative to Egypt as the route to an Arab-Israeli settlement because of the weakness of Jordan, Syria, and the Lebanon. Nor could Britain impose a settlement upon the Arabs and Israel because of Israeli refusal to cede territory and American preoccupation with the 1956 Presidential elections. Since an immediate settlement was impossible, Shuckburgh pondered:

If we have despaired of Nasser, ought we to seek to overthrow him and if so, how? We must have full American cooperation in any such effort.

Britain had to decide how Nuri and the Baghdad Pact could be sustained, how King Saud of Saudi Arabia could be detached from Nasser, and whether the United Nations, and thus the Soviet Union, should become more involved in the

23 PRO, FO371/121235/V1054/70G, Shuckburgh to Kirkpatrick, 10 March 1956, and subsequent minutes; Shuckburgh, p. 346.

area.²⁴

Nutting answered Shuckburgh's questions on 12 March. To isolate Nasser, Britain should bring the U.S. into a strengthened Baghdad Pact, forge the Iraqi-Jordanian axis, detach Saudi Arabia from Egypt, and install a pro-Western government in Syria. Meanwhile, military and economic aid, including funding for the Aswan High Dam, would be withheld from Egypt.²⁵

Eden was quick to reply. He called Nutting, who was having dinner at the Savoy, and snapped:

It's me. What's all this poppycock you've sent me? I don't agree with a single word of it.

When Nutting explained that he was trying to establish Britain's long-term position in the Middle East, Eden responded:

But what's all this nonsense about isolating Nasser or 'neutralising' him, as you call it? I want him destroyed, can't you understand? I want him removed, and if you and the Foreign Office don't agree, then you'd better come to the Cabinet and explain why.²⁶

Nutting explained the need to find another leader for Egypt, but Eden persisted, 'I don't want an alternative and I don't give a damn if there's anarchy and chaos in Egypt.'²⁷

Fortunately for the Foreign Office, two issues distracted Eden. The first was progress towards

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Nutting minute is missing from PRO, FO371/121235/V1054/70G and retained in PRO, FO800/734, but its contents can be deduced by tracing the Foreign Office minutes between Shuckburgh's inquiry of 10 March and Lloyd's presentation to Cabinet on 21 March.

²⁶ Nutting later claimed that Eden's original words were, 'I want him murdered, can't you understand?' (The End of Empire: Egypt, interview with Anthony Nutting)

²⁷ Nutting, No End of A Lesson, pp. 34ff.

reconciliation with Jordan. Sir Alec Kirkbride, advisor for more than 30 years to King Hussein's grandfather, King Abdullah, reported to the Cabinet after a visit to Amman:

The King's dismissal of General Glubb...was essentially an act directed against General Glubb personally; it was not designed to disrupt Jordan's relations with the U.K.; and both the King and the Prime Minister of Jordan were now most seriously disturbed at the possibility that a lasting breach might thereby created in the relations between the two countries.

He added, 'What was immediately required was an assurance that the U.K. Government were not proposing to withdraw their support from Jordan and an offer to discuss the terms on which British officers might serve with the Arab Legion in the future.' While Eden was 'clearly put out by what Kirkbride had to say,' the Cabinet expressed 'general agreement ...that it would be inexpedient' to assume that Anglo-Jordanian relations could not be restored.²⁸

On 10 March, Britain's need to maintain good relations with Jordan increased when Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia renewed their offer, first made in January, to replace the British subsidy to Jordan. The Foreign Office confirmed three days later:

It is most important that we should bring the Iraqis and Jordanians much closer together....It would be better to proceed through closer bilateral arrangements between Jordan and Iraq in the first place, leading possibly to some trilateral arrangements to include us.²⁹

The opportunity to develop the Iraqi-Jordanian axis came on 14 March when Hussein met King Feisal II of Iraq,

²⁸ Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 34ff.; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.21(56), 9 March 1956; Shuckburgh, p. 345.

²⁹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.21(56), 9 March 1956; PRO, FO371/121243/V1071/102, Foreign Office draft, 13 March 1956.

Crown Prince Abdul-Illah, and Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id at H-3, a pumping station on an Iraqi oil pipeline. Hussein told Ambassador Duke that the talks were 'most satisfactory,' as Iraq and Jordan would establish a joint defence council similar to the Anglo-Jordanian Defence Board. The British Chiefs of Staff confirmed on 22 March:

[While] existing facilities and the stationing of forces in Jordan are not militarily essential to U.K. strategy, ...overriding political considerations demand the retention of U.K. influence and interests in Jordan.... Support for Jordan should include the continuation of a subsidy, the setting up of a Military Mission to advise the Arab Legion and the Royal Jordanian Air Force, and assurance of U.K. intention to stand by the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty.³⁰

Meanwhile, Eden's attention turned from Egypt to Bahrain and the Persian Gulf States. As early as 3 March, Eden was writing minutes to Minister of Defence Monckton, ringing Foreign Office staff, and demanding emergency meetings. When Eden drafted a telegram authorising British military action in Bahrain, Nutting reminded the Prime Minister that progress was being made towards an accommodation between the Ruler and his reformist opponents.³¹

Rebuffed by the Foreign Office, Eden pressed Monckton:

We cannot allow the oil to be endangered. Therefore, a plan must be worked out without delay as to what reinforcements are necessary and where they can be put....Both the political and military difficulties have got to be

³⁰ Shuckburgh, p. 346; PRO, FO800/734, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 422, 15 March 1956; PRO, FO371/121484/VJ10393/15, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 427, 15 March 1956; PRO, CAB131/17, DC(56)7, 'Review of U.K. Position in Jordan,' 22 March 1956.

³¹ AP, AP20/21, Eden to Monckton, 3 March 1956; Shuckburgh, p. 345; Clark, p. 162; PRO, FO800/734, Nutting to Eden, 9 March 1956.

overcome.³²

Eden's interventions were so persistent that Cabinet Secretary Brook asked Shuckburgh to reassure the Prime Minister. Shuckburgh complained:

Nutting, Kirkpatrick, and I feel that we, alternately, are rejected by the PM as no good, not on the job, unhelpful....[Eden] seems to want to march troops in and arrest the [reformist] "Higher Executive Committee" with whom Bernard [Burrows] is now negotiating....We have now got to a state where each telegram that comes in causes Ministers to meet, telephone one another, draft replies, and curse everybody.³³

Bahrain was an official's nightmare, but Eden's obsession gave the Foreign Office a clear field on wider issues. On 21 March, Lloyd returned from his tour to present the Cabinet with a modified version of Nutting's minute of the 12th. The Foreign Secretary warned:

It was evident that [Nasser] was aiming at leadership of the Arab world; that, in order to secure it, he was willing to accept the help of the Russians; and that he was not prepared to work for a settlement of the Arab dispute with Israel....It was now clear that we could not establish a basis for friendly relations with Egypt.

However, as Nutting suggested, a direct confrontation with Egypt was rejected in favour of of a long-term policy of 'isolation':

We should seek increased support for the Baghdad Pact and its members. We should make a further effort to persuade the U.S. to join the Pact. We should seek to draw Iraq and Jordan more closer together. We should try to detach Saudi Arabia from Egypt by making plain to King Saud the nature of Nasser's ambitions. We should seek further support for Libya, in order to prevent the extension of Egyptian or Communist influence there. We should seek to establish in Syria a Government more friendly to the West. We should counter Egyptian subversion in the Sudan and the

32 AP, AP20/21, Eden to Monckton, 10 March 1956. See also AP, AP20/21, Eden to Lloyd, 17 March 1956.

33 Shuckburgh, pp. 346ff.

Persian Gulf. There were also possibilities of action aimed more directly at Egypt --- e.g., the withholding of military supplies, the withdrawal of financial support for the Aswan Dam, the reduction of U.S. economic aid, and the blocking of sterling balances.

In all this we should need the support of the U.S. Government. The first task would be to seek Anglo-American agreement on a general realignment of policy towards Egypt.

Despite his earlier castigation of Nutting, Eden now asserted 'he was in full agreement' with the Foreign Office approach and authorized Lloyd to present the package to Foster Dulles.³⁴

The Foreign Office had apparently won the policymaking battle, but Eden's concession was incomplete. Without Ministerial consent or the knowledge of Foreign Office officials, Eden apparently authorised a separate policy for dealing with Nasser. MI6 officers and unofficial representatives contacted Egyptian military personnel and politicians who were prepared to form a government if Nasser was overthrown.³⁵

In early 1956, a group of rebel officers formed 'The Supporters of Justice.' Julian Amery, a backbench Conservative MP, member of the Suez Group, and Macmillan's son-in-law, had been a British intelligence officer in Egypt in World War II and had maintained excellent contacts in the country since then. Unlike the British Government, he knew about the Free Officers movement in Egypt and their plans for a coup months before it happened in 1952. In 1956, Amery discussed the replacement of the Egyptian leader with a 'shadow Government' of the rebels.

³⁴ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.24(56), 21 March 1956.

³⁵ Peter Wright, Spycatcher (New York: Viking, 1987), p. 160.

The dissidents said they would assume power after Britain had toppled Nasser by covert or overt means. Amery passed selected portions of the talks to 'certain friends' in the intelligence services. According to the CIA's Miles Copeland, the Agency and MI6 subsequently exchanged lists of dissident Egyptian officers.³⁶

How could Eden have authorised planning against Nasser which not only bypassed the Foreign Office but was incompatible with the Cabinet policy? The answer lay in the Prime Minister's temper, MI6's desire to topple 'anti-British' governments, and direct liaison between Eden and the intelligence services through the Permanent Undersecretary's Department of the Foreign Office (PUSD).

Formed in 1948, the PUSD was supposed to be a coordinating body for planning by the Foreign Office, the military and service departments, and the intelligence services. By 1956, however, the PUSD, while responsible for the coordination of diplomatic and military plans, functioned as an adjunct to MI6 and ambitious Foreign Office personnel in operational matters. William Hayter, one of the 'founders' of PUSD, admitted that the Department...

...tended to be used ad hoc by Undersecretaries who wanted someone to devil for them outside their own department....Short-term problems were being constantly referred to it, and we used to fend them off as best we could.³⁷

The head of the Department, Patrick Dean, chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee, and the PUSD 'cleared' all intelligence operations that might conflict with Foreign

³⁶ PRO, FO371/125423/JE1019/File; Author's interviews with Julian Amery and Miles Copeland.

³⁷ Author's interview with William Hayter.

Office objectives.

Formally, the PUSD was supervised by Kirkpatrick and Lloyd. Lloyd, however, was occupied with the burdens of his post, and Kirkpatrick, familiar with covert operations and a strong proponent of action against Egypt and the Soviet bloc, did not interfere with MI6's plans. The result was that Eden, working through the PUSD, gave MI6 carte blanche, despite the possible impact of the intelligence service's plans upon the Foreign Office's more cautious approach.

The Crabb incident in April 1956 illustrated the problems of this 'system.' When Soviet leaders Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev visited Britain, MI6 wanted to discover why the cruiser on which they travelled, the Ordjonikidze, was faster than British warships. When the cruiser docked in Portsmouth Harbour, the service hired a frogman, Commander Lionel 'Buster' Crabb RNVR (retired), to inspect its hull. His first mission was successful, but he never surfaced from the second. His decapitated body washed ashore in the summer.³⁸

Eden knew nothing of the mission until a Soviet note, two weeks after Crabb's disappearance, asked for an explanation of a frogman floating near the Ordjonikidze. He told Ministers that, asked by the Admiralty about the mission a few weeks before the Soviet visit, he had written 'a clear and precise minute, expressly forbidding anything of the kind.' An enquiry by Sir Edward Bridges, the former Cabinet Secretary, cleared Ministers and senior MI6 officials of responsibility for the event, claiming

³⁸ See West, pp. 79ff., for a full account of the mission.

that the operation had been planned and implemented by junior personnel of MI6. In December 1956, Eden approved Bridges' recommendation that Dean, 'in his personal capacity, undertake an enquiry into the question of balance between military intelligence on the one hand, and civilian intelligence and political risks on the other.'³⁹

The fiasco arose because Eden had given MI6 to gather information on the Soviets without ensuring that he knew of all operations. John Henry, a MI6 Technical Officer who knew of the Crabb operation, commented:

You know what Eden is like. One minute he says you can do something, the next minute not. We thought it was an acceptable risk to take.

MI6 referred the Crabb mission to its Foreign Officer Adviser, Michael Williams, for approval, but Williams had just learned of the death of his father. Confronted with the proposal at the end of the day, he approved it without referring it to higher authority.⁴⁰

The same system encouraged MI6, without consulting Foreign Office officials outside the PUSD, to plot Nasser's downfall. A new head of MI6, Sir Dick White, was appointed to prevent a repetition of the Crabb fiasco, but his career had been spent in MI5, the British domestic intelligence service, and he needed time to adjust to MI6 procedures. Williams, after taking a leave of absence was replaced as Foreign Office Adviser in July 1956 by Geoffrey Macdermott, but the effective liaison with Eden was Dean. As the U.S. Embassy noted, 'The reshuffle of the chain-of-command of certain intelligence units after the

³⁹ AP, AP20/21, Eden to Head, 22 December 1956.

⁴⁰ Wright, pp. 73 and 160; West, pp. 83ff.

embarrassing episode of Commander Crabbe [sic]...brought increased authority to Dean.⁴¹ The result were two British foreign policies, one developed and implemented by Foreign Office officials, the other by Eden and MI6.

In Washington, the Eisenhower Administration was also reviewing the Middle Eastern situation. Since January, American hopes had been pinned on the Anderson mission for ALPHA. Briefing Anderson before his departure in January, Foster Dulles outlined the 'bargaining positions' the U.S. could use to extract concessions from Egypt and Israel, but it was soon obvious that American pressure could only be applied against Cairo. Foster Dulles noted, 'Nasser would be willing to pay a considerable price to get the support of the U.S. in limiting the Baghdad Pact to its present Arab membership...with Egypt maintaining its hegemony of the Arab countries.' Economically, 'in relation to cotton...[the U.S.] could either destroy or help Egypt's market' and withhold finance for the Aswan High Dam. Finally, the U.S. could construct a canal, financed by oil companies, outside Egypt.

Israel was immune from these threats. The pro-Israeli lobby in Congress and the upcoming Presidential election precluded any withdrawal of American aid. Foster Dulles' only suggestion was to warn Tel Aviv:

There was...a growing realization that backing Israel might be very costly to vital U.S. national interests. Israel from now on would have to play the part of a good neighbor to the Arabs and not seek to maintain itself by its own force and foreign backing. Unless the Israelis

41 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 741.13/2-757, London to State Department, Despatch 1912, 7 February 1957. I am grateful to Tracy Steele for bringing this document to my attention.

realized this, they were doomed.⁴²

After his first meeting with Nasser, Anderson was ready to report Nasser's acceptance of direct Egyptian-Israeli negotiations on territorial adjustments and resettlement of Palestinian refugees. After Anderson's departure, however, Nasser stopped the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt. Roosevelt recalled, 'In his amiable way, Nasser was nodding at everything Anderson said and Anderson thought he was making historic advances...[but his] Texas drawl was so thick that Nasser couldn't understand a thing he said.' When Roosevelt explained that Anderson wanted direct Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, Nasser interjected:

I could never do that. I'd be assassinated. Go stop him. Don't let him send that cable!

Roosevelt hurriedly left for a CIA safe house to stop Anderson's despatch. The next day, Nasser confirmed to Anderson that his proposals were not acceptable.⁴³

Anderson flew to Israel for meetings with Ben-Gurion and travelled between Cairo and Jerusalem twice more by early March. He made no progress. Ben-Gurion, while proposing direct talks, rejected territorial concessions or repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their homes in Israel. Nasser would not enter direct negotiations without some compromise by Ben-Gurion on both issues. Anderson, desperate to keep the negotiations alive, obtained Eisenhower's approval of a last approach to Egypt to pursue Nasser's offer of an agreement over the Johnston

42 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 10, Israeli Relations, 1951-1957 (4), Foster Dulles memorandum, 11 January 1956.

43 Neff, pp. 135ff.; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 91; Nutting, Nasser, p. 128.

Plan for the division of the Jordan River 'on condition that the U.S. and U.K. would not attempt to expand the membership of the Baghdad Pact.'⁴⁴

The Administration, however, was under pressure from American politicians and Israeli diplomats to increase arms shipments to Tel Aviv. On 23 February, Foster Dulles informed Ambassador Makins that time for finding an Arab-Israeli settlement was short and it was 'doubtful that the U.S. Government could hold off on arms to Israel.'⁴⁵ If Foster Dulles maintained his faith in the Anderson mission, he risked a showdown with the pro-Israeli lobby in an election year. If he increased U.S. arms to Israel, the Egyptians, Syrians, and possibly the Saudis, Jordanians, and Lebanese might turn to the Soviets.

Foster Dulles responded with a dual approach. Publicly, the U.S. would support the enforcement of the Tripartite Declaration and the U.N.'s efforts to conclude an Arab-Israeli settlement. Privately, the State Department would endorse arms supplies to Israel through third countries and, if Anderson's last efforts failed with Egypt, review its position towards Nasser.⁴⁶

The British tried to exploit Foster Dulles' dilemma. Makins advised London:

The Americans are groping too for a policy, and need our help and advice. Moreover, they are

⁴⁴ Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 224ff.; Ewald, p. 196; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, pp. 92ff.; U.S. DDCS, US84 002554.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO371/121271/V1075, Bailey to Shuckburgh, 24 February 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86 Series, Foster Dulles statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 24 February 1956.

⁴⁶ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 14, March 1956 Miscellaneous (6), U.S. Cabinet meeting, 2 March 1956.

evidently bracing up to the necessity of accepting additional responsibility in the Middle East.

Eden wrote Eisenhower on 5 March:

There is no doubt that the Russians are resolved to liquidate the Baghdad Pact. In this undertaking Nasser is supporting them and I suspect that his relations with the Soviets are much closer than he admits to us. Recent events in Jordan are part of this pattern.

Asking for American accession to the Pact and more Centurion tanks to Iraq, the Prime Minister concluded:

Certainly we should accept, I think, that a policy of appeasement will bring us nothing in Egypt. Our best chance is to show that it pays to be our friends.⁴⁷

Lloyd, in Karachi for a Ministerial meeting of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation, spoke to Foster Dulles, but the request for American accession to the Baghdad Pact was premature. Foster Dulles had not forgotten the failure of the Templer mission to Jordan, and Anderson's faint hopes in Egypt rested upon a moratorium on Pact membership: 'There was still a sufficient chance to salvage something from our relations with Nasser.' Moreover, 'a political crisis over U.S. relations with Israel,' provoked by Congressional debate over accession, 'would be the one thing that might rob President Eisenhower of victory [in the 1956 Presidential election].' Nutting commented to Eden, 'It does not seem that the Americans have yet hoisted in that appeasement of Nasser simply does not pay and that whatever "bargain" you make with him he will break.'⁴⁸

47 PRO, FO371/121271/V1075/55, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 582, 3 March 1956; PRO, FO800/734, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 1246, 5 March 1956.

48 PRO, FO800/734, Foreign Office to Karachi, Cable 531, 5 March 1956, and Nutting to Eden, 6 March 1956; Lloyd, p.

However, further meetings between Lloyd and Foster Dulles brought some accord on other issues. Significantly, Foster Dulles hinted at measures against Nasser if Egypt did not cooperate with Anderson:

Unless Nasser did something definite soon, we would have to "ditch" him. By something definite, he meant an immediate cessation of propaganda against the Baghdad Pact and the West, acceptance of the Johnston plan, and definite steps toward a settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute.⁴⁹

Shuckburgh, talking to American officials in London, wrote, 'Today both we and the Americans really gave up hope of Nasser and began to look around for means of destroying him.'

On 8 March, Foster Dulles carried out a 'speculative exercise' for Eisenhower. Possible measures included U.S. adherence to the Baghdad Pact; a settlement of the dispute between Britain and Saudi Arabia over Buraimi; a Congressional resolution authorizing Eisenhower to act with the U.N. to ensure Arab and Israeli compliance with armistice lines; 'substantial military support' to Saudi Arabia and Iraq and accelerated programs for Iran and Pakistan; and defensive arms to Israel.⁵⁰ The President adopted Foster Dulles' position:

We have reached the point where it looks as if Egypt, under Nasser, is going to make no move whatsoever to meet the Israelis in an effort to settle outstanding differences. Moreover, the Arabs, absorbing major consignments of arms from the Soviets, are daily growing more arrogant and disregarding the interests of Western Europe and

53; PRO, FO371/121271/V1075/61G, Karachi to Foreign Office, Cable DORAN 29, 7 March 1956.

49 PRO, FO371/121271/V1075/64, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 292, 9 March 1956; PRO, FO371/118842/JE1022/11G, Karachi to Foreign Office, Cable DORAN 33, 7 March 1956.

50 Shuckburgh, p. 345; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Hoover, 8 March 1956.

the U.S. in the Middle Eastern region. It would begin to appear that our efforts should be directed towards separating the Saudi Arabians from the Egyptians and concentrating, for the moment at least, in making the former see that their best interests lie with us, and not with the Egyptians and with the Russians.⁵¹

Approval of an Anglo-American campaign against Nasser awaited the return of Anderson and Foster Dulles to Washington. On 9 March, Eisenhower replied to Eden's letter of the 5th:

It may be that we shall be driven to conclude that it is impossible to do business with Nasser. However, I do not think that we should close the door yet on the possibility of working with him.

The President agreed to 40 Centurion tanks for Iraq and increased aid to Iran and Pakistan but 'questioned whether adherence [sic] by the U.S. to the Baghdad Pact now is the right answer.'⁵²

On 12 March, Anderson briefed Eisenhower and Undersecretary of State Hoover. Unable to arrange direct Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, he could only suggest letters from Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion and Nasser expressing the President's disappointment. The meeting concluded that 'a suitable tripartite resolution [on the Arab-Israeli issue] should be introduced in the Security Council at an early opportunity' and 'we should make every attempt to try to effect a split between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.'⁵³

51 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Diary, Eisenhower diary entry, 8 March 1956. See also DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 10 March 1956.

52 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eisenhower to Eden, 10 March 1956.

53 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Hoover to Foster Dulles, 12 March 1956.

Eisenhower diary recorded the significance of Anderson's failure in his diary. While both Israel and Egypt had refused to make concessions, the President concluded:

Nasser proved to be a complete stumbling block. He is apparently seeking to be acknowledged as the political leader of the Arab world.

Israel was 'a tiny nation, surrounded by enemies....[It had] a very strong position in the heart and emotions of the Western world because of the tragic suffering of the Jews throughout 2500 years of history.' Eisenhower concluded:

I think we can hold Libya to our side through a reasonable amount of help to that impoverished nation, and we have an excellent chance of winning Saudi Arabia to our side if we can get Britain to go along with us. Britain would, of course, have to make certain territorial concessions, and this she might object to violently. If Saudi Arabia and Libya were our staunch friends, Egypt could scarcely continue intimate associations with the Soviets, and a certain Egyptian would no longer be regarded as a leader of the Arab world.⁵⁴

Eisenhower's decision to hold Nasser, rather than both Israel and Egypt, responsible for ALPHA's failure was more pragmatic than ideological. While Eisenhower did not wish to be seen as 'pro-Israeli,' he could ill-afford to be perceived as 'anti-Israeli' in an election year.

Once ALPHA was laid to rest, British pressure upon the U.S. began to pay dividends. Eden wrote Eisenhower on 15 March:

I send you here with a most secret note of Egyptian intentions of whose authenticity we are entirely confident....It adds nothing startlingly new to what we both suspected. It does, however, confirm the wide range of

⁵⁴ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Diary, Eisenhower diary entry, 13 March 1956.

Egyptian ambitions against the Saudis, as well as Iraq and Jordan.

The enclosed intelligence report on Egyptian intentions is not available, but it was probably based upon the reports of LUCKY BREAK, the MI6 operative in Cairo who controlled an agent allegedly close to Nasser. The Egyptian President supposedly desired Israel's destruction of Israel, planning to attack by June 1956, and the elimination of Western influence in the Middle East. To dominate 'a sort of League for Arab republics,' he sought the overthrow Arab monarchs, not only in Jordan and Iraq but also in Saudi Arabia and Libya. To achieve this, he would allow the Soviets a dominant role in the area.⁵⁵ Using LUCKY BREAK's information, Ministers instructed British military planners in Washington, who were discussing with the Americans the response to an Israeli attack upon an Arab state, to consider an Egyptian attack because of the 'probability that Egypt is now more likely to be the aggressor.'⁵⁶

The accuracy of the intelligence was dubious, but it reinforced Eisenhower's developing antagonism towards Nasser. He replied to Eden:

Assuming that the information therein contained is completely authentic, it seems to me to give a clue of how we --- your Government and ours -- - might operate with the greatest chance of frustrating Soviet designs in the region.⁵⁷

Others in the Administration were advising the

55 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower, 15 March 1956.

See also William Clark Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MSS 7, Clark diary, 29 November 1955.

56 CIA London Station to Director CIA, Cable LOND 7064, 1 April 1956 (in author's possession).

57 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, March 1956, Eisenhower to Eden, 20 March 1956.

President to take a firmer line. Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned Eisenhower that Egypt was distributing arms to insurgents in Libya. He warned, 'If the U.S. does not join the Baghdad Pact, there are signs the Pact may disintegrate....The time may be coming when we will have to serve some notice on certain of the Middle Eastern countries.'⁵⁸ Admiral Arleigh Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations, added:

By dumping cotton, great pressure could be exerted [on Egypt]. Similarly, by curtailing oil output in some areas, the flow of money [to anti-Western activists] might be curtailed.

The next day, Hoover told Eisenhower about an Israeli request for 24 F-86 fighters and anti-tank weapons and remarked, 'It might...seem desirable for us to give them [the Israelis] a very few items, more in the nature of radar equipment than airplanes and anti-tank weapons, and at the same time fulfill some of the requests which we have from Saudi Arabia.' He concluded:

Nasser appeared to be becoming a progressively increasing menace. We were therefore giving added attention to methods of splitting the Saudis away from the Egyptians and to obtain closer relations with Libyans.

On 23 March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff formally recommended U.S. adherence to the Baghdad Pact.⁵⁹

On 21 March, an aide-memoire informed the Americans of the British Cabinet's adoption of a long-term program of measures against Nasser. The next day, Foster Dulles received a request from Allen Dulles for a meeting 'on

⁵⁸ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Goodpaster, Goodpaster memorandum, 15 March 1956.

⁵⁹ Ibid.; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with the President, January-July 1956 (4), Hoover to Foster Dulles, 16 March 1956.

something urgent...about the Middle East.' On the 24th, at Foster Dulles' home, the Dulles brothers were joined by James Angleton, Director of the CIA's Counter-intelligence Staff and the chief CIA contact with the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service; Roosevelt; Hoover; Assistant Secretary Allen; William Rountree, Allen's deputy in NEA; Francis Russell; and Herman Phleger, the State Department's chief legal officer. The meeting considered the following questions:

- 1) Can Nasser rally Arab world behind him and precipitate war with Israel?
- 2) Can we at the same time win the Saudis away from alliance with Nasser and bolster Iraq?
- 3) What is oil situation and what losses can Western Europe and NATO tolerate?
- 4) What are vulnerabilities re loss of [oil] production and loss of transport?
- 5) Can Iraq be built up as a rival to Egypt having regard to a) our Israeli policy and b) our Saudi Arabian policy?
- 6) [DELETED]
- 7) Can Communist atheism be explored?⁶⁰

Foster Dulles converted the meeting's conclusions into a memorandum for Eisenhower. The document, completed on 28 March, outlined OMEGA, the cornerstone of Anglo-American cooperation against Nasser:

In view of the negative outcome of our efforts to bring Colonel Nasser to adopt a policy of conciliation toward Israel, we should, I believe now adjust certain of our Near Eastern policies, as indicated below.

[The] primary purpose [is] to let Colonel Nasser realize that he cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored nation treatment from the United States. We would want for the time being to avoid any open break which would throw Nasser irrevocably into a Soviet satellite status and

⁶⁰ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Memoranda of Telephone Conversations, General, 3 January-30 April 1956 (4), Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 23 March 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 10, Israeli Relations 1951-1957 (4), State Department memorandum, 24 March 1956.

we would want to leave Nasser a bridge back to good relations with the West if he so desires.

The policies indicated below would in the main be coordinated with the U.K.

I. As regards Egypt:

- 1) Export licenses covering arms shipments to Egypt, whether from governmental or commercial sources, will continue to be denied by the U.S. and the U.K.
- 2) The U.S. and the U.K. will continue to delay the conclusion of current negotiations on the High Aswan Dam.
- 3) The U.S. will continue to delay action on pending Egyptian requirements for... [grants of] grain and oil.
- 4) The U.S. will hold in abeyance any decision on a CARE program [of economic aid] for Egypt for 1956...or, alternatively, approve an \$8 million program for the first quarter, leaving until later a decision on the balance [of \$100 million] for the year.
- 5) Expanded radio facilities will be offered to Iraq to counter Egyptian broadcasts.

II. As regards other countries:

- 1) The U.S. and U.K. will commence negotiations with the Sudan with a view to developing --- [DELETED] --- a situation of influence in that country which would minimize Egyptian influence and its control of the headwaters of the Nile.
- 2) Intensify present efforts to stabilize the situation in Libya.
- 3) Encourage the U.K. to maintain present treaty relationships with Jordan and help it to prevent a situation in which a pro-Egyptian coup d'etat would succeed...[DELETED]
- 4) Give increased support to the Baghdad Pact, without actually adhering to the Pact or announcing our intention of doing so. In addition to accelerated aid to the Pact countries, this support will consist of amending the nature of our participation in the Military Committee of the Pact, such as by assigning high-level officers who could join more actively in military discussions than our observers have in the past. We will also display an increased interest in the economic aspects of the pact by endeavoring to coordinate our aid with the Pact organization, wherever feasible, and by sending high-level officers to represent the U.S. in economic meetings

related to the treaty organization.

- 5) We will undertake an intensified program in Ethiopia to enhance the Western position in that country.
- 6) We will continue to take all practicable steps to counter Egyptian and Soviet influence in Yemen and the other Arabian principalities. King Saud's assistance will be solicited.
- 7) The U.S. will seek to dissuade Israel from undertaking work at Banat Ya'qub, or from taking other precipitate steps which might bring about hostilities and thus endanger the whole Western position in the Near East to the direct advantage of the Soviets.
- 8) For a further indefinite period, the U.S. will continue to deny export licenses for major military items to Israel and the adjoining Arab States (this excepts Saudi Arabia and Iraq). We would, however, be sympathetic if other Western countries wished to sell limited quantities of defensive arms to Israel.
- 9) We will continue to press for effective United Nations action to reduce area tensions.
- 10) We will endeavor to strengthen pro-Western elements in Lebanon by immediately offering economic aid in the form of grants or loans for projects designed to create the most favorable impact on public opinion. (The French might sell limited quantities of military equipment.)
- 11) It is extremely important that the American position in Saudi Arabia be strengthened. We must find ways, in connection with the new Dhahran [Air Base] agreement, to assure King Saud that some of his military needs will immediately be met and others provided for subsequently. We will press Britain for a generous agreement on the Buraimi issue...

III. In addition to the foregoing course of action, planning should be undertaken at once with a view to possibly more drastic action in the event that the above courses of action do not have the desired effect. This plan should cover: [3 STEPS DELETED]

Foster Dulles' long-hand notes offer clues to 'more drastic' action. Pressure would be placed upon the price of Egyptian cotton through dumping of American supplies on

the international market; Egyptian radio transmissions would be jammed; an Export-Import Bank loan for Israel would be arranged; and the U.S. would 'study Syrian assets' for a possible coup if Damascus continued to follow Nasser.⁶¹

That afternoon, Eisenhower considered the memorandum at a meeting with Foster Dulles, Hoover, Allen, Rountree, Reuben Robertson of the Department of Defence, Secretary of Defence Wilson, and Radford. Eisenhower emphasized, 'We should make sure we concert the overall plan with the Britain --- i.e., with Eden and Lloyd.' At the same time, the plan to build up King Saud to offset Nasser 'would probably require a settlement of the Buraimi issue, for which we might ask as a quid pro quo a better attitude on the part of the Saudis toward Iraq.' Apart from the precondition of an Anglo-Saudi agreement between the British and the Saudis over Buraimi, Foster Dulles was given a free hand to implement OMEGA.⁶² Eisenhower wrote in his diary:

[I hope] that we begin to build up some other individual as a prospective leader of the Arab world.... My own choice of such a rival is King Saud.... Arabia is a country that contains the holy places of the Moslem world, and the Saudi Arabians are considered to be the most deeply religious of all the Arab groups. Consequently, the King could be built up, possibly as a spiritual leader. Once this was accomplished, we might begin to urge his right to political leadership.⁶³

61 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Diary, Foster Dulles memorandum, 28 March 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 10, Israeli Relations 1951-1957 (4), Foster Dulles' long-hand notes, 27 March 1956.

62 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Diary, White House meeting, 28 March 1956.

63 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 13, March 1956 Diary, Eisenhower diary entry, 28 March 1956

Two measures were immediately significant in the battle against Nasser. The first was the decision to let negotiations on the funding of the Aswan High Dam 'languish.' Until late March, both Britain and the U.S. ensured that negotiations over the Dam proceeded, the Foreign Office and State Department intervening to prevent a breakdown of discussions between Egypt and the World Bank.⁶⁴

In March, the Americans, for domestic reasons, began to have doubts about the Dam. The pro-Israeli lobby opposed any assistance to Egypt. Fiscal conservatives thought the Dam a wasteful foreign-aid project, and Congressmen from Southern states feared the increased output of Egyptian cotton would depress the price for cotton from their states. By 24 March, Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey and Undersecretary of State Hoover, both of whom opposed the negotiations with Egypt in December, were swinging Administration sentiment against the Dam. Even before approval of OMEGA, Hoover told Makins of the American doubts.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, OMEGA confirmed the pivotal position of Syria in Middle Eastern affairs.⁶⁶ Throughout 1955, British and American representatives in Syria sought a pro-Western coalition of right-wing parties that could

⁶⁴ PRO, FO371/119047/JE1422/28, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 257, 17 January 1956; PRO, FO371/119051/JE1422/File; Love, p. 311.

⁶⁵ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 14, March 1956 Miscellaneous (6), Eisenhower to Thornton, 8 March 1956.

⁶⁶ See A. Gorst and W.S. Lucas, 'The Other Collusion: Operation "Straggle" and Anglo-American Intervention in Syria, 1955-56,' Intelligence and National Security (July 1988), pp. 576ff.

restore 'stability,' but a suitable leader could not be found.⁶⁷ With an internal solution unlikely, London and Washington considered Iraq's desire for union with Syria. On 4 October, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id told the British and American Ambassadors:

[I] would like at this stage to 'speak gently' with the Syrians and urge them to improve their regime and get rid of subversive elements and those unfriendly to Iraq. If this failed to achieve its object, [I] would want to intervene in Syria, if necessary by force.⁶⁸

The Foreign Office opposed 'overt Iraqi action' but G.G. Arthur proposed a long-term program, coordinated with the Americans and Iraqis, for Iraqi-Syrian union:

- (a) bribery within Syria, by or on behalf of Iraq. The Syrian Army should be the main target;
- (b) the rapid buildup of the Iraqi forces...;
- (c) propaganda in Syria in favour of Iraq, designed especially to bring home to Syrians the economic advantages to be derived from friendship with the Iraqis;
- (d) ...efforts to subordinate the Syrian economy to Iraq's, e.g., by an Iraqi loan to Syria;
- (e) measures, overt and covert, to counter Saudi influence in Syria;
- (f) propaganda designed to bring home to the Iraqi public the importance to them of a stable and friendly Syria.⁶⁹

Shuckburgh and Macmillan seized upon this as a 'Machiavellian scheme' for Iraqi-Syrian union. The British Ambassador to Syria, John Gardener, reported that Britain could 'bring about the merger of Syria with Iraq any time we like if given enough money.'⁷⁰

Despite Foster Dulles' complaints to Macmillan about

⁶⁷ PRO, FO371/115946/VY1015/File.

⁶⁸ PRO, FO371/115954/VY10393/2G, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 1394, 8 October 1955; PRO, FO371/115947/V1015/94G, Stewart to Rose, 6 December 1955; FRUS 1955-1957 XIII, pp. 543ff.

⁶⁹ PRO, FO371/115954/VY10393/7G, Arthur minute, 10 October 1955, and subsequent minutes.

⁷⁰ Shuckburgh, pp. 289ff.

Syrian behaviour, the State Department rejected sponsorship of Iraqi-Syrian union, primarily because of Saudi Arabian opposition to a 'Greater Iraq' and Israeli suspicion of Iraqi forces on her border. Instead, the Americans thought immediate action 'needed to be directed towards bringing the right-wing groups [in Syria] together.'⁷¹ By the Eden-Eisenhower summit, Britain and the U.S. had neared agreement on a program similar to Arthur's memorandum and linked it to the Iraqi-Jordanian axis and further action against Egypt.⁷²

On one level, the events of March 1956 drew the British and Americans into a 'conditional' alliance against Nasser. While the interests of the two countries still differed, each recognised a long-term threat to its objectives and believed that coordination of policy was preferable to unilateral action. In another sense, however, there was no Anglo-American 'alliance' because there was no single British policy. The Foreign Office had secured Cabinet support for a program, but that policy was a long-term one. Meanwhile, Britain's intelligence services, under the general mandate given to them by Eden, prepared a 'shadow' Egyptian Government for power without consulting the Foreign Office and considered political changes in other Middle Eastern countries. Eventually, such action would conflict with American interests and the methods of OMEGA.

⁷¹ PRO, FO371/115954/VY10393/3G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2414, 6 October 1955, and VY10393/9G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2616, 27 October 1955, VY10393/10G, Record of Anglo-American meeting, 28 October 1955, and VY10393/14G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 855, 3 November 1955.

⁷² See above, p. 119.

CHAPTER 7

APRIL-JULY 1956: THE OMEGA DISCUSSIONS

The ideas of MI6 soon jeopardised Anglo-American cooperation over OMEGA. On 31 March and 1 April, Wilbur Eveland, a Middle Eastern specialist seconded by the CIA from the Department of Defence, and James Eichelberger, the CIA station chief in Cairo, held a series of meetings with George Young, the Deputy Director of MI6 responsible for Middle Eastern operations, Nigel Clive, MI6's Political Officer, and other British officials. The Americans were sent by the Dulles brothers to prepare an 'intelligence appreciation' with MI6 and to hear British proposals for OMEGA's implementation. Preliminary discussions would lead to further talks between Allen Dulles and Kermit Roosevelt, the chief CIA operative for the Middle East, and MI6.

Young and Clive immediately defined Britain's enemy for Eveland and Eichelberger:

Nasser's aims are total destruction of Israel; Egyptian domination of all Arab governments and elimination of all Western positions in the Arab area; material extension of Egyptian influence in North Africa, particularly Libya. In order to realize his ambitions, Nasser has accepted full-scale collaboration with the Soviets, and is prepared to allow the Soviets whatever role in area they desire in order to assure himself of their support. Nasser is now taking the initiative for extension of Soviet influence in Syria, Libya, and French North Africa. Egypt must therefore be regarded as an out and out Soviet instrument.

Basing his assessment on the 25 reports sent by the MI6 operative LUCKY BREAK from Cairo to London since November 1955, Young was sceptical of the CIA's more cautious view of Nasser. Since the Agency was 'apparently

not yet prepared for categorical acceptance of [the British] reappraisal of Nasser, [the CIA's] intelligence coverage in Egypt must be regarded as poor,' and CIA reports passed to MI6 in recent months were 'rubbish.'

It is not certain whether LUCKY BREAK's source was passing information he believed to be genuine or whether he was creating false reports to turn London against Nasser. In any case, the CIA had good reason to be suspicious of the British appraisal. The Agency had sources within the RCC and Nasser's 'inner circle' of advisors, and it maintained a regular channel to Nasser through Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, a confidant of the Egyptian leader. It is unlikely that the plans attributed to Nasser by MI6, if true, were unknown to the Americans.

Not content with an intelligence appreciation, Young presented a three-phase plan of operations, embellishing it with comments like 'Britain [is] now prepared to fight its last battle' and 'no matter what the cost we will win.' The first phase was a 'complete change in Government of Syria.' The British could achieve this alone, 'but, if necessary,' they would consider 'joint action with Iraq, Turkey, and possibly Israel.' The boundaries of Syria would not be changed but 'a firm pro-Iraqi government' would emerge in an 'extension of Hashemite influence.'

In the second phase, the British would 'undertake efforts to exploit splits in [Saudi] Royal Family and possibly utilize their position [in the] Trucial States to hasten fall of [King] Saud.' If the CIA was unwilling or unable to assist, the British would consider 'joint action with Iraqis or action behind Iraqi front.' Finally,

Britain would prepare action against Nasser ' in anticipation of violent Egyptian reaction to phases 1 and 2.' Possible measures ranged from sanctions...

...to use of force (both British and Israeli) to tumble the Egyptian Government. ...Extreme possibilities would involve special operations by Israelis against Egyptian supply dumps and newly acquired aircraft and tanks, as well as outright Israeli attack [upon] Gaza or other border areas.'¹

MI6's plans not only went beyond the guidelines of OMEGA but also threatened American interests in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia. The Americans were taken aback. Eveland had joked to Eichelberger that Britain would ask the U.S. to do away with Nasser. Eichelberger responded seriously, 'If our British cousins [MI6] had their way, that would be just the plan.' Foster Dulles told Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, after the follow-up meetings between Allen Dulles, Roosevelt, and MI6, 'The British are making more drastic plans than we are.'²

Some of the damage caused by MI6 was repaired in Anglo-American diplomatic and military discussions. Air Chief Marshal Sir William Dickson, the Chairman of the British Chiefs of Staff, met Eisenhower, and they agreed upon the 'large hazards in an Arab "bloc" extending from Pakistan to Dakar, with weak and unstable governments and institutions, and resulting vulnerability to Soviet penetration.' The President stressed 'the importance of [British and American] information, propaganda, and political warfare activities in the area' and the need to

¹ CIA London Station to Director CIA, Cable LOND 7064, 1 April 1956 (copy in author's possession).

² Eveland, p. 168; Neff, p. 217.

develop OMEGA:

We have very considerable assets in the area, if we would just make use of them....We should try to build up a "design" for our actions in the Middle East....Actions should be under the direction of selected, very astute individuals.³

Shuckburgh told Ambassador Aldrich on 5 April that the British were 'gratified a large measure of agreement re Middle Eastern policy was achieved in the current discussions in Washington,' and Aldrich reported to Washington that the 'recurring panic in the highest quarters here was allayed, at least for the time being.'⁴

The Foreign Office's caution was evident, as it tried to prevent Nasser from learning of the Anglo-American discussions. The Foreign Office instructed Ambassador Trevelyan in Cairo to avoid any reference to Egypt's blindness to the Communist threat, since this might indicate how seriously the British viewed Nasser's collaboration with the Soviet bloc, and requested that the U.S. Ambassador, Byroade, inform the State Department, as they were 'an important part of the plan for keeping Nasser guessing.' When the British press, probably on prompting from Number 10, published headlines of 'British plans to hit back at Nasser,' the Foreign Office stated publicly that the speculation was groundless. Lloyd assured the State Department:

I have given no indication publicly or off the record that any new policy towards Nasser has been decided upon. I regard the whole matter as

3 PRO, FO371/121272/V1075/89G, Dean minute, 6 April 1956; PRO, FO371/118869/JE1071/4, Monckton to Lloyd, 10 April 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 15, April 1956 Goodpaster, Record of Eisenhower-Dickson meeting, 3 April 1956.

4 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/4-656, Cairo to State Department, Cable 4467, 6 April 1956.

still under confidential discussion with the U.S. Government, and when decisions are taken, their public handling will require careful consideration between us.⁵

Trevelyan wrote Shuckburgh that he was disturbed by reports that the Treasury's representative in Egypt brought from a visit to London: 'High officials in the Treasury particularly seem to have been very free with their proposals on what to do with Nasser, which include the most extreme solutions.' Shuckburgh commented, 'We have played the hand in exactly the opposite way from what we pretend to wish.' Possibly on the strength of briefings from 10 Downing Street, The Times continued to publish virulent anti-Nasser leaders, and A.J. Wilton, supervising the Egyptian desk, commented, 'British public feeling has seriously reduced the chances of our being able to temporise successfully.'⁶

Beside MI6's planning, two issues hindered Anglo-American cooperation. The first was the continuing Anglo-Saudi dispute over Buraimi. On 24 March, the Saudis proposed high-level discussions in New York. British acceptance of the American policy of detaching Saudi Arabia from Egypt prompted London to consider the despatch of a British delegation to Riyadh to open negotiations with the Saudis. Lloyd authorised a mission, headed by the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State, Douglas Dodds-Parker, to visit Saudi Arabia by the end of April.⁷

5 PRO, FO371/118861/JE1053/13, Foreign Office to Cairo, Cable 988, 3 April 1956; PRO, FO115/4549, Foreign Office to Washington, Cables 1890 and 1891, 4 April 1956.

6 PRO, FO371/118861/JE1053/17G, Trevelyan to Shuckburgh, 5 April 1956, and JE1053/5G, Wilton minute, 14 April 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 611.74/4-656, Cairo to State Department, Cable 1996, 6 April 1956.

7 PRO, FO371/120765/ES1051/14, Jedda to Foreign Office,

The second problem was the American relationship to the Baghdad Pact. The commitment in OMEGA to increased support for the Pact did not settle the issue of accession, endorsed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Eisenhower on 30 March.⁸ After discussions with State Department officials, Foster Dulles told Makins on 1 April that it was 'impossible in existing circumstances for the United States to join the Baghdad Pact,' primarily because of Congressional opposition to the U.S. commitment. However, Foster Dulles added that the U.S. would send high-level political and military observers to the April meeting of the Baghdad Pact Council, contribute to the Pact's technical assistance fund, and consider increased military aid to Iraq.⁹

This was not enough for Lloyd, who hoped that American observers could 'indicate in some striking and positive form the manner in which the U.S. intends to show that it is really behind the Pact.' Foster Dulles replied with a reference to the Arab-Israeli question:

The U.S. purpose in supporting these pacts was to help build up strength against Soviet aggression, but they were anxious not to become involved in local disputes....Some of the countries joined these pacts just for the very purpose of securing American support against some neighbour with whom they had a quarrel.¹⁰

The debate continued within the Administration.

Cable 23, 26 March 1956, and subsequent minutes, and ES1051/18, Riches minute, 5 April 1956.

8 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 15, April 1956 Goodpaster, Goodpaster memorandum, 2 April 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, MacArthur to Foster Dulles, 31 March 1956.

9 PRO, FO371/121250/V1073/108G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 819, 1 April 1956.

10 PRO, FO371/121250/V1073/108G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 1919, 5 April 1956, and V1073/117G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 875, 5 April 1956.

Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson requested that the NSC consider accession, trapping Eisenhower between the military's views and those of the State Department. The President tested Foster Dulles, 'We were originally strong in favour of the Pact being formed....We were in favour of the pact between Pakistan and Turkey.' When Foster Dulles replied, 'The trouble was that the British have taken it over and run it as an instrument of British policy,' Eisenhower retreated, 'We can't do any one of these things in a vacuum --- have to look at rounded picture --- everybody has got to have something.'¹¹

The Americans had compromised to some degree over the Pact, however, as the British had over Buraimi, and conversations proceeded on OMEGA. After speaking with Makins on 5 April, Foster Dulles reported to Eisenhower that British reactions, 'in the main, were favorable, although it looked as though Buraimi would be a sticking point' in the long run. By 13 April, Ambassador Aldrich was 'enthusiastic about what [Britain and the U.S.] are planning to do in the Middle East.'¹²

The first sign of progress was Anglo-American agreement to supply arms to Israel through Britain, Canada, and France. On 11 April, the U.S. approved the sale of 12 more Mystere IV jet fighters from France to Israel. Eden wrote that Britain had 'to continue [its] trickle' of arms to Israel and authorised delivery of six

11 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 15, April 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 7 April 1956.

12 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with the President, Foster Dulles memorandum, 6 April 1956; Shuckburgh, p. 352.

fighters and heavy artillery. Lloyd added that Canada should be encouraged to begin shipments to the Israelis, and the Cabinet agreed to a French request to refuel the *Mysteres*, en route to Israel, at British bases on Cyprus.¹³

The two sides continued discussions of possible sanctions against Egypt,¹⁴ and Foster Dulles' talks with Makins and American observers at the Baghdad Pact Council brought further American concessions. American membership of the Economic and Counter-Subversion Committees and the military liaison group were approved by Eisenhower on 19 April.¹⁵ Meanwhile, a paper by the British Chiefs of Staff, 'Analysis of the Military Problems Involved in Action under the Tripartite Declaration of 1950,' was agreed in general between British and American staffs, and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to further planning talks with the British.¹⁶

Anglo-American cooperation was also fostered by the visit in April of Soviet leaders Bulganin and Khrushchev to London. Eisenhower wrote Eden:

At the back of our minds must be the very grave threat in the Middle East....I fully agree with you that we should not be acquiescent in any measure which would give the Bear's claws a grip

13 Neff, p. 225; PRO, FO800/735, Eden to Lloyd, 12 April 1956, and Lloyd to Eden, 14 April 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.30(56), 19 April 1956.

14 See PRO, FO371/118862/JE1053/19G, Watson minute, 11 April 1956; PRO, FO371/121762/VR1076/100G, Bailey to Rose, 14 April 1956.

15 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Hill to Foster Dulles, 16 April 1956, and Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 17 April 1956.

16 USNA, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Geographical File 1954-1956, Box 12, 381 EMMEA (11-19-47), S. 29, Picher to Currie, 4 April 1956; PRO, FO371/121272/V1075/100G, COS(56)150, 18 April 1956; PRO, FO371/121273/V1075/101G-105G, COS(56)151-155, 18 April 1956.

on the production or transport of oil which is so vital to the defence and economy of the world.¹⁷

On 13 April, Foster Dulles told Makins:

If fighting came about after every effort had been exhausted to find a peaceful solution of the Middle Eastern problem which would not deprive Britain and Western Europe of the oil of the area....We would find, in one way or another, a way to be with you.¹⁸

Although little was decided at meetings with the Soviets, Eden wrote optimistically to Eisenhower:

In the Middle Eastern talk, I made plain to them that we had to have our oil and that we were prepared to fight for it. They accepted this and, though they continued to inveigh against the Baghdad Pact. I think they may have begun to understand that it is a protective pad for our vital interests and not a dagger pointing at their guts.¹⁹

The developing Anglo-American policy was soon tested, as Franco-Israeli cooperation evolved into an 'alliance' against Nasser. Like Israel, France, trying to quell rebellion by Algerian nationalists, who were receiving money, training, and arms from Egypt, were suspicious of Nasser. French fear of British domination of the Middle East through the Baghdad Pact and her treaties with Iraq and Jordan also spurred Paris into a close relationship with Israel. Moreover, the French Socialists, who were the dominant party in the ruling coalition which took power in early 1956, were philosophically close to Mapai, the leading party in the Israeli Government.

17 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 14, April 1956 Miscellaneous (5), Eisenhower to Eden, 5 April 1956.

18 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with President, MacArthur memorandum, 13 April 1956.

19 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower, 18 and 30 April 1956.

In mid-March 1956, however, French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau was encouraged by a visit to Nasser in Cairo.²⁰ Pineau may have promised that France would show no interest in the Baghdad Pact in exchange for an Egyptian moratorium on training and aid to the Algerian rebels. Nasser refused to halt arms supplies but gave his 'soldier's word of honour' that no rebels would be trained in Egypt. Pineau persuaded Mollet to allow French representatives to meet emissaries of the Algerian rebels, but the effort was abandoned when the plan leaked to the French press.²¹

The thaw in Franco-Egyptian relations was over. The French, circumventing the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee in Washington, increased deliveries of military equipment to Israel, and Mollet, Pineau, and other Ministers, without the knowledge of the French Foreign Ministry, decided to arm Arab countries outside Egypt to foster 'the hopes of many of them to remain independent in the face of the imperialism, the economic colonialism, of the two 'powers,' the U.S. and the Soviet Union.'²²

The French support reinforced the hard-line policy of Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and General Dayan, the Chief of Staff. In November and December 1955, they proposed that Israel seize Sharm-al-Sheikh at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, guaranteeing Israeli control of the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. Moderates in the Israeli Cabinet narrowly rejected the proposal.

20 Christian Pineau, Suez 1956 (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1978), p. 33.

21 Nutting, Nasser, pp. 125ff.

22 Neff, p. 234; Abel Thomas, p. 55, pp. 73ff., and pp. 94ff.; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 227ff.

Israeli 'reprisals' continued. An attack upon the Syrians at Kinnaret on 11 December undermined the attempts of Foreign Minister Sharett to obtain American arms, but Ben-Gurion was unrepentant. He argued that, with the developing relationship with France, Israel would not need weapons from the U.S. Only the Anderson mission delayed further Israeli discussion of measures against Egypt.²³

In April, fighting on the Egyptian-Israeli border erupted, and Israeli forces bombarded the town of Gaza, killing more than 60 people and injuring more than 100. Nasser responded by sending commando units, fedayeen, into Israel. Fourteen Israelis and ten fedayeen were killed in the following five days.²⁴

Initially, the Americans showed little concern,²⁵ but the continued killings convinced Foster Dulles that American action was necessary to prevent war. A White House press release emphasized that the President 'regarded the situation with utmost seriousness.'²⁶ Eden, partly to deter fighting, partly to quell criticism in Parliament, asked the Americans to state publicly that Britain and the U.S. had 'both made plans for intervention if necessary.' Foster Dulles refused, since the secret Anglo-American discussions on enforcement of the Tripartite Declaration were unknown to Congress. Instead, the Secretary sought preparations by the American military. The CIA agreed to consider the possibility that

²³ Shlaim, pp. 193ff.

²⁴ PRO, FO371/121773/VR1091/File.

²⁵ See DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with the President, Foster Dulles memorandum, 6 April 1956.

²⁶ US DDRS, US84 002128.

the Soviets would send 'volunteers' to support Arab forces, and Admiral Radford agreed to move the Sixth Fleet into the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁷

Foster Dulles reinforced his actions with personal messages from Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion and Nasser which hoped that both sides would, 'even under extreme provocation, avoid retaliatory action which could have the gravest consequences.' Nasser, who had promised Byroade that he would halt the fedayeen raids, was 'pleased with the tone' of the note. Fighting flared again on the night of 11 April, but the danger passed as the remaining fedayeen left Israel.²⁸

The Arab-Israeli situation had been calmed, but OMEGA encountered other problems. The British did not have the financial and economic strength to enforce sanctions against Egypt.²⁹ In April the Foreign Office told the State Department that measures against the oil-producing states or even Egypt alone 'were fraught with danger for Britain,' including sabotage of the Iraqi and Saudi oil pipelines to the Mediterranean and blockage of the Suez Canal by Egypt. Shuckburgh called the preparation of a

27 PRO, FO371/121762/VR1076/86, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 926, 11 April 1956, and VR1076/87, Hancock to Lloyd, 9 April 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to O'Connor, Foster Dulles to Wilkins, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, and Foster Dulles to Radford, 9 April 1956, and Foster Dulles to Radford, 10 April 1956.

28 US DDCS, US81 192D and US84 000623; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 11-13 April 1956.

29 PRO, FO371/121759/VR1076/9G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 351, 11 February 1956, and subsequent minutes, and VR1076/16, Bailey to Rose, 10 February 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121760/VR1076/48, Jebb to Pink, 22 February 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121761/VR1076/54G, Rose minute, 18 February 1956.

paper on sanctions 'unrealistic.' When the Americans pressed their request, he reluctantly conceded, 'I suppose it can do no harm as long as we don't lead anyone to think that "sanctions" can be applied by the Western Powers to the Arabs.'³⁰

An even more significant problem was Eden's attitude. Plagued by the press and obsessed with the Persian Gulf situation, Eden nearly wrecked the agreement with the U.S. over Buraimi. He told Lloyd that, with recent Saudi attempts to subvert Britain's position in the Gulf, negotiations would be a sign of British weakness. Lloyd suspended the mission and, on Eden's instructions, asked the State Department about 'the precise means by which' King Saud would be detached from Nasser.³¹

Rountree, the Deputy Director of NEA, emphasized to the British Embassy that American friendship with Saudi Arabia was a vital part of OMEGA. Foreign Office officials admitted, 'Even half-hearted American support is better than none.' On 19 April, Lloyd authorised the despatch of the British mission to Saudi Arabia.³²

Eden then took up the question of Britain's position in the smaller Arabian states, claiming that there was a 'serious possibility that British forces might be needed to protect oil interests in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf.' Lloyd was sceptical, admitting that the attitudes of the

30 PRO, FO371/121762/VR1076/100G, Bailey to Rose, 14 April 1956, and subsequent minutes, and VR1076/108G, Watson minute, 19 April 1956, and subsequent minutes.

31 PRO, FO371/120765/ES1051/19, Lloyd minute, 13 April 1956.

32 PRO, FO371/120765/ES1021/20G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 964, 17 April 1956, and subsequent minutes.

Bahraini ruler and his British adviser, Sir Charles Belgrave, were 'feudal,' regarding 'even reasonable constitutional demands as tantamount to rebellion.' Cabinet Secretary Brook cited a Cabinet Paper, endorsed by Eden in 1953, which argued that nationalism precluded the stationing of Western forces in Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf States. Brook concluded, 'If we believe that, in some of these countries, the nationalist movement will come uppermost, we ought to take steps to ensure that we are not found, at a crucial moment, to be backing the wrong horse.'³³

Eden's Private Secretary, Frederick Bishop, wrote Brook, 'I wish I could say that the Prime Minister received your views with delight or even appreciation, but you will not be surprised to know that, having disagreed with the views expressed by the Foreign Secretary, he did not feel that the general principle you suggested could easily or safely be applied in Bahrain.' Pressed by Eden, Minister of Defence Monckton supported the despatch of another company to the Persian Gulf and possible reinforcements from Libya or Cyprus.³⁴

Even this did not satisfy the Prime Minister, who insisted on immediate placement of a reserve battalion in Kenya. When the Ministerial Defence Committee asked the Chiefs of Staff for a full report on a Kenyan strategic reserve, Eden insisted on a full battalion in Aden, at the

33 PRO, CAB129/80, CP(56)80, 'Bahrain,' 14 April 1956; PRO, PREM11/1440, Record of ad hoc ministerial meeting, 13 April 1956; PRO, PREM11/1457, Brook to Eden, 14 April 1956.

34 PRO, PREM11/1457, Bishop to Brook, 15 April 1956; PRO, PREM11/1440, Monckton to Eden, 25 April 1956, and Eden to Monckton, 29 April 1956.

southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, to support British troops in Bahrain. The debate dragged on until Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in July 1956.³⁵

Eden was also impatient about OMEGA, commenting, 'We seem to have to do all the giving to please the Americans. Hardly satisfactory.' Reviewing a letter from Eisenhower to Churchill, he wrote:

Although [the Americans] are willing to work closely with us in discussing common policies for the Middle East, it is difficult for them to admit publicly that they are doing so, especially in an election year. There has been an unhappy revival of that phrase "no ganging up", and we have strongly protested against it. Their unwillingness to let it be known that we are at one on this important issue diminishes the influence which each of us could exercise in the area. It also puts a considerable strain on our relations.³⁶

In early May, Foster Dulles and Lloyd, attending the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Paris, reviewed OMEGA. Despite Eden's interference, the Foreign Office was determined to establish a coordinated program. Adam Watson, the head of the African Department, minuted on 25 April, 'We must push on with the various lines of action...to which the State Department have now in general agreed.'³⁷ To 'lull' Nasser, Watson authorised Ambassador Trevelyan to make gestures on the Jordan River plan, the Aswan High Dam, the status of the Sudan, British fulfillment of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and the forthcoming visit of an Egyptian trade mission to Britain. Trevelyan, uninformed about OMEGA, was unsure about the

³⁵ PRO, PREM11/1440, D.C.(56)5th meeting, 1 May 1956, and subsequent minutes. See also AP, AP20/21/File.

³⁶ PRO, FO800/735, Bishop to Logan, 18 April 1956; PRO, PREM11/1690, Eden to Churchill, 21 April 1956.

³⁷ PRO, FO371/118862/JE1053/26G, Watson minute, 25 April 1956.

motive for this renewed spirit of friendship:

[If we were] to work with Nasser and not against him, then, with great patience and in time, it may be possible to get on terms of some confidence with him again. If, however, that is not our policy, then this will be impossible, as he will have periodical evidence of our actions in a sense hostile to him, e.g., efforts to detach King Saud [from Egypt].³⁸

On 15 May, Watson replied in a harsher tone than that of his previous letter:

If we are to preserve our essential positions in the Middle East, and particularly the oil, we must continue and intensify our discreet operations to weaken Nasser's ability to interfere in other Arab countries (and our own colonies) against us by stirring up public opinion. This process will take some time to bear fruit and in some areas, like Libya, has scarcely begun, but, as it takes effect, Nasser will inevitably be aware of what is happening.³⁹

Watson's firmer line was prompted by the Paris meetings between Lloyd and Foster Dulles. The initial talks on 3 May were disappointing for some participants,⁴⁰ but a policy was agreed on the Aswan High Dam. When Foster Dulles suggested that Britain and the U.S. 'drag our feet but not...let the project drop,' Lloyd, 'We should let the project languish, but without giving Nasser any excuse for saying that it was our fault.'⁴¹

However, the issue of Saudi Arabia was still troublesome. The British believed that they had satisfied American conditions with the Dodds-Parker mission to Riyadh, so the plan to detach King Saud from Nasser could now be defined. The Americans wanted results from the

38 PRO, FO371/118862/JE1053/26G, Trevelyan to Watson, 5 May 1956.

39 PRO, FO371/118862/JE1053/31G, Watson to Trevelyan, 15 May 1956.

40 See Shuckburgh, p. 355.

41 PRO, FO371/121273/V1075/117G, Foster Dulles-Lloyd meeting, 3 May 1956.

Anglo-Saudi talks before proceeding. When Lloyd asked about the status of U.S. plans for King Saud, Foster Dulles admitted that little progress had been made but commented that he attached great importance to improved Anglo-Saudi relations from the Dodds-Parker discussions. Lloyd finally showed his hand, saying that, to deter Saudi Arabia from its evil ways, the 'soft-peddalling' of the Saudis must be stopped.⁴² Rountree and Shuckburgh had heated but inconclusive exchanges about the issue, and no progress was made in the Anglo-Saudi talks before Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in July.⁴³

Cooperation between the State Department and the Foreign Office was now so established, however, that the dispute over Saudi Arabia did not halt Anglo-American planning. Besides the decision on the Aswan High Dam, general agreement was reached on two measures. First, Foster Dulles and Lloyd approved the supply of more jets from third countries to Israel. Foreign Minister Pineau formally told his counterparts that, besides the first 12 Mystere IVs delivered to Israel in April, France was sending 12 Mystere IV and 12 Mystere II fighters to Tel Aviv. Foster Dulles urged Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson to supply F-86 fighters to Israel and recommended to Eisenhower that the U.S. fly 24 F-86s to Cyprus, to be taken over by Israeli pilots if an Arab state attacked Israel.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Shuckburgh, p. 355; PRO, FO371/120755/ ES1021/30G, Shuckburgh minute, 4 May 1956; FRUS 1955-1957 XIII, p. 377, p. 388, and pp. 392ff.

⁴⁴ PRO, FO115/4549, Kirkpatrick to Dixon, 18 May 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, May 1956, Paris to State Department, Cable DULTE 12, 6 May 1956.

Second, Foster Dulles and Lloyd discussed STRAGGLE, the operation to intervene in elections or sponsor a coup in Syria. Soon after his return from Paris, Foster Dulles authorised a Middle Eastern tour by Wilbur Eveland, on contract to the CIA, and CIA and State Department evaluation of Syrian contacts who could put a pro-Western government in power. A week later, Lloyd called a Foreign Office meeting to consider the Middle Eastern situation. Discussion on Syria was devoted to STRAGGLE.⁴⁵

Lloyd also informed Foster Dulles that the Jordanian Government could not maintain control without Western assistance. Serious problems had hindered the development of the Iraqi-Jordanian axis. Jordan was dissatisfied with the level of Iraqi economic aid from Iraq and the stagnation of Iraqi-Jordanian staff talks. When Colonel Abu Ali Nuwar, the Jordanian Deputy Chief of Staff, travelled to Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo in April for military discussions, Iraq suspended economic aid and recalled its Ambassador from Amman.⁴⁶

Anglo-American plans were shaken when Egypt, to protect her supply of weapons, recognised Communist China on 16 May. During his visit to Britain, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev indicated that Moscow would join any U.N. embargo on arms to the Middle East, and Nasser

45 PRO, FO371/121273/V1075/117G, Foster Dulles-Lloyd meeting, 3 May 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 10, Israeli Relations, 1951-57 (2), Foster Dulles-Lloyd meeting, 6 May 1956 (classified); PRO, FO800/723, Shuckburgh minute, 29 May 1956; Eveland, p. 181.

46 PRO, FO371/121485/VJ10393/File; PRO, CAB129/81, CP(56)106, 'Jordan,' 1 May 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.32(56), 3 May 1956; PRO, FO371/121273/V1075/117G, Foster Dulles-Lloyd meeting, 3 May 1956.

mistakenly believed that Eden had proposed the embargo to the Soviets. Several days later, the Egyptians received reports of the agreement between Foster Dulles, Lloyd, and Pineau to supply arms, including the additional Mysteres, to Israel. Nasser concluded that, under an arms embargo, Egypt would be militarily inferior to a rearmed Israel. His solution was to establish an alternate source of supply through links with Communist China, who had been barred by the U.S. from entering the U.N.⁴⁷

Foster Dulles later encouraged the belief that Egypt's recognition of Communist China forced him to turn against Cairo. Indeed, his immediate reaction was to tell the Egyptian Ambassador, Ahmed Hussein:

Every time I appear before Congress, the matter of the Dam is thrown at me. The situation in the Congress is boiling over the combination of arms for Saudi Arabia, no arms to Israel, [and] Egyptian recognition of Communist China.⁴⁸

However, after his anger subsided, Foster Dulles refrained from punishing Cairo. On 23 May, he informed an official from the U.S. Treasury:

Israel and others had recognized Red China. We don't act on basis of any one single fact. The whole situation has to be evaluated.

Foster Dulles admitted to C.D. Jackson, a former special assistant to Eisenhower, 'I think recognition of Communist China by Nasser was some indication that the Egyptians do not feel confident that they can get arms indefinitely from the Russians.'⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Nutting, Nasser, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Hoopes, p. 336; Neff, p. 253. See also DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 18 May 1956; PRO, FO371/118843/JE1022/28, Trevelyan to Shuckburgh, 26 May 1956.

⁴⁹ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Snyder, 23 May 1956; Neff, p. 255.

As Foster Dulles told Ambassador Hussein, the real effect of recognition was upon Congress. On 1 June, the U.S. Minister in London, Walworth Barbour, told Kirkpatrick, 'The Administration now thought that, in the altered climate of opinion, there was no chance whatever of inducing Congress to stump up money for the Aswan Dam.' The State Department's dilemma was that 'if Nasser turned to Russia and the Dam was built by a cloud of Russian technicians, that would be regarded as a diplomatic victory for Russia and a diplomatic defeat for Mr. Dulles.' The solution was to sustain Nasser's hope of aid for the Dam while privately carrying out the Foster Dulles-Lloyd agreement to let the project languish.⁵⁰ The British were considering the same problem. Eden agreed with the Foreign Office that 'we should not be in a hurry to go back to the Egyptians...however...we must keep Nasser in play for the time being.'⁵¹

The flaw in the Anglo-American strategy was that the Soviets could offer to finance the Dam at any moment. The British and Americans would then have to agree to fund the Dam or withdraw their offer and accept the Soviet deal with Cairo. In mid-June, when Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov announced a trip to Cairo, it was reported that he would offer Soviet financing of the Dam to Nasser.⁵²

Neither side was prepared to meet the Soviet

⁵⁰ PRO, FO371/119054/JE1422/186G, Kirkpatrick minute, 1 June 1956.

⁵¹ PRO, FO371/119054/JE1422/167G, Millard to Graham, 7 May 1956.

⁵² PRO, FO371/119055/JE1422/198G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1344, 13 June 1956.

challenge. On 12 June, Whitehall's Middle East Official Committee reached no decision on the State Department's suggestion of a riparian conference of states with interest in the Nile Waters, including Sudan and Ethiopia, to delay negotiations on the Dam. The next day Hoover revealed to makins that the State Department also had no definite strategy. The alternatives were to resume negotiations with Nasser, persist with the proposal of a riparian conference, or withdraw using the 'best possible formula,' for example, the suggestion that the Dam's cost would cause undue interference with Egypt's economy and internal affairs.⁵³

Confusion reigned in London and Washington. The Foreign Office abandoned the idea of the riparian conference and proposed a resumption of negotiations with Egypt, spinning out the discussions as long as possible. Foster Dulles and Hoover decided, however, 'to wait for developments so as not to give in to blackmail.' The Foreign Office deferred to Washington's wishes.⁵⁴

Further delay by Britain and the U.S. increased misunderstanding with the World Bank and the ill will of Nasser. On 20-21 June, Eugene Black, the President of the Bank, visited Cairo. Black, unaware of OMEGA, could not understand why Nasser could not reach agreement with Britain and the U.S. when the Bank and Egypt were ready to proceed. When he asked for the reason, Nasser complained

⁵³ PRO, CAB134/1298, ME(O)C(56)35, 'High Aswan Dam,' 12 June 1956.

⁵⁴ PRO, FO371/119055/JE1422/198G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 2901, 14 June 1956, and JE1422/199G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1366, 14 June 1956, and subsequent minutes.

that London and Washington had not replied to Egypt's amendments, proposed in February, to the Western aide-memoires. The Foreign Office and State Department disregarded Black's advice to make a definite statement in reply to the Egyptian amendments, and the Bank was never told of the Foster Dulles-Lloyd decision to let funding 'languish.'⁵⁵

Between 11 and 13 July, Foster Dulles shifted from the 'wait-and-see' attitude towards withdrawal of the Western offer. On 27 June, Assistant Secretary Allen told Foster Dulles that Shepilov's visit to Cairo had not produced a Soviet offer on the Dam. With the Soviet threat receding, Foster Dulles could risk rebuffing the Egyptians.⁵⁶ He had already recalled the embattled Byroade from Egypt despite the Ambassador's close relationship with Nasser.⁵⁷ On the morning of 13 July, Foster Dulles visited Eisenhower, who was recovering from surgery for ileitis at his farm in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Foster Dulles said:

Instead of [Shepilov's visit] leading to a Russian proposal to build the dam as many had anticipated, the Egyptians were now back saying they would take our proposal on the original terms and withdraw their own counterproposals. ...We were not in a position now to deal with this matter because we did not know of the legislative situation. Also our views on the merits of the matter had somewhat altered....We were considering this carefully and would

⁵⁵ PRO, FO371/119055/JE1422/206G, Cairo to Foreign Office, 21 June 1956, and JE1422/219, Bailey to Watson, 30 June 1956. See also Eisenhower, p.32; Lloyd, p. 69; Love, 325; DDE, Oral History Collection, OH-341, Eugene Black oral history, 13 May 1975.

⁵⁶ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Allen, 27 June 1956.

⁵⁷ See USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/4-1956, Cairo to State Department, Cable 2020, 19 April 1956, and 611.74/7-1256, Byroade to State Department, 12 July 1956.

consult with the President next week.

The State Department was controlling American policy. Eisenhower was told little of Foster Dulles' views and he was not asked on 13 July to make or approve any decision.⁵⁸

Foster Dulles returned to Washington to tell Makins that 'he had mentioned the matter to the President at Gettysburg this morning and would be discussing it with him early next week.' He added that 'his opinion was hard against proceeding' for several reasons, notably Congress's attitude, Egyptian discontent at the economic austerity and reduced military spending that would be required to finance the Dam, and the 'serious inflationary effect' of the project. He concluded, 'Assuming that we decided to take this course, it might be better to tell the Egyptians what the situation was, while holding out hope that they would recover economic aid in some other form.'⁵⁹

Although the Aswan High Dam dominated discussion of

⁵⁸ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Foster Dulles-Eisenhower meeting, 13 July 1956.

Between December 1955 and July 1956, there is only one recorded instance of Eisenhower expressing an opinion, let alone making a decision about the Dam, and on that occasion, his thoughts were superfluous because of the development of OMEGA. Furthermore, Eisenhower was effectively removed from office on 8 June with a severe attack of ileitis that required surgery, and he did not return to the White House until 15 July. Although Sherman Adams, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, claimed that the President was fit enough to walk about within days of the operation, there is no evidence that he met Foster Dulles between 8 June and 13 July or considered foreign policy matters, except for the authorisation of missions by the U-2 reconnaissance plane. (Adams, pp. 182ff.; Records in Eisenhower Library)

⁵⁹ PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/229G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1508, 13 July 1956.

OMEGA, other elements of the plan were implemented between May and July. While Wilbur Eveland visited Syria for the CIA, political turmoil highlighted the threat to the Western position. On 2 June, the Government of Sa'id el-Ghazzi resigned over student protests about Syria's economic links with France and French policy in Algeria. For two weeks, a series of Syrian politicians failed or refused to form a Cabinet, as right-wing parties failed to reconcile their differences. On 14 June, Sabri el-Asali, who served as Prime Minister in 1954 and 1955, formed a Cabinet with two Ministers of the Ba'ath (Socialist) Party, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Salah Bitar. The British Ambassador, John Gardener, cabled London, 'Situation here is serious; if the pro-Iraqi elements now succumb, it will be some time before they can reemerge.'⁶⁰ Gardener subsequently warned that several sources indicated that el-Asali and the Ba'ath leader, Akram el-Haurani, had agreed on a statement of government policy, including the proclamation of an Egyptian-Syrian union 'open to all Arabs who have no defence treaties with Foreign Powers.' Left-wing Army officers, led by Colonel Mustafa Hamdun and Captain Abdel Hamid Sarraj, threatened a coup if the statement was not issued.⁶¹

Gardener's hopes rested with a group of officers who formed the anti-leftist Arab Liberation Party. If that group cooperated with political figures, notably Mikhail Ilyan, prominent in Syrian affairs since the 1940s, the Ba'ath and the left-wing Army officers might be checked.

⁶⁰ Eveland, pp. 181ff.; PRO, FO371/121858/VY1015/File.

⁶¹ PRO, FO371/121858/VY1015/File.

Gardener asked the Foreign Office:

Would it be possible when discussing the situation with Nuri to urge that Lian [Ilyan] and Co. should be encouraged financially to continue their struggle? Also Jallal ul Sayid [an agent for Britain working inside the Ba'ath Party]?⁶²

The CIA had the same idea. On 1 July, Kermit and Archie Roosevelt met Ilyan, who requested aid to offset spending by the Egyptians, Saudis, and Soviets. To defeat left-wing elements, Ilyan sought control of Damascus and Aleppo with the help of a few senior Army officers and newspapers bought from Egypt and Saudi influence with Western money.⁶³

British and American efforts soon yielded dividends. Support was obtained from the tribes on the Iraqi-Syrian border and the Moslem Brotherhood. With Iraqi assistance, former President Hashim el-Atasi returned from Rome to build a right-wing coalition. Colonel El-Nafuri of the Arab Liberation Party was introduced by the Iraqi Minister in Damascus to Ilyan. The Syrian Chief of Staff, General Shawkat Shuqayr, after a row with the Minister of Defence and right-wing officers, resigned on 7 July. Gardener was 'reliably informed' that Ilyan and Adnan el-Atasi, the son of the former President, had decided to 'eliminate' leading left-wing Army officers and form a right-wing government without el-Asali, the Ba'ath, and the military. Ilyan and his collaborators 'fled' to Lebanon on 13 July, possibly because of a left-wing backlash against their efforts, possibly to meet American, British, or Iraqi

62 PRO, FO371/121858/VY1015/37, Damascus to Foreign Office, Cable 311, 20 June 1956.

63 Eveland, p. 189.

representatives in Beirut.⁶⁴

At the same time, the Foreign Office fought off a challenge to its Iraqi-Jordanian policy. The Permanent Undersecretary, Kirkpatrick, thought Britain's annual subsidy of £12 million to Jordan was being wasted, and he instructed Ambassador Wright in Baghdad to consult Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id. Wright rebuffed Kirkpatrick:

[This] would suggest we are prepared to abandon Jordan to Egypt and Syria before Jordan has crossed the Rubicon by her own action; it would not do much to explain our motives in terms of the situation as a whole; and I would expect the effect on [Nuri] to be extremely depressing, with possible consequences on his conduct of policy.

Eden wrote Lloyd, 'Clearly we must do all we can to hold on to Jordan until better arrangements are possible elsewhere.' British officials considered a £2,000 'subsidy' to General Nuwar, who was about to become Chief of Staff of the Arab Legion.⁶⁵

Foreign Office officials, after the meeting of 30 May reviewing Middle Eastern policy, instructed Wright to tell Nuri that, while Britain would maintain its subsidy to Jordan, the Iraqis should assume a share of the contribution. Nuri avoided financial commitment, telling Wright that the U.S. had agreed to his request for \$8 million in economic aid to Jordan and indicating this might be coordinated with Iraqi projects.⁶⁶

On 17 June, Wright reported that General Nuwar and

⁶⁴ PRO, FO371/121858/VY1015/File.

⁶⁵ PRO, FO371/121495/VJ1051/126, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 567, 17 May 1956; AP, AP20/21, Eden to Lloyd, 15 April 1956.

⁶⁶ PRO, FO371/121495/VJ1051/127, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 1166, 4 June 1956, and VJ1051/132G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 655, 11 June 1956.

the Iraqis had agreed upon an Iraqi-Jordanian Defence Committee. If Israel attacked Jordan, an Iraqi division would assist the Jordanians. The immediate barrier to further progress was Nuwar's request for small arms, ammunition, and equipment worth £800,000. Nuri, contending that Iraq was short of funds, asked if Britain could finance the purchases. In reply, the British offered to strengthen the Royal Jordanian Air Force with 12 Venom fighters in 1957 and 24 Gnat fighters in 1958-59.⁶⁷

Once again, British plans were affected by Arab-Israeli tension. On 2 July, General E.M. Burns, the commander of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organisation, told the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Edward Lawson, that talks with Ben-Gurion and the new Israeli Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, indicated that 'the Israelis [were] now likely [to] take unilateral action with Jordan in event border incidents continued.' The next day, King Hussein told the British Ambassador and the U.S. Charge d'Affaires that Ben-Gurion was contemplating a large-scale attack upon Jordan. Jordanian troops were mobilised and the Arab Legion requested £1 million of ammunition from British stocks.⁶⁸

Burns' initial reports were exaggerated, and an Israeli source, probably the Director-General of Ben-Gurion's office, Teddy Kollek, said the Israelis had

67 PRO, FO371/121485/VJ10393/45G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 676, 17 June 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/121554/VJ1203/File.

68 PRO, FO371/121728/VR1073/195, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 935, 3 July 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85 Series, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 1, 2 July 1956, and Amman to State Department, Cable 8, 5 July 1956. See also PRO, FO371/121728/VR1073/195, Laurence minute, 4 July 1956.

decided upon no further reprisals. The source added, however, 'In case of future serious...incidents originating from Jordan, Ben-Gurion was authorized to take the necessary action without further Cabinet consideration.' The State Department agreed with Makins that Israel had established, for the record, that all peaceful processes were exhausted.⁶⁹

The Israeli threat hastened Britain's reevaluation of its position in Jordan. The Chiefs of Staff had concluded in late June that the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty was 'now an embarrassment and...of little further value' and that 'the stationing of British forces in the country was not strategically necessary.' They added, however, that a British presence was desirable if it satisfied Britain's political aims, and the Foreign Office decided that political objectives outweighed the cost of the subsidy and the commitment of British troops. At the Anglo-Jordanian Defence Board in mid-July, British representatives told Nuwar that Britain would defend Jordan with air and naval forces if Israel attacked.⁷⁰

Britain also accelerated its psychological campaign against Nasser. In March, Sydney Hebblethwaite of the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD), responsible for covert propaganda, urged British

69 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85/7-1356, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 39, 13 July 1956; PRO, FO371/121729/VR1073/243, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1512, 14 July 1956. See also PRO, FO371/121730/VR1073/253, Chancery (Tel Aviv) to Levant Department, Despatch 10310/56, 16 July 1956, and VR1073/265, Duke to Rose, 4 August 1956.

70 PRO, FO371/121496/VJ1051/154G, Chiefs of Staff brief, 27 June 1956; PRO, FO371/121730/VR1073/266G, British Defence Coordinating Committee (Middle East) to COS, Cable MECOS 162, 9 August 1956.

information officers in the Middle East to use 'their best endeavours to cultivate the appropriate key personalities of the small broadcast stations in their countries so as to ensure that through such friendly contacts, anti-British criticism is reduced and a little more space is given to objective news about Britain.' Hebblethwaite subsequently asked the Regional Information Officer in Beirut to remind information officers to 'report two or three times a year on the success of their attempts to penetrate local broadcast stations.'⁷¹ Newer and more powerful transmitters were considered for British stations in Libya, Aden, and Kuwait, and after extensive efforts by the Foreign Office, the Iraqis erected a transmitter in September 1956 which was more powerful than any Egyptian station.⁷² Jack Rennie, the head of IRD, and his deputy, Norman Reddaway, told Press Secretary Clark of their desire for more 'black' propaganda from British radio stations.⁷³ Lloyd even pressed Ian Jacob, the Director-General of the BBC, to help:

The BBC was too respectable. In most instances, it was good, but in others it might be more aggressive, although certain aspects of offensive broadcasting had better be done through other agencies.⁷⁴

In June, Douglas Dodds-Parker, the Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, chaired an ad hoc committee directed to study non-military measures to

⁷¹ PRO, FO953/1650/PB1041/30, Hebblethwaite minute, 27 March 1956.

⁷² PRO, FO953/1658/PB1045/File; PRO, FO953/1659/PB1045/109, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 974, 3 September 1956, and subsequent minutes. See also AP, AP20/21, Eden to Lloyd, 4 May, 15 May, and 3 June 1956.

⁷³ William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 2 May 1956.

⁷⁴ PRO, FO953/1641/PB1011/20, Dodds-Parker minute, 11 July 1956.

maintain Britain's Middle Eastern position. The Middle East (Official) Committee had recommended a one-off allocation of £50,000 to build VHF radio stations and supply receivers 'to counter Egyptian propaganda in the Middle East.' The Dodds-Parker Committee expanded this to propose an increase of £568,000 in annual spending and £330,000 in capital expenditure for broadcasting. Besides the second short-wave transmitter in Aden and two transmitters in Libya, the Committee endorsed a medium-wave relay station in Cyprus for the BBC, and a system of VHF broadcasting for the Persian Gulf.⁷⁵

After the early stumbles in the planning of OMEGA, the Foreign Office had linked plans for Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia with the isolation of Nasser in the Middle East without provoking open Anglo-Egyptian conflict.⁷⁶ Lloyd told the Egyptian newspaper Al-Akhbar on 18 June, 'There are no actual disputes or conflicts between Great Britain and Egypt which justify the present lack of confidences between the two countries.' A week later, the Daily Herald printed Nasser's reply:

Now that the Egyptian people have won their independence and that there are no longer any foreign troops on Egyptian soil, a completely new chapter opens and we want that chapter to be one of real friendship and of friendly cooperation.⁷⁷

The rapprochement was an illusion. A Cabinet Paper, drafted by the Foreign Office, considered whether Britain

⁷⁵ PRO, CAB134/1298, ME(O)C(56)33, 'Working Paper on Middle Eastern Expenditure,' 11 June 1956; PRO, FO371/120812/UEE10062/9G, Dodds-Parker minute, 19 July 1956.

⁷⁶ See PRO, FO371/118862/JE1053/ 37G, Shuckburgh to Middle Eastern posts, 28 May 1956.

⁷⁷ Love, p. 218.

'should move over to a more overtly hostile line towards [Nasser].' The paper noted:

[Our] policy, as agreed with the Americans, has been not to adopt an attitude of open hostility to Nasser but rather to keep him guessing about our ultimate intentions, while doing what we can to weaken his influence in Egypt and other Arab states by covert methods....The time for a change may come after we have dealt with the Aswan Dam, but there is no alternative regime in sight in Egypt and such a change will push him [Nasser] more firmly in the hands of the Russians and covert reprisals against our economic interests.

However, once Nasser was weakened by the measures in OMEGA, the memorandum concluded:

We shall be able to indulge in activities which he will see are directed against him by us. It is in preparation for that phase that we must have our machinery ticking over.⁷⁸

78 PRO, FO371/118864/JE1053/67G, Wilton minute, 5 July 1956, and JE1053/74G, Lloyd memorandum, 20 July 1956.

CHAPTER 8

19 JULY-26 JULY: WESTERN ATTACK, EGYPTIAN COUNTERATTACK

At 4 p.m. on 19 July, Ahmed Hussein, the Egyptian Ambassador to Washington, walked into Foster Dulles' office. When he left the office an hour later, Foster Dulles had withdrawn American support for the Aswan High Dam.

Blaming Egypt for the events leading to the Suez crisis, American officials perpetuated the myth that Foster Dulles was forced into the withdrawal. Hussein allegedly entered the office and demanded 'a huge commitment over a period of years' from the U.S., and threatening that the Egyptians had a Soviet offer 'in their pocket.' Foster Dulles replied that, in that case, Egypt would not need American help.¹

In fact, Hussein's behaviour had nothing to do with the withdrawal, which had been planned by Foster Dulles over the past six days. At 3:40 p.m., Foster Dulles told his brother Allen:

If [I do] nothing, Congress will chop [funding for the Dam] off tomorrow and [I] would rather do it....If [the Soviets] do make this offer, we can make a lot of use of it in propaganda with the satellite bloc. [We will say that] you don't get bread because you are being squeezed to build a dam.

When Allen Dulles asked how the decision would be justified, Foster Dulles replied that 'he would put it on the ground that since the offer was made, the situation has changed and so on. On the whole, it is too big an affair to swing today.'²

When Hussein entered the office, Foster Dulles threw an 'artificial tantrum':

We believe that anybody who builds the High Dam will earn the hatred of the Egyptian people because the burden will be crushing....We don't want to be hated in Egypt; we are

1 Eisenhower, p. 32; Robert Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors (London: Collins, 1964), p. 459.

2 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 19 July 1956.

leaving this pleasure to the Soviet Union if they really want to do it!

Foster Dulles added, 'We doubted that we could obtain funds from Congress to carry out the work....No single project in the Mutual Security Program was as unpopular today at the Aswan Dam.' Hussein then replied:

Although he himself still thought it would be a mistake for Egypt to accept the Russian offer, he feared it would be extremely difficult for his Government to do so. The Egyptian people had been told that they need arms and the High Aswan Dam, and it would not be easy to explain to them that they could not have the latter if the Russians were willing to provide it.

The Egyptian Ambassador left the office to face reporters armed with a statement from the State Department asserting that 'developments' meant 'the ability of Egypt to devote adequate resources to assure the project's success has become more uncertain than at the time the offer was made.'³

In fact, Foster Dulles' hand had been forced by Congress. On 16 July, the Senate Appropriations Committee, reviewing the foreign aid bill for fiscal year 1957, insisted upon an amendment prohibiting finance for the Dam without the authorisation with the Committee. The White House had spent two years resisting Congressional attempts to limit Executive control of foreign policy, narrowly defeating the Bricker Amendment, which required Congressional approval of any Executive agreement with a foreign country. If Congress approved the Appropriations Committee's amendment, any allocation of foreign aid might be subject to Congressional veto.

William Knowland, the Republican leader in the Senate, warned Foster Dulles on 17 July that the Administration would 'proceed at its peril' if it tried to fund the Dam. Foster Dulles hinted, 'We

³ Ibid.; PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/247G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1552, 19 July 1956; Mosley, p. 402; Love, p. 316.

have just about made up our minds to tell the Egyptians we will not do it.' When Knowland indicated that 'the committee won't be taking [the amendment] until Friday [20 July],' Foster Dulles assured, 'It might well be taken care of by then and action on the bill won't be necessary.'⁴ On 18 July, the State Department told Makins of the imminent withdrawal. The Ambassador informed the Foreign Office that 'no final decision will be taken until tomorrow morning,' but added, 'My impression is that Mr. Dulles will leave [Hussein] in no doubt that the offer of last December is withdrawn.'⁵

Just as it was convenient for the Americans to blame the Egyptians for withdrawal of finance for the Dam, British politicians later criticised Foster Dulles for triggering the Suez crisis with his unilateral and abrupt actions.⁶ In fact, Eden knew of Makins' conversation of 13 July with Foster Dulles and agreed with the intention to cut off funding. Lloyd told the Cabinet on 17 July of American plans and added:

It would probably be best to indicate to the Egyptians that, in view of their commitments for expenditure on armaments and military installations, the two Governments had been forced to the conclusion that the financing of the Dam, even with the assistance which had been proposed, would be beyond Egypt's resources.⁷

The next day, the Foreign Office informed Makins, 'It will suit us very well if Mr. Dulles speaks as you foresee.'⁸

On the morning of 19 July, Foster Dulles told Makins of his final decision. Makins responded that the British 'point of view on

4 PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/232G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1528, 17 July 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 16 July 1956; Neff, p. 260.

5 PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/230G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1541, 18 July 1956.

6 See Eden, p. 422; Harold Macmillan, Riding the Storm (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 98.

7 PRO, FO371/119056/229G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1508, 13 July 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.50(56), 17 July 1956.

8 PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/230G, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 3256, 19 July 1956.

the substance of the problem seemed to [him] much in line with the U.S. view [although Britain] would prefer to play it very much longer and not give a definite refusal.' Foster Dulles said he preferred this...

...but, after consultation with [the] President, he had come to the conclusion that Congressional circumstances simply did not allow this....He was not prepared to let the control of foreign policy pass to the Congress.⁹

Foster Dulles then told Eisenhower, who was about to leave for Panama, of his decision and showed the President the State Department's proposed statement. Eisenhower made no changes. The meeting lasted 12 minutes.¹⁰

The British were not agitated about Foster Dulles' action. Lloyd merely told the Cabinet on 20 July that it was 'clear that the U.K. Government should similarly withdraw.' The Cabinet authorised an announcement at noon that would 'emphasize the economic considerations which led us to this decision and would give the Egyptian Government no ground for assuming that it had been taken for political reasons.'¹¹

Nasser was returning with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru from a summit with Yugoslav ruler Tito when he heard the news of the withdrawal.¹² The Egyptian President was especially incensed at the implication in the State Department's statement that Egypt had neither the resources nor the management skills to the construct the Dam, operate the economy, and expand military forces. He told Ambassador Byroade:

9 PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/245, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1545, 19 July 1956. See also PRO, FO371/119058/JE1422/297G, Wright minute, 27 November 1956, and subsequent minutes.

10 Neff, p. 260. See also DDE, Oral History Collection, OH-14, Dwight Eisenhower oral history, 28 July 1964.

11 PRO, FO371/118864/JE1053/74G, Lloyd memorandum, 20 July 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.52(56), 24 July 1956, and C.M.53(56), 26 July 1956.

12 See Peter Calvocoressi, Suez: Ten Years After (London: BBC, 1967), p. 41; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 115.

This action of Mr. Dulles is an action against me by a great power, and no great power can take action against me without taking into account the necessary consequences of it....The necessary consequences are that you fellows are out to kill me, and all I can do is protect myself. I tell you this. I am not going to be killed.¹³

After Nehru left Cairo, Nasser considered Egyptian reaction to the withdrawal. One option was nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company (SCC), a symbol of Western involvement in Egyptian affairs. More than 80 percent of its stock was held by French and British shareholders, and its concession to oversee shipping through the Suez Canal expired in 1968. Since 1954, the Egyptians had considered their eventual takeover of the SCC's activities.¹⁴ In early July, when Nasser told Hussein to accept the American conditions on funding for the Dam, he added:

Ahmed, do you know Egyptian history? Do you know about the Suez Canal? Before you go back to Washington, go to a bookshop in Cairo and buy a book about the Canal.¹⁵

Nasser completed an 'appreciation' of the situation on 23 July. Egyptian emissaries were sent to Cyprus, where guerrillas fighting for union with Greece provided photographs of British military installations and radio stations, and to Malta, where the labour movement provided reports. Nasser recognised that Britain's immediate impulse would be to reverse the nationalisation, but he realised weeks of preparation would be needed to assemble the equipment and the troops necessary to occupy the Canal Zone. As time passed, the pressure of public opinion would dissuade Britain from action and push it into negotiations with Egypt, and a settlement would be reached within the three months the British required to complete military plans. Nasser did not expect France to support British military action because of Anglo-French

¹³ Mosley, p. 404.

¹⁴ See Calvocoressi, p. 43.

¹⁵ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/7-3056, Cairo to State Department, Cable 176, 30 July 1956.

conflicts in the Middle East. 'Least of all,' according to his confidant Mohammed Heikal, 'did it enter Nasser's head at any stage in the Suez crisis that France and Britain would destroy every vestige of their influence and good name in the Arab world by using Israel as their stalking-horse for an attempt to seize the Canal by force.'¹⁶

The main deterrent to nationalisation was the economic risk for Egypt. The country had little foreign exchange to compensate the SCC's shareholders, and it did not have the technical expertise to build the Aswan High Dam alone. Moscow could not be relied upon to provide aid for the Dam: on 21 July, Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov said the Soviet Union was 'not interested in financing it [as] Egypt was in need of general economic development.' Nasser apparently gambled that Egypt could keep the Canal open and earn enough revenue to keep its economy afloat. He later told a British reporter that the Egyptians had £60 million in reserves which, with an additional £10 million of Egyptian holdings that the British were due to release in January 1957, would compensate the SCC. The net profits from supervision of Canal transit would then support their economy --- the SCC had made £19 million in 1955. Egyptian assets would be set against the £61 million in gold held by the SCC in Cairo to meet any problems of foreign exchange.¹⁷

In a speech on 24 July, Nasser responded to the withdrawal of funding for the Dam:

Our reply today is that we will not allow the domination of force and the dollar. I will tell you on Thursday, God willing, how Egypt has acted so that all its projects --- such as [the Dam] --- may be projects of sovereignty, dignity, and not those of humiliation, slavery,

¹⁶ Heikal, Nasser, p. 90, and Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 117; Love, p. 335; Nutting, Nasser, p. 147.

¹⁷ PRO, FO371/119056/JE1422/248, Moscow to Foreign Office, Cable 1002, 21 July 1956; PRO, FO371/119087/JE14211/291, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1430, 5 August 1956.

domination, rule, and exploitation.¹⁸

Thursday was 26 July, the culmination of celebrations of the anniversary of the 1952 Revolution. The centrepiece was Nasser's speech, to be broadcast by the Voice of the Arabs, in Liberation Square in Alexandria. A reference in the speech to 'De Lesseps,' the industrialist who supervised the Suez Canal's construction, was the signal for three groups of men to seize SCC offices in Cairo and at both ends of the Canal.

'By turns sarcastic, condescending, and occasionally facetious,' speaking in a heavily colloquial dialect, a relaxed Nasser began the 2 1/2-hour speech with a long review of 'imperialistic efforts to thwart Egyptian independence.' He then recounted the story of the Aswan High Dam from its inception to the American withdrawal. During the story, Nasser compared Eugene Black, the President of the World Bank, to 'De Lesseps.' Fearful that his collaborators would not hear the signal, Nasser repeated the name 13 times in his address. Nasser then announced the nationalisation, setting off a 10-minute ovation. The U.S. Consul summarised:

In the space of a half-hour, Nasser succeeded for the first time in capturing the imagination of the rank and file and converting them into active supporters....Among normally pro-Westerners, there is grudging admiration for the man who in one week managed to recover from a major setback on the High Dam to administer a stinging blow to Western powers.¹⁹

The nationalisation surprised the West. The State Department's deliberations over the Egyptian response to withdrawal of funding for the Dam never considered the possibility. Instead, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo predicted that Nasser would terminate the

¹⁸ Hoopes, p. 345.

¹⁹ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301 Series, Cairo to State Department, Cable 146, 26 July 1956, and Alexandria to State Department, Cable 20, 28 July 1956, and 774.11/7-2856, Alexandria to State Department, Despatch 1, 28 July 1956.

operations of the U.S.-backed International Cooperation Administration. Only the French Ambassador to the U.S., Maurice Couve de Murville, warned of nationalisation.²⁰

Nasser's action altered the implementation of OMEGA. After the CIA's 'probing operation' in Syria, the Dulles brothers did not endorse working with Ilyan, but they agreed that CIA funds should subsidise bids by American oil companies for the construction of the refinery at Homs. Other steps included the 'buying' of support for the West in Jordan, the forging of pro-Western links between Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, and pressure upon King Saud to renew American rights to use the Dhahran Air Base and to break his 'alliance' with Nasser. George Young of MI6 warned Wilbur Eveland, working for the CIA, that Britain and Iraq would proceed with plans for a coup in Syria and complained about Washington's 'foot-dragging' in accepting British operations. However, when Eveland asked if a coup had been planned against Nasser, Archie Roosevelt, supervising operations against Syria, replied, 'Certainly not yet. We'll watch [Nasser] carefully and concentrate on creating a friendly bloc of Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.'²¹

Nasser's nationalisation of the SCC changed these plans. The CIA decided, in the new circumstances, that the electoral process would take too long in Syria and that Operation STRAGGLE, the plan for a coup, must be implemented. Ilyan asked Eveland and Archie Roosevelt for a 'half-million and at least 30 days' to install a new regime. The target date was the end of August.²²

Most importantly, the nationalisation of the SCC threatened

20 PRO, PREM11/1100, Trevelyan to Lloyd, 1 September 1956; Calvocoressi, p. 39; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 611.74/7-2556, Cairo to State Department, Cable 133, 25 July 1956; Love, p. 217.

21 Eveland, pp. 192ff.; Private information.

22 Ibid.

Foreign Office control of a long-term program against Nasser. After 26 July, British policy was defined by a number of committees. At the top, Eden and a select group of Ministers supervised action through the Egypt Committee, while the Egypt Official Committee, composed of senior civil servants and chaired by Cabinet Secretary Brook, established the political aims of a military operation to overthrow the Egyptian Government. The Defence Transition Committee of middle-level officials considered administration of Egypt by a British Military Government. A select group of military planners, most of whom had served on the Suez Canal Zone base, drafted operations to meet the instructions of the Egypt and Egypt Official Committees.

Middle Eastern planning remained under the Foreign Office's supervision, but the ad hoc system of committees disrupted its efforts. If the work of the Foreign Office and the military was considered by the Egypt Committee, problems could be addressed, but Eden was obsessed with toppling Nasser and Macmillan, formerly the Foreign Office's defender, was even more determined than the Prime Minister. Other members of the Egypt Committee, notably Commonwealth Secretary Lord Home and Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd, shared these views.

In the confusion, MI6 was encouraged to implement its own policy. While the Foreign Office and the military coordinated OMEGA with the Americans, MI6, after the talks with the CIA in April that nearly destroyed the planning, only discussed general objectives with the U.S. and the Foreign Office. It remained to be seen whether the Foreign Office and the State Department could again pull the Eden Government back from direct confrontation with Egypt.

CHAPTER 9

26 JULY-14 AUGUST 1956: BRITAIN'S QUEST TO 'HIT, HIT NOW,
AND HIT HARD'

Eden was dining with King Feisal II, Crown Prince Abdul-Illah, and Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id of Iraq when news came of Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. Nuri allegedly told Eden:

You have only one course of action open and that is to hit, hit now, and hit hard. Otherwise it will be too late. If [Nasser] is left alone, he will finish all of us.¹

After the Iraqis left, Eden summoned the Chiefs of Staff, French Ambassador Jean Chauvel, and American Charge d'Affaires Andrew Foster to 10 Downing Street. Foreign Secretary Lloyd, the Lord President, Lord Salisbury, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir, and Commonwealth Secretary Home joined the discussion. Eden's Press Secretary, Clark, recorded:

Eden made it absolutely clear that military action would have to be taken and that Nasser would have to go. Nasser could not be allowed, in Eden's phrase, 'to have his hand on our windpipe.'²

Foster cabled Washington, '[British] Cabinet takes an extremely grave view of situation and very strong feelings were expressed, especially by Eden, to the effect that Nasser must not be allowed to get away with it.'³

The military was unable to carry out Eden's wishes, however. Fulfilling the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1954,

1 Heikal, Nasser, pp. 96ff.

2 William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 26-27 July 1956.

3 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, London to State Department, Cable 481, 27 July 1956.

British troops completed their evacuation from the Suez Canal Zone in June 1956. The Chiefs of Staff had concluded in March that a landing of three to four divisions was necessary to reoccupy the Zone and keep the Canal open. On 3 July, the Chiefs assessed, as did the civilian Dodds-Parker Committee, 'We can no longer rely solely on the threat of military force to attain political stability, and we must therefore devote much more of our non-military resources to this end.' Britain should not retain rights to the Canal Zone Base after the expiry of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1961, since 'the relatively small functions which [the Base] fulfill in the Cold War could be met by other arrangements.'⁴

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Gerald Templer, opposed landing a lightly-armed force in Egypt while General Hugh Stockwell noted that paratroops were out of training and landing craft were out of commission. Furthermore, British forces had serious problems with equipment. Hunter fighters suffered from jammed guns and engines that surged unexpectedly. Valiant bombers had no bomb sights, and Canberra bombers were not cleared for high-altitude flights.⁵

Lord Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, advised Eden that the British fleet could sail from Malta within a few hours, collecting Royal Marine Commandos at Cyprus and landing them at Port Said, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, in three to four days, but he continued:

⁴ PRO, CAB131/17, DC(56)17, 'U.K. Requirements in the Middle East,' 3 July 1956.

⁵ Philip Ziegler, Mountbatten (London: Collins, 1985), p. 538; Lamb, p. 199.

Though the 1200 Marines could seize the Causeway, they would have great difficulty maintaining themselves there in the face of Egyptian opposition. I recommend that unilateral action by the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines should not be taken.⁶

The three Chiefs of Staff closed the discussion by threatening to resign if immediate operations were pursued. They formally agreed the next day that it was essential that the operation have 'overwhelming force from the outset.'⁷

As Britain was unable to act alone, 'the question confronting [British] Cabinet tonight,' Foster recorded, 'was, of course, extent to which U.S. would go in supporting and participating in firm position vis-a-vis Nasser in terms of economic sanctions and, beyond that if necessary, military action.' With no authority to give an answer, Foster could only agree to meet Lloyd and Eden the following afternoon.⁸

The next morning, the Cabinet authorised Eden to ask Eisenhower to send a representative for consultations with Britain and France. After reviewing economic factors, the Cabinet considered its legal position. Contrary to the Government's claims during the crisis, Ministers recognised that Britain was...

...on weak ground in basing our resistance on the narrow ground that Colonel Nasser had acted illegally....From a narrow legal point of view, his action amounted to no more than a decision to buy out the shareholders.

Unable to use existing law to justify military action, the

⁶ Ziegler, p. 538.

⁷ AP, AP23/37/24B, Head to Eden, 3 May 1962, and AP33/2, Templer to Eden, 21 August 1976.

⁸ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, London to State Department, Cable 481, 27 July 1956.

Cabinet constructed a new legal principle 'on wider international grounds':

The Canal was a vital link between the East and the West, and its importance as an international waterway, recognised in the [Constantinople] Convention signed in 1888, had increased with the development of the oil industry and the dependence of the world on oil supplies. It was not a piece of Egyptian property but an international asset of the highest importance, and it should be managed as an international trust.

Having concocted a formula for the use of force, the Ministers reviewed Britain's military options. The Chiefs of Staff estimated that the three divisions necessary to defeat the Egyptians 'could be made available...but, as a great quantity of vehicles and other heavy armoured equipment would have to be transported to the area by sea, the necessary preparations for mounting the operation would take several weeks.' They also warned, 'It was important that the operations should be so planned as to reduce to the minimum the risk the other Arab States would be drawn into supporting Egypt.'

Led by Eden, the Cabinet dismissed the military's caution:

Failure to hold the Suez Canal would lead inevitably to the loss, one by one, of all our interests in the Middle East, and even if we had to act alone, we could not stop short of using force to protect our position if all other means of protecting it proved unavailable.

The Chiefs would prepare a military plan, while Mountbatten requisitioned necessary shipping and strengthened the naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The Board of Trade would prepare for the restriction of Middle Eastern oil deliveries to Britain and ensure an adequate supply of

shipping for trade and the military operation. With France, the Treasury would block Egyptian currency balances in London and Paris. Most significantly, the Egypt Committee, consisting of Eden, Salisbury, Lloyd, Home, Minister of Defence Monckton, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan, was appointed to oversee British policy. Eden's goal was clear: plans would be made for...

...the worst case, that is, the British having to "go it alone" without the allies and it was made pretty clear that the French are almost certain to join in....The Prime Minister stated that his object was to get rid of Colonel Nasser personally and his regime, whom he regarded as the principal enemies.⁹

The timing of Nasser's nationalisation forced Eisenhower, who had little to do with American policy in the Middle East, into action. The President decided that the crisis was not serious enough to recall Foster Dulles, who was visiting Peru, to the U.S. Significantly, Eisenhower refused to condemn the nationalisation as illegal. He distinguished the Suez crisis from the case of Iran in 1953, when the CIA and MI6 sponsored the overthrow of the Government that nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company was 'not the same as nationalising oil wells,' since the latter exhausted natural resources while use of the Canal built them up. The logic was spurious, but it established that Eisenhower would not sponsor force against Nasser just to regain control of transit through the Canal.¹⁰

⁹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.54(56), 27 July 1956; PRO, ADM205/117, First Sea Lord to Vice Chief Naval Staff, 27 July 1956.

¹⁰ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 16, July 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 27 July 1956. See also DDE, Oral History Collection, Dwight Eisenhower oral history, 28 July 1964.

Like the British Cabinet, the President considered whether action against Egypt could be supported on 'wider international grounds.' Undersecretary of State Hoover noted that Nasser had violated the concession granted to the SCC in 1869 and that Egypt might interfere with use of the Canal, breaking the 1888 Convention guaranteeing freedom of transit to all nations. Eisenhower showed some sympathy for British feelings, noting, 'No nation is likely to allow its nationals to be held in what amounts to slavery, operations of the Canal may suffer, and we and many other countries have a concern over its operations,' but he took no action other than a public statement emphasizing that the U.S. regarded the situation 'with utmost seriousness and [was] consulting with others affected.'¹¹

The State Department informed Foster in London, 'Nasser's action in expropriating an international utility was in a very different category to the expropriation of, e.g., an oil company,' and suggested taking the case to the U.N. When Foster presented these views, Lloyd countered:

[We] must, from the outset, be prepared to take military measures, if necessary. Political and economic measures were not enough. Nasser would laugh at them. We must first establish between our three Governments that we are prepared to go to the limit.

A tripartite note to Egypt should reject nationalisation and demand that an international body control the Canal:

If the Egyptians refused, we should have to take strong action. This might mean denouncing the

¹¹ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 16, July 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 27 July 1956.

1954 [Anglo-Egyptian] Agreement and reoccupying the Canal Zone (with the support of other Governments). Among other possibilities it might mean the use of naval escorts to ensure free passage through the Canal.'¹²

Eden wrote Eisenhower on 27 July, 'If we do nothing, our influence and yours throughout the Middle East will, we are convinced, be finally destroyed.' He then presented the Cabinet's legal justification for action:

We should not allow ourselves to become involved in legal quibbles about the rights of the Egyptian Government to nationalise what is technically an Egyptian company or in financial arguments about their capacity to pay the compensation which they have offered. I feel sure that we should take issue with Nasser on the broader international grounds.

Most significantly, Eden rejected OMEGA in favour of overt measures:

We are unlikely to attain our objective by economic pressures alone....My colleagues and I are convinced that we must be ready, in the last resort, to use force to bring Nasser to his senses.¹³

Eden's message finally convinced the Americans that Anglo-Egyptian war was possible, and Eisenhower and Hoover agreed that Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy should immediately go to London. However, they did not absolutely reject support for the use of force:

If the British or the French were to pull out their pilots, insurance companies would not then cover ships in passage through the Canal; the result would be a halt in operations. If they [the Egyptians] tried to seize or hold the pilots, the U.K. would undoubtedly use force and would undoubtedly be justified in the eyes of the world.

¹² USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/7-2756, State Department to London, Cable 545, 27 July 1956 (classified); PRO, FO371/119092/JE14211/ 421G, Lloyd-Chauvel-Foster meeting, 27 July 1956.

¹³ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 19, Eden, Eden to Eisenhower, 27 July 1956.

Hoover added that 'his feeling, in which Secretary [of the Treasury] Humphrey agrees, is that we must move strongly in the Middle East --- otherwise the whole Middle East position will be quickly challenged.' The Joint Chiefs of Staff asserted that nationalisation was 'militarily detrimental' to U.S. control of military bases and NATO:

[Action was required] which can reasonably be expected to result in placing the Suez Canal under a friendly and responsible authority at the earliest practicable date....If action short of the use of military force cannot reasonably be expected to achieve this result, the U.S. should consider the desirability of taking military action in support of the U.K., France, and others as appropriate.¹⁴

The Americans simply wanted time to obtain support, both inside and outside the U.S., for the use of force if it was necessary. Eisenhower replied to Eden:

While we agree with much that you have to say, we rather think there are one or two additional thoughts that you and we might profitably consider....We are of the earnest opinion that the minimum number of maritime nations affected by the Nasser action should be consulted quickly in the hope of obtaining an agreed basis of understanding.¹⁵

On 27 and 28 July, the Egypt Committee drafted a plan of action. To limit Egypt's room for financial manoeuvre, Macmillan was authorised to secure control of the SCC's assets and £130 million in Egyptian sterling balances in London. Ministers authorised the deployment of a second carrier to the Mediterranean, the preparation of two ships to transport Army and RAF personnel and equipment, and four-day notice for a cruiser and three destroyers of the

¹⁴ USNA, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Geographical File 1954-1956, Box 15, 092 Egypt (7-28-56), S. 1, JCS draft to Secretary of Defence, undated.

¹⁵ U.S. DDCS, US81 384B; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 19, Eden, Eisenhower to Eden, 28 July 1956.

Home Fleet to sail to the Middle East.

At the Committee, the Chiefs of Staff raised the subject of cooperation with Israel:

Militarily, it would be to our advantage if the Egyptian armoured division now astride the Canal could be induced to move east of the Canal. A demonstration by Israel might achieve this, but such a move would tend to range the other Arab States on the side of Egypt, and it was an essential aim of our policy to isolate Egypt from the other Arab countries.¹⁶

The Foreign Office agreed. Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Elath on 28 July was 'unofficially' told that British preparations were to Israel's advantage but 'it was essential that Israel should keep out and that [Israeli Prime Minister] Ben-Gurion should keep quiet.' Lloyd warned the French against sending Mystere jet fighters to Tel Aviv 'to keep Israel out of the situation, as much in Israel's interest as anyone.'¹⁷

The first signs of division in the Anglo-American alliance were appearing. The Egypt Committee brusquely subordinated Eisenhower's request for consultation with maritime nations to the military option:

It was not...thought wise to hold such a conference immediately; it would be preferable to delay until military preparations were sufficiently advanced to enable forceful action (should this be necessary) to follow hard upon the presentation to the Egyptian Government of any plan approved by maritime countries.¹⁸

In contrast, Eisenhower told Murphy and Hoover, 'If any sweeping action...[was] taken, (it) should involve all the maritime powers.'

¹⁶ PRO, CAB134/126, E.C(56)1st and 2nd meetings, 27-28 July 1956.

¹⁷ PRO, FO371/121706/VR1052/23G, Ross minute, 28 July 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/7-2756, London to State Department, Cable 510, 27 July 1956.

¹⁸ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)2nd meeting, 28 July 1956.

Hoover told Makins that the U.S. sought international administration for the Canal but 'at present, that is to say in default of some further overt act by Egypt (riotous action against foreigners, imprisonment of pilots), military action could not be justified.'¹⁹

With the U.S. reluctant to join military operations, Britain turned to France. The day after the nationalisation, Foreign Minister Pineau warned U.S. Ambassador Douglas Dillon:

French Government takes most serious view of the affair and likens it to seizure of Rhineland by Hitler.... Inevitable result [of failing to oppose Nasser] would be that all of Middle Eastern pipelines would be seized and nationalized within the next three months and Europe would find itself totally dependent on the goodwill of the Arab powers.²⁰

The French Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nomy, who accompanied Pineau to London on 29 July, allegedly said, '[Anglo-French action] would teach those damned Arabs the lesson they long needed.' Lloyd reported, after discussion with Ambassador Chauvel:

The French were ready to go all the way with us. They would be prepared to put French forces under British command if this was necessary, and they contemplated making land and air forces available as well as naval forces.

Eden, without consulting the U.S., instructed the Chiefs of Staff to talk informally with Nomy.²¹

Before meeting Pineau and Lloyd, Murphy cabled

19 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, Goodpaster memorandum, 28 July 1956; PRO, PREM11/1098, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1609, 28 July 1956.

20 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, Paris to State Department, Cable 469, 27 July 1956.

21 PRO, ADM205/117, First Sea Lord to Vice Chief of Naval Staff, 30 July 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)3rd meeting, 29 July 1956.

Washington to define U.S. policy on collaboration with Britain and France. The telegram, endorsed by the State Department, if not by Eisenhower personally, became the cornerstone of the American position:

We do not believe that our action should relate principally to the question of the legal right of Egypt to effect a nationalization of this company. The American interest relates rather to the right freely to use an essential international waterway, the free access to which is guaranteed by the Constantinople Convention of 1888...

We believe that whatever action is decided should be taken only after an estimate of the facts and that the decision should take fully into account the effect of such action on world public opinion. We desire to have the closest affiliation possible with the U.K. and France, but we believe that whatever action is taken should, if possible, have a broader basis than the interests, however important, of those three powers. The interest of other nations, especially maritime and trading nations, is important and their association and support, it seems to us, is essential....

The question of eventual military intervention does not seem to arise. It would depend on developments. For the present we believe it should be delegated to the background. We feel equally strongly that the Arab-Israeli question should be segregated from the present issue.²²

The first tripartite meeting nearly collapsed because of Pineau's distaste for U.S. policy. He told Lloyd:

The question for [France] was not only of the Middle East but also of Algeria....One successful battle in Egypt would be worth ten in North Africa.

Lloyd agreed with Pineau but carefully described the position to Murphy:

Political and economic pressure was unlikely to have any effect on Nasser unless he knew that there were military sanctions in the background. It was therefore necessary to proceed with military preparations as far as possible, in

²² DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, July 1956, London to State Department, Cable 517, 29 July 1956 (*italics added*).

case it was necessary to take military action.

In contrast, Pineau was blunt to the point of being offensive:

[I do] not agree with the U.S. approach to this whole question.... [Nationalisation] was a direct result of the decision made by the U.S. Government not to finance the Aswan Dam.

Only Lloyd's assurance that 'it was not intended to make any military ultimatum to Nasser at the present stage' saved the talks. Murphy held out against Lloyd's pressure for immediate financial measures against Egypt, and it was agreed that, for the moment, the SCC should not order its pilots to quit.²³

The next day, 30 July, Eden invited Murphy to lunch. The Prime Minister accepted the American desire to avoid force but requested, in the event of Anglo-French action, that the U.S. 'keep a watchful eye on the Soviet Union and...restrain Israel.'²⁴

Eden had not retreated from military action but intended to use the Conference for diplomatic cover. He told Lloyd and Pineau:

Action against Egypt if it were necessary would...in any case, take time to prepare. If the Conference could achieve this end without prejudicing the eventual action that might be necessary, it might be admirable.

The Prime Minister's policy was accepted by the Egypt Committee later in the day.²⁵

Eden thought he had accommodated the Americans. In

²³ PRO, FO371/119081/JE14211/124G, Lloyd-Pineau meeting, 29 July 1956, and JE14211/121G-122G, 1st-2nd Lloyd-Pineau-Murphy meetings, 29 July 1956.

²⁴ Rhodes James, p. 470; PRO, PREM11/1098, Lloyd minute, 31 July 1956.

²⁵ PRO, FO371/119081/JE14211/125G, Eden-Lloyd-Pineau meeting, 31 July 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)4th meeting, 30 July 1956.

fact, hard-line British Ministers horrified Murphy. At dinner, Macmillan emphasized:

[The] British Government has decided to drive Nasser out of Egypt. The decision...is firm....Military action is necessary and inevitable.

Three British divisions could defeat Egypt within the next six weeks at a cost of £400-500 million 'which [Britain] couldn't afford but would pay.' He concluded, 'If [Britain] had to go down now, the Government and...British people would rather do so on this issue than become perhaps another Netherlands.'²⁶

Lloyd later argued that Macmillan's comments to Murphy 'led to a misunderstanding of [the British] position, particularly by Eisenhower,' since 'up to then, Murphy had no reason to think that we were contemplating hasty action.' Macmillan wrote in his diary:

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.

In fact, Macmillan's comments differed little in essence from those by Lloyd and Eden, who merely added the proviso 'in the last resort' regarding force.²⁷

Foster Dulles, who had returned from Peru, told Eisenhower, after Murphy's lunch with Eden but before his dinner with Macmillan, 'It looks as though the impression we got from Murphy at noontime that they were more moderate has given way to a stronger line they want to take.' Foster Dulles obtained the President's agreement that Murphy insist upon the international conference and

²⁶ Murphy, pp. 462ff.; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 674.84A/7-3156, London to State Department, Cable 550, 31 July 1956.

²⁷ Lloyd, pp. 91ff; Horne, p. 398.

avoidance of force.

The Secretary told Makins, 'The U.S. Government would not be in sympathy with any attempt to make the Egyptian Government rescind their nationalisation decrees, or to regard them as inoperative, under the threat of force.' His only concession was that 'if the Egyptians refused to attend the conference or if, when there, they refused to consider reasonable proposals for the international supervision of the canal and of the provisions of the Suez Canal Convention, then the situation would be created which might call for a different approach.'²⁸

Macmillan's comments merely hastened Foster Dulles' departure for London. In a White House meeting on 31 July, Foster Dulles noted, 'The British had taken a firm, considered decision to "break Nasser" and to initiate hostilities at an early date for this purpose.' The meeting almost unanimously condemned the British. Eisenhower noted, 'The British were out of date in thinking of this as a mode of action in the present circumstances,' and Humphrey added, 'It looked as though [the British] were simply trying to reverse the trend away from colonialism and turn the clock back 50 years.' Only the Chief Naval Officer, Admiral Arleigh Burke, defended the use of force:

Nasser must be broken....This should be accomplished with economic and political means. If, however, these are tried and prove insufficient, the U.K. should then use armed force, and we should declare ourselves in support of their action.

28 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 30 July 1956; PRO, FO371/ 119080/JE14211/87G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1613, 30 July 1956.

The meeting considered financial sanctions against the Egyptians but merely decided to suspend Egypt's transfer of \$10 million from the U.S. to Cairo.²⁹ A letter was drafted from the President to Eden, to be hand-delivered by Foster Dulles:

I received the message, communicated to me through Murphy from you and Harold Macmillan, telling me on a most secret basis of your decision to employ force without delay or attempting any intermediate and less drastic steps....I cannot overemphasize the strength of my conviction that some such method [of negotiation] must be attempted before action such as you contemplate should be undertaken....Public opinion here, and I am convinced, in most of the world, would be outraged should there be a failure to make such efforts. Moreover, initial military successes might be easy, but the eventual price might become far too heavy....

Foster Dulles, in a handwritten note, cautioned Eden that the U.S. was not consenting 'to the going through the motions of having an intermediate conference but to the use of intermediate steps as a generous and sincere effort to settle the problem and avoid the use of force.'³⁰

Tensions increased when the Egypt Committee refused the American request that the new international body controlling the Canal act under U.N. auspices, condemned the three-power communique drafted by the U.S., because it mentioned Soviet participation in the conference, and suggested that Britain and France convene a conference on

29 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 16, July 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 31 July 1956.

30 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 19, Eden, Eisenhower to Eden, 31 July 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 15, July 1956 Miscellaneous (1), Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 31 July 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 11, Miscellaneous Papers - U.K. (4), Foster Dulles to Eden, 1 August 1956.

their own. Lloyd noted:

There might be advantage in going ahead together and leaving the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. on the sidelines. The Americans often followed where others took action.³¹

When Foster Dulles arrived in London on 1 August, he tried to calm the situation, telling Harold Caccia, Deputy Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, that 'the Americans were entirely at one with [the British] in considering it to be intolerable that the the future management of the Canal should be in the sole hands of Colonel Nasser.' He added, however, 'Steps should be taken which showed a genuine desire to reach an acceptable international solution for the control of the Canal by means other than the use or the threat of the use of force.'³²

In contrast, Lloyd adopted Macmillan's tone when he met Foster Dulles:

If Nasser were to get away with his action, we should lose the pipelines and our oil supplies. Our economy would then be slowly strangled....Nasser was a paranoiac and had the same type of mind as Hitler.

Foster Dulles did not waver, but he tried to present the American rejection of force and preference for OMEGA in terms acceptable to the British:

Egypt was under the dictatorship of a man who had avowed that the use of the Canal was not for the benefit of the nations of the world but for the satisfaction of his own national ambitions. A way had to be found to make Nasser disgorge what he was attempting to swallow.

Foster Dulles then clearly stated:

The U.S. Government did not exclude the use of

31 PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)5th and 6th meetings, 31 July 1956; PRO, FO371/119083/JE14211/212G, Lloyd-Pineau meeting, 31 July 1956.

32 PRO, FO371/119088/JE14211/307G, Caccia minute, 1 August 1956.

force if all other methods failed. However, the use of force, if not backed by world opinion, would have disastrous results. It would involve the loss of Western influence in all the Moslem countries, unless it were intended to take the whole of the Middle East by force. Such action would be highly dangerous, and even if the Soviets did not openly intervene, they would activate resistance, send 'volunteers,' and supply weapons....He doubted if the U.S. Government would be able to associate themselves with an operation involving force, which had not been preceded by genuine efforts to reach a satisfactory solution by negotiation. In such a case it would not be possible to get the necessary legislation through Congress.³³

Lloyd understood, but Foster Dulles made the mistake of using the same approach with Eden. When Foster Dulles spoke of making Nasser 'disgorge the Canal,' Eden, ignoring the rest of Foster Dulles' statement, assumed that the Secretary had been won over by British firmness. Foster Dulles' proviso of 'force if all other methods failed' was interpreted by Eden as a request to go through the ritual of an international conference before invading Egypt.

Foster Dulles and Eden met twice: at lunch on 1 August, with Lloyd, Salisbury, Murphy, Aldrich, and advisers, and on the morning of 2 August on their own. American observers at the first meeting were struck by uneasiness between Foster Dulles and Eden and critical of British intransigence.³⁴ Foster Dulles clearly stated that 'the question was how [Nasser's] course should be reversed and he could be brought to "disgorge",' but he again objected to military action. U.S. public opinion would not support a venture 'which, at this stage, could be

33 PRO, PREM11/1098, Lloyd-Foster Dulles meeting, 1 August 1956; Lloyd, p. 99.

34 See Murphy, p. 467; Mosley, p. 410.

plausibly portrayed as motivated by imperialist and colonialist ambitions in the general area.' Not only would Britain and France face sturdy Egyptian opposition, assisted by the Soviet Union, but 'all the Arab and part of the Moslem world would be arrayed against the U.K. and France' and Britain 'would be in trouble in the United Nations.' Eden conceded that he would 'give a try to the conference method, if it could be pushed ahead quickly.'³⁵

The meeting on 2 August later aroused controversy. In his memoirs, Eden faithfully recorded Foster Dulles' opinion that 'a way had to be found to make Nasser disgorge what he was attempting to swallow.' Eden also noted that Foster Dulles believed:

It should be possible to create a world opinion so adverse to Nasser that he would be isolated. Then if a military operation had to be undertaken, it would be more apt to succeed and have less grave repercussions than if it had been taken precipitately.

These comments did not differ from those made to Lloyd, but Eden also claimed that Foster Dulles assured him that, 'in the event of an Anglo-French military operation against Egypt,' Britain 'could always count on the moral support and sympathy of the United States.' This claim is unsupported by any account, even Lloyd's. Moreover, the next day, Eden told Iverach Macdonald of the Times that, while Foster Dulles had 'freely committed himself to an international authority,' he had not promised American support for force if the conference failed: 'Nothing had been decided [except] that each of the three powers would then have full liberty of action to do whatever seemed

³⁵ Eden, p. 437; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-156, Foster Dulles memorandum, 1 August 1956.

necessary.³⁶

Foster Dulles had not given Eden a blank cheque for military action. He merely restated the American position but, using OMEGA to satisfy Eden's determination to topple Nasser, he fostered the illusion that the U.S. would not oppose unilateral British measures. Robert Bowie, the head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, summarised:

It was a sort of cat and mouse game, in which Dulles was constantly trying to manoeuvre the situation so that force wouldn't have to be used and that still a satisfactory solution could have been gotten. Eden was trying to maneuver the situation in such a way that the use of force would be legitimately justified.³⁷

In contrast, Lloyd reached agreement with Foster Dulles over the international conference. Foster Dulles accepted that the tripartite communique 'should contain a strong condemnation of Egypt's action and an affirmation of the need to place the Canal under international control' and that the U.N. should not supervise that international control. In return, Lloyd agreed to a conference attended by the eight signatories of the 1888 Constantinople Convention, including the Soviet Union, five leading users of the Canal, and six powers with a 'vital interest' in the Canal. Eden was dissatisfied but the Cabinet agreed that, 'if this was the price of U.S. cooperation, it must reluctantly be accepted.'³⁸

However, the agreement over conference arrangements

³⁶ Eden, p. 437; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-156, Foster Dulles memorandum, 1 August 1956; Lloyd, pp. 99ff.; Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 414. See also Maurice Vaisse, 'France and the Suez Crisis,' in Louis and Owen, p. 140.

³⁷ Carlton, pp. 410 and 413.

³⁸ PRO, FO371/119092/JE14211/422G, Lloyd-Pineau-Foster Dulles meeting, 1 August 1956.

did not mitigate the fundamental division over force.

Inviting Foster Dulles to dinner, Macmillan emphasized:

If we should be destroyed by Russian bombs now that would be better than to be reduced to impotence by the disintegration of its entire position abroad. No one wanted to see another Munich.

Foster Dulles told Eisenhower on 1 August that he believed he had persuaded London and Paris to refrain from force 'unless and until they have made a genuine effort to mobilize world opinion in favour of an international solution of the Canal problem.'³⁹

The bargaining continued the following day. Finally, after two long meetings with Lloyd and Pineau, Foster Dulles agreed to the conference starting on 16 August and accepted that the three powers 'would not consider ourselves bound by an adverse majority [at the conference]' and 'it should not last more than one week.' He cabled Eisenhower, 'I think we have introduced a valuable stopgap into a dangerous situation and, while the danger is still there, we have perhaps made it more remote and more manageable.'⁴⁰

If conflict with Egypt was 'manageable,' the Egypt Committee did not consider it 'remote.' The Cabinet had approved the callup of 20,000 reservists, with the Queen signing the order on the rear end of a racehorse at Goodwood racecourse, and the Committee accepted joint planning with the French in principle. Admiral Nomy,

³⁹ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 2, 2 August 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-156, Murphy and Aldrich memoranda, 1 August 1956.

⁴⁰ PRO, FO371/119092/JE14211/423G and 424G, Lloyd-Pineau-Foster Dulles meetings, 2 August 1956.

accompanied by high-ranking officers from the French Army and Air Force, returned to London on 2 August for discussions.⁴¹

Other opinion offset American opposition to a firm British line. The British Embassy in Paris reported 'the remarkable unanimity of French parliamentary and public opinion' for a showdown with Nasser. While the Indians sought a negotiated settlement and the Canadians were concerned about the use of force, New Zealand's Prime Minister Stuart Holland supported Eden and Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who initially advised that the use of force 'would split the Western world,' soon endorsed 'the prompt and firm reaction of the U.K. Government.' In Iraq, Nuri suggested that Western ships not pay dues to Egypt, since Nasser would halt traffic, giving 'the maritime powers a good case for military action.' The British Ambassador to Moscow, William Hayter, and his French and American colleagues believed Soviet intervention against Britain was unlikely.⁴² The British press, with the exception of the Manchester Guardian, urged an immediate show of British strength.⁴³

Most importantly, the Government received all-party

41 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.57(56), 2 August 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)9th, 2 August 1956; William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 2 August 1956.

42 PRO, FO371/119083/JE14211/209, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 196, 2 August 1956; PRO, FO371/119085/JE14211/249, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 303 Saving, 3 August 1956; PRO, FO371/119080/JE14211/69, San Francisco to Foreign Office, Cable 2, 28 July 1956; PRO, FO371/119081/JE14211/132G, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1624, 31 July 1956, and Cable 1633, 2 August 1956; PRO, FO371/121662/VQ1051/43G, Wright minute, 30 July 1956, and VQ1051/45G, Lloyd-Nuri-Abdul Illah meeting, 3 August 1956; PRO, FO371/119083/JE14211/193, Moscow to Foreign Office, Cable 1054, 2 August 1956.

43 See, for example, The Times, 2 August 1956.

support in the House of Commons debate on 2 August, the last day before the summer recess. Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of the Labour Party, was present at Eden's dinner for King Feisal II of Iraq on 26 July. He wrote in his diary:

I said that I thought they [the Government] ought to act quickly, whatever they did, and that as far as Great Britain was concerned, public opinion would almost certainly be behind them, but I also added that they must get America into line.

The next day, Gaitskell told the Commons, 'We deeply deplore this high-handed and totally unjustifiable step by the Egyptian Government.' After a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet on 30 July, Gaitskell told Eden that 'force would be appropriate in self-defence or, at any rate, in circumstances which could be properly justified before the United Nations.' He also suggested that Britain and the West increase arms shipments to Israel.⁴⁴

In the debate of 2 August, Gaitskell vehemently denounced Nasser, asserting:

This episode must be recognised as part of the struggle for the mastery of the Middle East....It is all very familiar. It is exactly the same that we encountered from Mussolini and Hitler in those years before the war.⁴⁵

Yet Gaitskell did not offer unconditional support for the Government, as Eden later claimed. Labour MPs Douglas Jay, who had learned from W.N. Ewer of the Daily Herald of the Government's military preparations, and John Hynd persuaded Gaitskell to mention Britain's obligations to the U.N.: 'We must not...allow ourselves to get into a position where we might be denounced in the Security

⁴⁴ Williams, p. 552 and pp. 561ff.; Hansard, 27 July 1956.

⁴⁵ Hansard, 2 August 1956.

Council as aggressors or where the majority of the Assembly were against us.' Any dispute over the legality of Nasser's action should be taken to the International Court of Justice.⁴⁶

Gaitskell's position was similar to the American policy, but his bellicose comments about Nasser were seized upon by the press, the Commons, and the Government. If Britain resorted to force without U.N. support in the immediate future, Gaitskell could either accept the invasion or support the hated Nasser against Britain.

Following the debate, Jay told Gaitskell of Ewer's information that the Foreign Office was 'contemplating war.' After reading the press of 3 August, Gaitskell tried to protect his position, writing Eden:

While one or two members of our Party indicated in the debate that they would support force now, this is, I am pretty sure, not the general view....If Nasser were to do something which led to his condemnation by the United Nations as an aggressor, then there is no doubt, I am sure, that we would be entirely in favour of forceful resistance, but I must repeat, [as] I said in my speech yesterday, that, up to the present, I cannot see that [Nasser] has done anything which would justify this.

Eden gave no specific assurances about the use of force, and the Egypt Committee proceeded with military planning.⁴⁷

British Ministers even considered MI6's idea of collaboration with Israel. In December 1955, Lloyd asked Ambassador Elath if Israeli forces could invade Egypt and reach the Suez Canal within five days. When Elath replied

⁴⁶ Douglas Jay, Change of Fortune (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 254.

⁴⁷ Jay, p. 254; PRO, PREM11/1159, Gaitskell to Eden, 3 August 1956.

that this was possible, Lloyd asked if '[Israel] would return to [its] borders' after the invasion.⁴⁸ At the Egypt Committee on 2 August, Macmillan commented, 'It would be helpful if Egypt were faced with the possibility of a war on two fronts.' The following day, the Chancellor chaired a special meeting with Salisbury, Leslie Rowan of the Treasury, the British Ambassador to France, Gladwyn Jebb, and Foreign Office officials. After the meeting agreed that Britain's 'primary object should be the early establishment of an acquiescent Government in Cairo,' the idea of Israeli cooperation was accepted:

The disadvantages of Israeli participation did not outweigh the disadvantages of failing in the military enterprise, but the meeting was of the opinion that Israeli assistance should, if possible, stop short of active intervention. Israel's presence alone should tie down considerable Egyptian forces. The meeting recognised that it would probably be difficult, perhaps impossible to restrain the Israelis, who could in any case be expected to try to extract a price for meeting our wishes.⁴⁹

Macmillan then presented his proposal to the Egypt Committee. Lloyd, fearing association with the Israelis would ruin Britain's position in the Arab world, opposed the Chancellor. Eden was furious with Macmillan for intervening, commenting, 'None of his business anyway,' and the Committee agreed that the Israelis should not act before the maritime conference. Lloyd subsequently told Elath 'in no uncertain terms how important it was to Israel's interests, not only to keep right out of the Suez

⁴⁸ Israeli State Archives, 193/1, Eytan to Eban, 2 February 1956. I am grateful to Orna Almog for this information from her forthcoming doctoral thesis.

⁴⁹ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)9th meeting, 2 August 1956; PRO, CAB134/1217, EC(56)9, 'France and the Middle East,' 7 August 1956.

Canal question, for the time being, but to exercise the greatest possible restraint during this time to keep the situation on the frontiers with her Arab neighbours quiet.⁵⁰

The French were not as hesitant. In June, Ben-Gurion removed the greatest obstacle to collaboration with France against Egypt when he forced the resignation of Foreign Minister Sharett, who favoured Israeli cooperation with Washington rather than Paris, and replaced him with Golda Meir. Within days, the Director-General of the Ministry of Defence, Shimon Peres, travelled to France and agreed with French Minister of Defence Maurice Bourges-Maunoury upon a Franco-Israeli 'preventive' attack against Egypt. Bourges-Maunoury authorised the delivery of 72 Mystere IV fighters to Israel, including the 24 already cleared with Britain and the U.S. and 48 to be supplied without their knowledge. On 22 June, Peres, General Dayan, and the Chief of Army Intelligence, General Yehoshafat Harkavi, met representatives from the French Ministry of Defence and intelligence services to confirm the arrangements.⁵¹

The day after Nasser's nationalisation, the French Chief of the General Staff, General Paul Ely, the Chief of the Air Staff, General Maurice Challe, and Colonel Louis Mangin, an 'aide' to Bourges-Maunoury who also worked for the French foreign intelligence service, SDECE, asked

50 PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)10th meeting, 3 August 1956; PRO, FO371/119090/JE14211/368G, Lloyd-Elath meeting, 3 August 1956.

51 Brecher, pp. 264ff.; Moshe Dayan, The Story of My Life (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 149; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 228ff; Matti Golan, Shimon Peres: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp. 45ff.

Peres for information on the strength and location of Egyptian troops. Ben-Gurion agreed, and Dayan proposed three alternative plans: seizure of the Sinai Peninsula, the capture of Sharm el-Sheikh at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, closed by Egypt to Israeli shipping, or annexation of the Gaza Strip. Ben-Gurion, fearing Egypt's Soviet-made bombers and fighters, said Israel was not equipped for war and should await its opportunity to take advantage of the Suez Crisis.⁵²

The Israeli military swiftly acted to correct its deficiencies. On 7 August, Peres met Bourges-Maunoury, Ely, Bourges-Maunoury's chief aide, Abel Thomas, and Admiral Pierre Barjot, later the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Anglo-French military operation against Egypt. Bourges-Maunoury asked Peres how long Israeli forces needed to reach the Suez Canal. Peres replied, 'Five to seven days.' Asked if Israel would work with France, Peres immediately assented.⁵³

Eden maintained British pressure on the Americans with a letter to Eisenhower on 5 August. He combined acceptance of diplomatic steps with a resolution to stand firm:

We have...gone to the very limits of the concessions which we can make....I have never thought Nasser a Hitler, he has no warlike people behind him, but the parallel with Mussolini is close....The removal of Nasser and

⁵² Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 149ff; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 3 August 1956, in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh (eds.), The Suez-Sinai Crisis of 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal (London: Frank Cass, 1990), p.292.

⁵³ Brecher, p. 264; Golan, p. 48; Abel Thomas, p. 94. See also PRO, FO371/118871/JE1073/6G, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 227, 11 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1100, Lloyd-Pineau meeting, 24 August 1956.

installation in Egypt of a regime less hostile to the West must therefore also rank high among our objectives.⁵⁴

The Chiefs of Staff, assuming that they were to achieve Britain's public objective, the seizure of the Suez Canal Zone, recommended an assault upon Port Said at the northern end of the Canal, but Macmillan was committed to the unstated goal of overthrowing Nasser. Conferring with Churchill on 5 August, he asserted, 'Surely if we landed, we must seek out the Egyptian force, destroy them, and bring down Nasser's government.' The next day, Churchill wrote to Eden:

I was very glad to hear that there would be no weakening about [the invasion of Egypt from] Libya....On the other side a volte face should certainly free our hands about Israel. We should want them to menace and hold the Egyptians and not be drawn off against Jordan.⁵⁵

On 7 August, the Egypt Committee debated Macmillan's proposal for an attack upon Alexandria, Egypt's second-largest city, from Libya. Supporters noted that British commanders had doubts about a landing in the Canal Zone and preferred striking Alexandria if French troops were available. Critics pointed to the difficulties of eventual operations against Cairo and asserted that an attack on Port Said was needed to sustain Britain's public claim that her only goal was international control of the Canal. Lloyd again tipped the balance, noting that an attack from the west upon Alexandria 'would precipitate serious political trouble in Libya' and might lead to abrogation

54 PRO, PREM11/1098, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 3568, 5 August 1956.

55 Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, Volume VIII: Never Despair, 1945-1965 (London: Heinemann, 1988), pp. 1203ff.; Horne, p. 403.

of the Anglo-Libyan Treaty.⁵⁶

On 9 August, the Committee formally linked diplomatic and military processes:

Some diplomatic exchanges with the Egyptian Government would have to be carried through after the end of the Conference....On the other hand, a military operation, once it was mounted, could not easily be delayed for more than a few days, and, if force was to be applied with sufficient speed after a final Egyptian rejection of our reasonable demands, the preparatory movements must begin at a relatively early stage --- some of them, indeed, before the end of the international conference.

The dilemma for Britain was how to force Nasser's downfall while retaining the favour of world opinion. The solution became the cornerstone of British policy:

Any military action against Egypt should be launched in retaliation against some aggressive or provocative act by the Egyptians....The Government might be compelled to take advantage of any provocative act by Egypt, even though it came at a time when the proportions for military operations were less well-advanced than might have been desired.⁵⁷

The Chiefs of Staff, accepting the Egypt Committee's private goal of overthrowing Nasser, now endorsed Macmillan's concept of an assault against Alexandria, albeit from sea rather than from Libya. An attack on Port Said would overcome light Egyptian defences to take immediate control of the Canal, but it was a poor starting point for an advance into Egypt. Beaches were shallow and muddy, and the port facilities were close to the town and limited in their capacity for the unloading of troops. The march along the Canal on a narrow causeway was hazardous and would delay an assault on Cairo.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)11th meeting, 7 August 1956.

⁵⁷ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)13th meeting, 9 August 1956.

⁵⁸ PRO, DEFE32/5, COS(56)78 C.A., 'Operation MUSKETEE - Force Commanders' Outline Plan,' 9 August 1956.

Alexandria had excellent harbours and good beaches. Although Egyptian defences were heavier there than at Port Said, they could be 'taken out without difficulty,' and the airfield could be quickly occupied. Alexandria was also 200 miles closer than Port Said to Malta, the main launching point for operations. On 10 August, the Egypt Committee approved the plan, and General Sir Charles Keightley, the British Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, was appointed supreme commander of the operation, codenamed MUSKETEEER.

In Committee discussion, 'serious misgivings were expressed about...discussing these details with the French military authorities' because 'French security was notoriously bad.' Plans for the use of French troops could be discussed, provided their destination was not revealed. It is not recorded whether the Chiefs of Staff thought this policy was realistic.⁵⁹

As the Committee established its policy of military plans supported by a diplomatic pretext for action, the Americans tried to convert that pretext into genuine negotiations between Britain and Egypt. On 30 July, Nasser told U.S. Ambassador Byroade that, while he 'knew he was fighting with his back to the wall,' he was anxious not to provide a pretext for military action. Egypt would compensate the SCC's shareholders and maintain efficient operation of the Canal.⁶⁰ Four days later, Nasser bluntly informed Byroade that acceptance of international control for the Canal 'would mean a return of colonialism.' He

⁵⁹ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)14th meeting, 10 August 1956.

⁶⁰ PRO, FO371/119080/JE14211/89, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1330, 30 July 1956.

could not attend the maritime conference, as 'it was clear that not only was the agenda fixed but the decisions were already made.' Instead, he would sign a new agreement guaranteeing international use of the Canal.⁶¹

Establishing the link with Byroade, Nasser made his views known in Washington and possibly checked American support of military action. Nasser also hoped that he would receive information of Anglo-French plans from the State Department, the U.S. Embassy, and the CIA station. Foster Dulles allegedly passed a message to Cairo through the Ambassadors of Baghdad Pact countries that 'Eden would stop at nothing in order to harm Nasser' and that Egypt would be wise to compromise over the Canal.⁶²

Only the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to argue for support of Anglo-French military action, but on 8 August, Eisenhower blocked initiatives by the U.S. military, informing Foster Dulles, 'In the [National Security] Council, he welcomes anybody, but in the main he looks to [Foster Dulles] for judgement in political matters and to the military for various consequences.' Eisenhower wrote in his diary that force under extreme circumstances might be necessary, but 'if Nasser were to prove (1) that Egypt could operate the Canal and (2) would indicate an intention to abide by the Treaty of 1888, then it would be nearly impossible for the U.S. ever to find real justification, legally or morally, for use of force.' The

61 PRO, FO371/119086/JE14211/281, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1414, 4 August 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-656, Cairo to State Department, Cable 272, 6 August 1956.

62 Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 100.

NSC meeting endorsed this position on 9 August.⁶³

Makins believed that if Britain and the U.S. cooperated on non-military measures, Nasser's control of the Canal could be blocked. On 10 August, the Ambassador met Arthur Flemming, the Director of the Office of Defence Mobilisation, about the supply of American oil to Britain in an emergency. Letters were despatched to U.S. oil companies enlisting their cooperation, and a meeting was set for 15 August.⁶⁴

Makins optimistically reported that Eisenhower's decision to summon Congressional leaders to Washington, possibly to consider a special Congressional session, was 'a convincing demonstration of the gravity with which the Administration view the situation.' Foster Dulles confirmed to certain journalists, off-the-record, that the U.S. was prepared to provide oil to Europe and might finance part of the cost. At a press conference on 8 August, the President fulfilled Makins' request to emphasize the seriousness of the situation, although he then stressed:

I can't conceive of military force being a good solution, certainly under considerations as we know them now, and in view of our hopes that things are going to be settled peacefully....Here is something that is so important to the whole world that I think a little sober second thinking is going to prevail in a good many quarters.⁶⁵

63 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Anderson to Foster Dulles, 8 August 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 17, August 1956 Diary, Eisenhower diary entry, 8 August 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, ?, ?th NSC meeting, 9 August 1956

64 PRO, PREM11/1099, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1691, 10 August 1956.

65 PRO, FO371/119260/JE15310/3, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1693, 10 August 1956.

Makins' assessment was astute. Eisenhower, in an election year, and Foster Dulles, fearing renewed attempts to curb executive control of foreign policy, were unable and unwilling to act without Congressional authority.⁶⁶ The Administration was also concerned that the status of the Panama Canal, controlled by the U.S. under a treaty with the Panamanian Government, might be questioned if international control was sought for the Suez Canal. Using the 1888 Constantinople Convention as the basis for an international conference, Foster Dulles hoped to distinguish Suez from Panama, since the latter had never been regulated by international agreement.⁶⁷

Eden was in no mood to be patient. On 8 August, broadcasting on television and radio, he directly challenged Nasser:

We cannot agree that an act of plunder which threatens the livelihood of many nations shall be allowed to succeed, and we must make sure that the life of the great trading nations of the world cannot, in the future, be strangled at any moment by some interruption to the free passage of the Canal....Our quarrel is not with Egypt, still less with the Arab world; it is with Colonel Nasser.⁶⁸

Makins reported that the speech was 'thought to have clarified the issues very well and to have hit just about the right note.' Ambassador Jebb wrote from Paris, 'Everybody thought it first-class.' In a British Gallup poll of 10 August, 74 percent of respondents favoured the

⁶⁶ See DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 8, August 1956 Diary, Ann Whitman diary entry, 12 August 1956; Neff, p. 292.

⁶⁷ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 16, August 1956 Press Conferences, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 8 August 1956. See also DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 5, Foster Dulles memorandum, 14 August 1956.

⁶⁸ Rhodes James, p. 492; Love, p. 395; Eden, p. 444.

freezing of Egyptian assets in Britain, and 65 percent approved of the military preparations.⁶⁹

Any British optimism was misguided. Makins overlooked the American press, which highlighted the Eisenhower Administration's role as peacemaker. In a veiled attack on Eden, the Washington Post praised Eisenhower's press conference of 8 August as a 'calm expression of hope...in marked contrast to some of the exhibitions of muscle-flexing abroad.' At home, Gaitskell wrote Eden that nationalisation was 'only a threat not, in my opinion, justifying retaliation by war.' While most British people polled by Gallup favoured steps short of force, only 33 percent endorsed military action.⁷⁰

Most importantly, Eden's challenge to Nasser exposed the charade of British efforts at a diplomatic settlement. Nasser had informed Byroade and the Indian Ambassador that Egypt would call its own international meeting. After Eden's speech, Nasser could publicly claim that he 'had been inclined to accept the invitation to the London Conference because he was sure of Egypt's rights but to accept the invitation would now be against Egypt's dignity owing to the military threats and the Prime Minister's announcement that he did not trust Nasser.'⁷¹

69 PRO, PREM11/1099, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1691, 10 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1126, Jebb to Eden, 10 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1123, News-Chronicle Gallup Poll, 10 August 1956.

70 PRO, FO371/119094/JE14211/613, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 569 Saving, 9 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1159, Gaitskell to Eden, 10 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1123, News-Chronicle Gallup Poll, 10 August 1956. See also Jay, pp. 254ff.; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-1456, London to State Department, Cable 870, 14 August 1956.

71 PRO, FO371/119100/JE14211/667, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1536, 12 August 1956; PRO, FO371/119093/JE14211/450, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1478, 8 August 1956.

The Eden speech did strengthen Anglo-French ties. The British finally agreed that French commanders could be given full details of military plans, provided Mollet and Bourges-Maunoury were the only French politicians to receive the information.⁷²

After three days of talks between Ambassador Jebb and French officials, it was agreed that military operations would seek free passage through the Canal and a 'democratic, non-militarist Government' in Egypt. France agreed to discourage Israel 'by all possible means' from attacking its neighbours and to accept the Baghdad Pact, although 'very great prudence should be exercised in seeking to extend its membership,' a reference to Syria and the Lebanon.⁷³

All that remained was confirmation of the military arrangements. Eden did not raise the issue in Cabinet on 14 August. Some Ministers, searching for alternatives, introduced OMEGA and Makins' idea of non-military measures:

The effect of any economic sanctions would...be greatly increased if the United States were prepared to cooperate. The main objective should be to ensure that it was made apparent to the Egyptian people that Colonel Nasser's action had failed to fulfill his promises of improving their standard of living. If Colonel Nasser could be discredited in this way in the eyes of his own and other Arab peoples, a reaction might quickly set in.

Eden, without going into details, continued to emphasize the military option:

⁷² PRO, FO371/118871/JE1073/File.

⁷³ PRO, PREM11/1099, E.C.(56)18, Staff Conference of 11 August, 13 August 1956, and Record of Anglo-French discussions, undated. See also PRO, PREM11/1126, Jebb to Eden, 14 August 1956.

Agreement to pay all [Canal] dues to a blocked account... should quickly cause Colonel Nasser to lose prestige. If he were to retaliate by stopping shipping from using the Canal or by taking action against the employees of the Suez Canal Company, a new situation would have arisen which would warrant use of force against Egypt.⁷⁴

The Prime Minister waited until the Egypt Committee in the afternoon to present a timetable for military action, drafted by Cabinet Secretary Brook. Brook assumed the completion of the London Conference by 23 August, rejection of the Conference proposals by Egypt on 5 September, sailing of the assault force from the United Kingdom on 7 September, and the landing in Egypt on 20 September. Acutely aware of the need for a pretext, Eden suggested postponing the military timetable five to six days to ensure all necessary diplomatic steps had been taken.⁷⁵

The strain was beginning to affect Eden, who exploded at headlines in the tabloids and berated Foreign Office officials for statements such as 'we believe in peace.' Suffering recurrent pain from his bungled gall bladder operation of 1953, Eden took Pethidin, commonly given to women in childbirth, during the worst of the attacks. Clark, noting that Eden's doctor was also giving the Prime Minister various placebos, wrote, 'Certainly [Eden] remains pretty easily triggered and Clarissa does her best to set him off at every turn.'⁷⁶ Frederick Bishop, Eden's Private Secretary, returned from Chequers to tell Clark 'of terrible tantrums over the weekend [of 11 August] with

⁷⁴ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.59(56), 14 August 1956.

⁷⁵ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)15th meeting, 14 August 1956.

⁷⁶ AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, August 1956; William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 22/8/56.

him slamming the door and PM bouncing out of bed to shout at him.' Richard Powell, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Ministry of Defence, later recalled:

[Eden] was very jumpy, very nervous, very wrought up....He regarded almost the destiny of the world as resting on his shoulders....I had to have a scrambler telephone installed in my flat so that he could ring me up and talk about these things.

William Dickson, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, said that he 'had never been spoken to in his life in the way the PM several times spoke to him.' Commonwealth Secretary Home later admitted:

We were under extreme pressure, and the pressure wasn't of course lessened because the Prime Minister was not undoubtedly well. The meetings were probably not methodically conducted as they would have been in times of lesser stress.⁷⁷

The tension spilled over into conflict with the British Broadcasting Corporation. Even before the Suez Crisis, the Eden Government was considering measures to exercise control over the BBC.⁷⁸ The Prime Minister was extremely angry when the BBC refused a broadcast by Australian Prime Minister Menzies, as this would mean three pro-Government broadcasts without Opposition reply. The Corporation relented after a call from Clark warning that Eden might 'take some drastic action which would be permanently harmful to the BBC.' Eden asked Clark to stop transmission of a program on 15 August featuring Salah Salem, the Egyptian Minister of National Guidance, but the Press Secretary replied this was impossible. The next day, Eden wrote Sir Alexander Cadogan, chairman of the BBC

⁷⁷ William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 8 August 1956; British Broadcasting Corporation Radio Four, A Canal Too Far (1987), interview with Lord Home.

⁷⁸ See PRO, CAB134/1215, PR(56)9th meeting, 25 July 1956.

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⁷⁸ See PRO, CAB134/1215, PR(56)9th meeting, 25 July 1956.

Board of Governors and former Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office:

Of course, the Government have no intention of interfering with the freedom of the BBC to try and reflect, as well as educate, public opinion in this country, but I hope that the Governors will bear in mind the very heavy responsibility which rests on the BBC at this crucial time.

Clark recorded, 'Other ministers, including the Chancellor and the Colonial Secretary [Alan Lennox-Boyd], are even fiercer [than Eden] and are looking up the rules to see how they could control broadcasting.' The immediate crisis passed with a meeting between Eden and Ian Jacob, the Director-General of the BBC, on 17 August, but Kirkpatrick warned Jacob that Ministers were considering 'governmental control in the Overseas Services and...the curtailment of the £5 million grant in aid of the BBC and its expenditure in other propaganda enterprises.'⁷⁹

Three weeks after Nasser's nationalisation, Britain was no closer to an effective riposte. Immediate military action could not be carried out, and effective punishment of Egypt required American support. Ministers recognised that Foster Dulles' vision of Egypt 'disgorging' the Canal relied upon diplomatic procedures and the formation of an international coalition, but 'hawks' like Eden and Macmillan were unwilling to set aside the military option. The more Eden insisted to Eisenhower that military measures were necessary, the more the President sought a compromise to prevent bloodshed. by 14 August, the

⁷⁹ Grace Wyndham-Goldie, Facing the Nation: Television and Politics, 1936-1976 (London: The Bodley Head, 1977), p. 178; Clark, pp. 174ff.; PRO, PREM11/1089A/ File; Peter Partner, Arab Voices: The BBC Arabic Service, 1938-1988 (London: BBC, 1988), p. 101. See also Gilbert, p. 1208.

President was suggesting a 'supervisory board of five persons designated by such countries as Egypt, France, India, and Sweden, who would have a voice in the selection of a general manager who would be in charge of Canal operations.' Foster Dulles replied that the idea was 'in line with my thinking....It might even be necessary to minimise the role of Britain and France, assuming dependable alternatives could be found.'⁸⁰

⁸⁰ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 5, Foster Dulles memorandum, 14 August 1956.

CHAPTER 10

15 AUGUST-3 SEPTEMBER 1956: WASHINGTON'S LEASH UPON LONDON

At the London Conference, Foster Dulles again assuaged British sensibilities without deferring to British policy. He dismissed press reports that he and Eisenhower told Congressional leaders that the U.S. would accept an international body with 'advisory,' not controlling, powers and expressed concern 'at the suggestions in some U.S. papers that there was a difference between the U.K. and U.S. positions.' After lunch with Foster Dulles, Eden wrote in his diary:

Foster seemed quite as firm as before and ready to table the [tripartite] resolution himself. He also seemed not to exclude possibility of joint use of force.¹

Foster Dulles' sympathy allowed Eden to cling to the hope that the U.S. would accept London's plans. He reported to the Egypt Committee on 16 August that Foster Dulles 'had implied that [the U.S.] recognised the possibility that force might be used in the last resort, since he had asked whether we will be ready to justify such action before the United Nations.' Military preparations would not be postponed, despite indications that Nasser would not give the necessary pretext for the use of force.²

Lloyd's cooperation and Eden's complacency led Foster Dulles to conclude that the American view was prevailing with Britain. He cabled Eisenhower:

¹ Rhodes James, p. 501; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-1656, London to State Department, Cable SECTO 5, 16 August 1956.

² PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)16th meeting, 16 August 1956.

There is, I think, a growing realization of magnitude of the task of military intervention and of the inadequacy of their military establishments to take on a real fighting job of this size....I do not mean to imply that they may not take the plunge if things go badly here, but they are much less apt to do so than two weeks ago.³

The atmosphere of Anglo-American agreement, based upon mutual misunderstanding, continued when the London Conference opened on 16 August. Introducing the resolution, Foster Dulles contended that Egypt's nationalisation violated the 1888 Constantinople Convention because it denied the international character of the waterway. He proposed that a new Convention establish an international body, with Egyptian representation, to control the Canal's operation. Egypt's sovereign rights would be recognised, and it would be guaranteed a fair return in Canal revenues.⁴

The fundamental difference between Britain and the U.S. soon resurfaced. Hosting Foster Dulles at dinner on 18 August, Macmillan stated:

There are only three choices: (1) Nasser voluntarily takes a proposal along lines of U.S. paper or (2) we compel Egypt to take it; (3) we accept Nasser's refusal. In the last event, Britain is finished, and, so far as I am concerned, I will have no part in it and will resign.⁵

Eden warned Foster Dulles the next evening that 'he had suspended military preparations during...the Conference

3 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 1, 16 August 1956.

4 Lloyd, pp. 115ff.; Rhodes James, p. 501; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 107; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 4, 16 August 1956.

5 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 10, 18 August 1956. See also Horne, p. 393.

but further action could not long be delayed.'⁶

Macmillan claimed that Foster Dulles 'really agreed with our position.' In fact, Foster Dulles commented, 'Support [in Britain] for a strong line has dwindled to a point where if Nasser rejects, the Macmillan policy can scarcely be carried through and...some form of a governmental crisis may result.'⁷

Eisenhower worried that insistence upon international control of the Canal might bring a breakdown in negotiations and British use of force. He again proposed a body with supervisory capacity. Nasser could appoint the operations manager of the Canal, who would be approved by an international board of directors. In effect, Eisenhower was supporting a plan presented by the Indian delegation to the Conference on 17 August.⁸ Foster Dulles replied that it would be 'very difficult and perhaps impossible' to get Britain and France to abandon the concept of an 'international operating authority.' Eisenhower finally conceded the argument, writing that he 'merely hoped that negotiations would not collapse over detail of operating arrangements.'⁹

The tripartite proposal for international control of the Canal was accepted by 18 of the 22 delegations on 23 August. India, Ceylon, Indonesia and the Soviet Union

6 USNA, RG 59, Lot 62 D 11, Suez Conference Files, Box 1, Foster Dulles-Eden meeting, 19 August 1956.

7 Horne, p. 408; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 12, 19 August 1956.

8 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 19 August 1956.

9 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 17, 20 August 1956.

opposed the plan, but Foster Dulles thought the support of 18 countries 'a more impressive result than we anticipated.'¹⁰

The British left the conference with mixed feelings. They obtained substantial backing for the principle of international control of the Canal, which would not be sacrificed in negotiations with Egypt. On the other hand, the 18-Power Plan could only serve as a pretext for force if the U.S. endorsed military action when Nasser rejected the proposals. Eden, certain of American support on 16 August, was unsure after dinner with Foster Dulles three days later. He told the Egypt Committee that Foster Dulles 'was not in favour of provoking Colonel Nasser into taking further action which would justify the use of military force' nor would U.S. troops join an operation because 'the U.S. Government could not justify going to war over oil in the Middle East.' Eden insisted on misconstruing Foster Dulles' words to sustain the illusion of American backing for force:

Mr. Dulles had warned the Soviet Foreign Minister that the U.S. Government would not stand by if the U.K. and France were involved in a war, which suggested that, in the event of hostilities, the U.S. would at last materially help.'¹¹

The Egypt Committee, noting the conclusions of a Treasury working party, acknowledged that Britain could not administer unilateral economic sanctions against Egypt, as the Egyptians could retaliate by closing the Suez Canal and Arab countries might interfere with oil

¹⁰ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 22, 22 August 1956.

¹¹ PRO, CAB134/126, E.C.(56)18th, 20 August 1956.

pipelines. However, the U.S. would not join Britain. In a 'very unsatisfactory' talk with Macmillan, Foster Dulles said the U.S. Government would not advise American-owned ships to withhold dues from the Egyptian Canal Authority, and the State Department had no authority over U.S. ships operating under Liberian or Panamanian flags. Foster Dulles told Eden on 19 August, '[There was] little more that the U.S. Government could do in the way of exerting economic pressure.'¹²

Foster Dulles' hesitancy stemmed from division within the Eisenhower Administration. Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey opposed measures which interfered with American markets and only agreed to block Egyptian assets after Foster Dulles argued that the funds were needed to offset the claims of American shipowners forced to pay to Cairo. If Foster Dulles asked for payment of dues into a 'blocked account,' rather than to Cairo, Humphrey would argue that the freezing of Egyptian assets was no longer justified.

Eden presented his dilemma to the Cabinet on 21 August:

Care would have to be taken to avoid giving the impression that the [Menzies] Committee [taking the 18-Power Plan to Cairo] were prepared to negotiate with the Egyptian Government....They would... have the function of bringing pressure to bear on the Egyptians to accept the declaration of principle as a basis for the subsequent negotiation of a treaty.

Pressure depended upon American enforcement of the Plan, however, and Foster Dulles 'seemed at present to be reluctant to contemplate any further financial or economic

¹² PRO, T236/4625, Macmillan memorandum, 17 August 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)18th meeting, 20 August 1956.

pressures on Egypt.' When Lloyd asked that evening what should be done if Nasser rejected the proposals, Foster Dulles requested discussions 'without commitment' because 'the economic problems that would be raised were of a very complicated nature.'¹³

After the Conference, Lloyd tried again, telling Foster Dulles:

Colonel Nasser...would look like a fool if he could not lay his hands on any dues. The result would probably be that he would stop ships going through the Canal.

Foster Dulles objected:

If pressure to bear on Colonel Nasser meant that our ships would have to go around the Cape, this would result in a serious loss of revenue, Western Europe would be deprived of oil, and the price would go up....[The Administration] were prepared to use their influence with the oil companies to send tankers around the Cape...[but] it would be impossible to take any of these measures without preparing public opinion in the U.S.¹⁴

Some Ministers began to consider the unthinkable: acting without the U.S. A paper by the Egypt (Official) Committee defined the first objective as a new Egyptian Government. While 'some difficulty [might] be experienced in finding competent Ministers,' a large number 'of formerly prominent and able figures, not necessarily of marked party affiliation,' were dissatisfied with Nasser. Press Secretary Clark commented:

[I] read [the paper] with some cold shivers....I still find it quite impossible to believe that we really shall do all this.¹⁵

¹³ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.60(56), 21 August 1956; PRO, PREM11/1099, Lloyd-Foster Dulles meeting, 21 August 1956.

¹⁴ PRO, PREM11/1099, Lloyd-Foster Dulles-Pineau meeting, 23 August 1956.

¹⁵ PRO, PREM11/1100, E.C.(56)28, 'Egypt: Military Planning,' 20 August 1956; Clark, p. 177.

The Information Research Department, technically in the Foreign Office but working closely with the intelligence services, emphasized the use of radio to destabilise Nasser's regime. While Britain's network of Middle Eastern radio stations openly provided 'information' supporting the British case over Suez, British and French 'black' stations began broadcasting 'disinformation' into Egypt on 28 July. A 'Free Egyptian' station, transmitting from France, operated on a frequency close to that of the Voice of the Arabs.¹⁶ Israeli monitors detected covert broadcasts, suspecting they were coming from the British colony of Aden. The Foreign Office's Archibald Ross, overseeing British operations with the Permanent Undersecretary's Department, confirmed that the station was in Aden, although he would not admit the station was British-run.¹⁷ At home, the IRD supplied the BBC with material on Nasser.¹⁸

All that remained was a pretext for military action. The Lord President, Salisbury, told Macmillan, 'It must, I feel, now be for the Foreign Office to produce one [provocation] which is likely to exasperate Nasser to such an extent that he does something to give us an excuse for marching in.' A group of Ministers suggested removing munitions from the Suez Canal Base, which was still overseen by British 'technicians,' but six weeks were

16 Nutting, Nasser, p. 152: PRO, FO953/1659/PB1045/100, Dodds-Parker minute, 3 August 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-2256, State Department to London, Cable TOSEC 45, 22 August 1956.

17 PRO, FO953/1659/PB1045/99, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 343, 3 August 1956, and subsequent minutes. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.00(W)/9-656, SANA to State Department, Despatch 189, 6 September 1956.

18 Author's interview with Norman Reddaway.

needed to move the supplies, since the Egyptians were responsible for the transportation. On 22 August, the Egypt Committee delayed the target date for military action four days to 19 September.¹⁹

The question of proceeding with military action now provoked divisions within the British Cabinet. Macmillan's avid leadership of the 'hawks' was already raising suspicion.²⁰ Clark recorded that Commonwealth Secretary Home was firm about the need for force but...

...regretted (and [I] think [Cabinet Secretary] Brook does too) the hurry with which the PM pushed that vital decision through Cabinet without time for a proper discussion. In fact, I gathered the whole Cabinet is a bit weak and searching almost desperately for a moral basis for action. In particular RAB [Lord Privy Seal R.A. Butler] is discouraged by the whole outlook and has come back from holiday a very damp influence. The worst part is the thought of bombing which may really revolt the conscience of the nation but which is, he [Home] says, necessary to control [Egypt].

Home was also concerned about Commonwealth opinion: Australian Foreign Minister Richard Casey was 'bending over backwards to avoid being taken' for the British, 'Canada was terribly wobbly, and India, including [Prime Minister] Nehru, as bad as could be.'²¹

While Home wrote Eden of Butler's concern 'that we have got ourselves into a position where we should press the button before we have a moral basis for action which will carry conviction in the country, the Free World, and the Conservative Party,' the Prime Minister wrote Minister of Housing Duncan Sandys, who questioned the Cabinet's

¹⁹ Horne, p. 427; PRO, WO32/16709, Key to Head, 21 August 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)19th meeting, 22 August 1956.

²⁰ See Clark, p. 178.

²¹ Clark, p. 179.

exclusion from discussion of military operations:

Knowledge of these details must, for obvious reasons of security, be confined within the narrowest possible circle. Such political guidance as the military authorities may need in the preparation of their plans must continue to be given by me, in consultations with a small number of my most senior Cabinet colleagues and, as necessary, such Departmental Ministers as may be concerned.²²

If doubts were limited to Ministers outside the Egypt Committee, Eden might continued to circumvent the Cabinet. The Prime Minister faced a revolt within the Committee, however, when Minister of Defence Monckton rowed with the 'hawks' on 24 August. Discussing the diplomatic and military timetable, Lloyd noted that U.N. deliberations could only begin about 4-5 September after Nasser rejected the 18-Power Plan. Minister of War Antony Head noted the consequences: since the Security Council's conclusions might not be known until 11 September, the 17-day interval between the decision for military action and the beginning of the attack meant another delay in D-day from 19 September to 28 September.²³

Eden and Macmillan asked for a commitment that Nasser's rejection of the 18-Power Plan and the Security Council's support of international control of the Canal would be sufficient for the use of force. Moreover, the Committee could order military operations before the Council's decision was announced, reducing the gap between U.N. action and D-day.²⁴ Monckton was aghast that the 'PM and Chancellor were trying to rush things through....He

²² PRO, PREM11/1152, Home to Eden and Eden to Sandys, 22 August 1956.

²³ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)21st, 24 August 1956.

²⁴ Ibid.

could not agree to press the button now, which made war inevitable.' Eden, 'strongly supported' by Macmillan, Salisbury, and Home 'took the view that [Britain] had no alternative. We must secure the defeat of Nasser, by one method or another.' The hawks triumphed. Although the Committee did not commit itself to invasion of Egypt after the U.N. discussions, it asked Monckton to work with Head and the Chiefs of Staff to deploy forces in the Mediterranean, decreasing the 17-day interval between political decision and military action.²⁵

Monckton had been isolated in the Committee. Clark concluded that Eden and Macmillan had 'made [Monckton] feel very low, no longer essential, and he will have to go when the crisis is over.' Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd wrote Eden:

I remain firmly convinced that if Nasser wins, or even appears to win, we might as well as a government (and indeed as a Country) go out of business....I was horrified by the doubts expressed by the Minister of Defence.²⁶

However, members of the Committee urged Eden to obtain Cabinet support, since Monckton's alliance with Butler, the senior Minister outside the Committee, and discontented junior ministers could produce a rebellion. Home wrote:

Even before Walter's outburst at our Committee this morning, I had thought that I had better warn you that I see a definite wavering in the attitude of some of our colleagues towards the use of force....[Minister of Agriculture] Derry Amory, for instance, who is one of the most stable of our colleagues, feels the deepest anxieties, but I think would be ready to face up

²⁵ Clark, p. 180; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)21st, 24 August 1956.

²⁶ Clark, p. 180; PRO, PREM11/1152, Lennox-Boyd to Eden, 24 August 1956.

to it if all the processes of UNO had been exhausted....The anxiety of some, Rab for instance, might be removed if we didn't have to go on thinking in terms of button-pushing and dates and had plenty of time for diplomatic manoeuvre.²⁷

Salisbury, who favoured a token appeal to the U.N. followed by military action, advised the Prime Minister:

Both you and I knew that [Monckton] had, for some time, had doubts about a firm policy over Suez, but I suspect that there will be a measure of support for his views when the Cabinet meets on Tuesday [28 August]. Rab is clearly not happy, and I gather...that he has been making enquiries and finds there are quite a number of others, especially among the younger members of the Cabinet, who have not yet made up their minds.²⁸

Brook gave Eden an 'intelligence report':

The Cabinet are...agreed that we must stop [Nasser's] action at all costs and that, in the last resort, if all other methods fail, we must be able to show that we have made an honest effort to reach settlement by peaceful means and have exhausted all the 'other methods.

The division lay between Ministers who favoured postponement of force until genuine negotiations were exhausted and those who wished to use the diplomatic process to establish a pretext for invasion. Among the former were...:

...W.M. [Monckton], RAB, Selkirk, Chief Whip [Edward Heath]...Kilmuir (?), [Minister of Labour Ian] MacLeod, Amory (?). The unknown quantities might be J.S. [James Stuart, Secretary of State for Scotland], B-H [Minister of Works Patrick Buchan-Hepburn], and D.E. [Minister of Education David Eccles]. The rest I would expect to be pretty solid.

While suspect in places --- Kilmuir was actually a firm supporter of force --- the analysis was generally

²⁷ PRO, PREM11/1152, Home to Eden, 24 August 1956.

²⁸ PRO, PREM11/1152, Salisbury to Eden, 24 August 1956.

See also AP, AP20/33, Salisbury to Eden, 24 August 1956.

correct.²⁹

The issue was complicated when a split occurred among Ministers seeking a pretext for military measures. Lloyd, increasingly concerned with the need for American support 'at the highest level,' insisted upon the approach to the U.N. If Britain delayed, the Soviet Union would probably ask the Council to prevent Anglo-French use of force, and moderate opinion at home and abroad required appeasement. Eden was sceptical, fearing that opponents of Anglo-French action would protract the discussions. Instead, he suggested tabling the issue in NATO, a safe audience for Britain. The Egypt Committee finally authorised Lloyd to confer with the U.S. and France about the U.N. approach, as Eden probably accepted Salisbury's suggestion of linking the Council's decision with military action.³⁰

Eden cleverly used the Committee's decision to seize the initiative in the Cabinet on 28 August, obtaining agreement that Britain would approach the Security Council 'if the support of the U.S. and others was assured.' Lloyd then asked that the Government not advise pilots to leave the Egyptian Canal Authority, despite the Suez Canal Company's wishes for a stoppage on 7 September.

With these conciliatory moves, the 'hawks' won one tactical victory. They earned a second by introducing military action as a defensive move against Egypt. Macmillan presented a Treasury paper which concluded that the costs of military preparations (£12 million through

29 PRO, PREM11/1152, Brook to Eden, 25 August 1956.

30 PRO, PREM11/1100, Lloyd minute, 'The U.N. and Suez,' undated, and Eden to Lloyd, 26 August 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)22nd meeting, 27 August 1956.

September 1956 and £25 million each subsequent year) and military action (up to £100 million) were small compared to the cost of a cutoff of British oil through the Suez Canal and Middle Eastern pipelines.

Monckton, using arguments similar to those of the Americans, counterattacked:

If together with the French, we took military measures against Egypt, our action would be condemned by a substantial body of public opinion in countries overseas, including several of the independent countries of the Commonwealth. Within the United Kingdom, opinion would be divided. Our vital interests in other parts of the Middle East would also be affected; we must, in particular, expect sabotage against oil installations in other Arab countries. Moreover, once we had sent military forces into Egypt, it would not be easy to extract them; we might find ourselves saddled with a costly commitment.

Salisbury, however, used the decision to appeal to the U.N. to steer a course between Macmillan and Monckton:

[If] we were satisfied that the success of Colonel Nasser's policy would undermine our national economy and destroy our influence as world Power, we should be resolved to take whatever action was necessary to defeat that policy....Before any military measures were taken, we should have recourse to the procedures of the United Nations, but if the United Nations failed to secure international justice, it would have failed to fulfill its purpose.

Butler, who might have led a movement against force, was cautious, saying only, '[The Egypt Committee] should be able to show that, before resorting to force, they had taken all practicable steps to secure a satisfactory settlement by peaceful means.'

Eden had obtained Cabinet deference to the Egypt Committee. He summarised:

It was evident that the Cabinet was united in the view that the frustration of Colonel Nasser's policy was a vital British interest

which must be secured, in the last resort, by the use of force. He fully recognised that, before recourse was had to force, every practicable attempt should be made to secure a satisfactory settlement by peaceful means, and it must be made clear to the public, both here and overseas, that no effort to this end had been spared. At the same time, we could not afford to allow these efforts to impose an undue delay.³¹

The Egypt Committee later agreed to a new D-day of 26 September.³²

The question remained whether Britain could act without the Americans, who were secretly pursuing a solution through King Saud of Saudi Arabia. On 23 August, Eisenhower's envoy, Robert Anderson, met King Saud and the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Feisal, in Riyadh. Asking the Saudis to urge Nasser's acceptance of international control of the Canal, Anderson threatened that nationalisation of the Canal could render 'Saudi Arabia's petroleum worthless, as the U.S. would help Europe develop nuclear energy as an alternative to oil. Feisal dismissed the idea as impossible and warned that the Saudis would not tolerate Anglo-French action with Israel against Egypt.³³ Despite Anderson's failure, the Americans encouraged Saudi mediation, with Eisenhower and Saud exchanging messages throughout September and October and the King sending his close adviser, Yusuf Yassin, to Cairo to meet Nasser.³⁴

31 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.62(56), 28 August 1956.

32 PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)23rd, 28 August 1956.

33 U.S. DDRS, US87 000570; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 42, Saudi Arabia, King Saud 1952-1956 (3), Eisenhower to Saud, 20 August 1956; Eveland, pp. 209ff.; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, August 1956 (1), Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 31 August 1956.

34 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301 Series, State Department to Jedda, Cable 180, 10 September 1956, and Cable 199, 19

On 27 August, Eden played the Communist card, writing Eisenhower:

I have no doubt that the Bear [the Soviet Union] is using Nasser, with or without his knowledge, to further his immediate aims...first to dislodge the West from the Middle East and second to get a foothold in Africa so as to dominate that Continent in turn....This policy is clearly aimed at Wheelus Field [U.S. air base in Libya] and Habbaniya [Iraqi air base used by Britain] as well as at our oil supplies.

All this makes me more than ever sure that Nasser must not be allowed to get away with it this time.³⁵

Eden's rhetoric no longer affected the Administration. On 30 August, Foster Dulles used the Communist threat to justify American opposition to force:

Regrettable as it might be to see Nasser's prestige enhanced even temporarily, I did not believe the situation was one which should be resolved by force....[Britain and France] would make bitter enemies of the entire population of the Middle East and much of Africa. Everywhere they would be compelled to maintain themselves by force, and in the end their own economy would be weakened virtually beyond repair and the influence of the West in the Middle East and most of Africa lost for a generation, if not a century. The Soviet Union would reap the benefit of a greatly weakened Western Europe and would move into a position of predominant influence in the Middle East and Africa.

The President, Foster Dulles recorded, 'entirely agreed with me in this basic analysis....This was not the issue upon which to try to downgrade Nasser.'³⁶

At the NSC, Admiral Radford made one last attempt at American support for Anglo-French military action, but Eisenhower concluded, 'The limit of what we can consider doing now is to take the necessary steps to prevent the enlargement of the war if it immediately breaks out.'

September 1956.

35 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower, 27 August 1956.

36 U.S. DDS, US85 000276.

Significantly, he decided that the recall of Congress in special session was unnecessary.³⁷

Replying to Eden's letter on 3 September, Eisenhower, using Foster Dulles' draft, agreed 'that the underlying purpose of [Soviet] policy in this problem is to undermine the Western position in the Near East and Africa and to weaken the Western nations at home,' but he added:

I am afraid, Anthony, that from this point onward our views on the situation diverge....Even now military preparations and civilian evacuation exposed to public view seem to be solidifying support for Nasser which had been shaken in many important quarters....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.³⁸

Eden had no reason to misinterpret this unambiguous position, but he continued to delude himself. 'Racing back, almost in despair,' from his vacation home in Broadchalke to London, he insisted, 'U.S. was in favour of our continued moves....Foster advocated going on.' The Prime Minister 'expressed horror' when Loy Henderson, the U.S representative on the Menzies Committee presenting the 18-Power plan to Nasser, said he was leaving for Cairo on 31 August, a 24-hour delay in the British diplomatic and military timetable.³⁹

The Americans were not the only irritant for Eden. Oliver Poole, the Chairman of the Conservative Party,

37 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 7, 295th NSC meeting, 30 August 1956.

38 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eisenhower to Eden, 3 September 1956.

39 Clark, p. 183; PRO, PREM11/1100, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1761, 29 August 1956, and DeZulueta minute, 28 August 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/8-2856, London to State Department, Cable 1131, 28 August 1956.

informed Eden that 'an increasing number of people became less prepared to support armed intervention' as time went on. Poole concluded:

The fact is that the majority of people in this country want the best of both worlds. They want negotiations with Nasser to end in a diplomatic victory for this country with as much loss of face to Nasser as possible and with a solution to the control of the Suez Canal which will be acceptable to Great Britain and France, and at the same time, they are unwilling to take the final step of military intervention, particularly if this is to be done by Great Britain on her own.

Although 59 percent of the respondents in a Gallup poll of 31 August approved of the Government's handling of the situation, the poll did not determine if the approval was of military steps or negotiations.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id still hoped that Britain could...

...see the matter through, using force if necessary, but in such a way that Nasser would be obliged either to give in or to fire the first shot....It was life or death for the West as well as Nasser.

Nuri's statements were repeated by Crown Prince Abdul-Illah. Eden circulated copies of the Iraqi comments to Cabinet members, commenting, 'All this points to our having little time in hand.'⁴¹ MI6 also persisted with plans to overthrow the Egyptian Government. After Allen Dulles reported his talks with MI6 officers, Foster Dulles told Frank Wisner, the CIA's Deputy Director of Operations, that his brother 'hadn't put his point across...."They" were more determined than ever to proceed

⁴⁰ PRO, PREM11/1123, Poole to Eden, 29 August 1956, and News-Chronicle Gallup poll, 31 August 1956.

⁴¹ PRO, FO371/118857/JE10393/2G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 914, 20 August 1956, and subsequent cables and minutes.

along a certain line.' Wisner replied, 'It was clear to [the CIA] that [Britain and France] were still pulling the throttle open, undoubtedly connecting it with other matters.'⁴²

With its Permanent Undersecretary, Kirkpatrick, agreeing with the 'hawks' that Nasser should be punished publicly, the Foreign Office could not check Eden or MI6. When Assistant Undersecretary Harold Beeley wrote 'that the gravest consequences would follow from a failure [of the use of force] to deprive Colonel Nasser of control over the Canal,' Kirkpatrick challenged:

It seems to me easy to enunciate these views --- which are sound and, I think, generally accepted here, but it is more difficult to draw up a program which will achieve the end, 'Defeating Nasser without resort to force'....I shall be grateful for ideas.⁴³

Kirkpatrick commented on Eisenhower's letter of 3 September:

We might bulldoze [the Americans] into suitable economic and psychological measures simply by threatening that, if they do not agree, we shall have no alternative but to have recourse to force.⁴⁴

Kirkpatrick immediately drafted a message, which Eden amended and sent to Eisenhower on 6 September. Using his experience at the British Embassy in Berlin in the 1930s, Kirkpatrick justified the maintenance by force of Britain's Middle Eastern position:

In the 1930s Hitler established his position by series of carefully planned movements....

In more recent years Russia has attempted

42 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Wisner, 30 August 1956.

43 PRO, FO371/119128/JE14211/1390G, Beeley minute, 18 August 1956, and subsequent minutes.

44 PRO, FO371/119154/JE14211/2127, Kirkpatrick to Lloyd, 4 September 1956.

similar tactics....The seizure of the Suez Canal is, we are convinced, the opening gambit in a planned campaign designed by Nasser to expel all Western influence and interests from Arab countries. He believes that, if he can get away with this and if he can successfully defy 18 nations, his prestige in Arabia will be so great that he will be able to mount revolutions of young officers in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. (We know from our joint sources that he is already preparing a revolution in Iraq, which is the most stable and progressive.) These new Governments will in effect be Egyptian satellites if not Russian ones. They will have to place their united oil resources under the control of a united Arabia led by Egypt and under Russian influence. When that moment comes, Nasser can deny oil to Western Europe and we shall all be at his mercy....

I agree with you that prolonged military operations as well as the denial of Middle Eastern oil would place an immense strain on the economy of Western Europe. I can assure you that we are conscious of the burdens and perils attending military intervention. But if our assessment is correct and if the only alternative is to allow Nasser's plans quietly to develop until this country and all Western Europe are held to ransom by Egypt acting at Russia's behest, it seems to us that duty is plain. We have many times led Europe and the fight for freedom. It would be an ignoble end to our long history if we tamely accepted to perish by degrees.⁴⁵

Kirkpatrick, with little first-hand knowledge of the U.S. and no love lost for Americans, was misguided in his attempts to scare the Eisenhower Administration. The U.S. never accepted the contention that Egypt was 'acting at Russia's behest' in nationalising the Suez Canal Company, and Britain's repeated allegations of Nasser's intentions were unsupported by further evidence. The only Middle Eastern leaders who called for Nasser's overthrow by force were those in Iraq, Egypt's rival for leadership of the Arab world, and even Nuri had retreated, saying 'the pressure of opinion of many countries' was preferable to

45 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower, 6 September 1956.

the use of force.⁴⁶ The Shah of Iran 'gave getting rid of Nasser a very high priority' but did 'not believe that this [would] be achieved by the use of force...because it would require the total occupation of Egypt, making Nasser a martyr, and arouse the whole Arab world.' The Libyan Ambassador in London may have said 'that wise men must see the danger of Nasser succeeding,' but his Government would not allow British troops to march from Tripoli into Egypt. The British claim that Saud had said to Prince Za'id of Iraq 'that it would be bad if Nasser emerged triumphant, for...if he succeeded the regimes in Iraq and Saudi Arabia would be swept away' did not impress the Americans, who had a more accurate view of the Saudis from the Anderson mission. King Saud asked the U.S. to withdraw its economic measures against Egypt and to persuade Britain and France to halt their military preparations.⁴⁷

The only evidence in British records of Nasser's 'subversion' was an MI6 report, 'from rather a direct source,' of the development of an Egyptian organisation in Libya 'to sabotage British equipment and attack British troops and communications.' The British decided to warn King Idris 'and obtain his cooperation' while exposing the plot and 'pointing the moral to King Saud and others.' British officials in Libya clearly indicated, however, that the Egyptian actions were not designed to overthrow the Libyan Government or kill Idris but to prevent British

46 PRO, FO371/119107/JE14211/812, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 892, 15 August 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-656, Baghdad to State Department, Cable 374, 6 September 1956.

47 Lloyd, p. 109; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301 Series, State Department to Jedda, Cable 180, 10 September 1956, and Cable 199, 19 September 1956.

forces invading Egypt from Libya.⁴⁸

Eisenhower told Foster Dulles, 'The British had gotten themselves into a box in the Middle East. They have been choosing the wrong issue in which to get tough,' as they had with the Anglo-Saudi dispute over Buraimi. To halt the trans-Atlantic exchanges, Eisenhower personally drafted the reply to Eden, noting, 'The only usefulness it might have is in its attempt to destroy Anthony's apparent fixation that delay or long, drawn-out negotiations might result in catastrophe for Great Britain and the West.'⁴⁹

The note to Eden, revised by Foster Dulles, emphasized OMEGA and Foster Dulles' recent idea of the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA) as methods to curb Nasser:

The result that you and I both want can best be assured by slower and less dramatic processes than military force....We can, for example, promote a semi-permanent organisation of the user governments to take over the greatest practical amount of the technical problems of the Canal, such as pilotage, the organisation of the traffic pattern, and the collection of dues to cover actual expenses....

There are economic pressures which, if continued, will cause distress in Egypt.

There are Arab rivalries to be exploited and which can be exploited if we do not make Nasser an Arab hero.

There are alternatives to the present dependence upon the Canal and pipelines which should be developed, perhaps by more tankers, a possible new pipeline to Turkey, and some possible rerouting of oil, including perhaps more from this hemisphere....

Gradually it seems to me we could isolate Nasser and gain a victory which would not only be bloodless but would be more far-reaching in its ultimate consequences than could be anything

⁴⁸ PRO, W032/16709, Troopers to Middle East Main, Cable 05718/DMO, 1 October 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, DEFE32/5, COS(56)100(4) C.A., 12 October 1956.

⁴⁹ DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 7 September 1956.

brought about by force of arms. In addition, it would be less costly both now and in the future.⁵⁰

When Nasser rejected the 18-Power Plan and the Security Council called for international control of the Canal, Britain and France either had to use force without the Americans or renounce the military option. Ironically, Eden was saved from his dilemma by Foster Dulles, who had devised a new proposal for Anglo-American cooperation against Egypt.

⁵⁰ PRO, PREM11/1177, Eisenhower to Eden, 8 September 1956.

CHAPTER 11

4 SEPTEMBER-18 SEPTEMBER 1956: NEW PLANS, NEW FAILURES

The outcome of the Menzies Committee's mission was settled before the first meeting with Nasser. Australian Prime Minister Menzies was instructed by Eden to stand firmly upon the 18-Power Plan, but Nasser had publicly stated on 12 August that he would never accept international control of the Suez Canal.¹

Menzies was affable when the five Committee members first met Nasser, but he was not as good-natured when he saw Nasser alone. Menzies cabled the British Foreign Office:

I had good reason to know that the U.K. and French Governments take a most serious view of Egypt's actions. Nasser would be most unwise to assume that the use of force was ruled out in the absence of a satisfactory settlement by agreement.

Nasser complained to Loy Henderson, the American member of the Committee, 'I want to reach an agreement; instead you send this Australian mule to threaten me.'²

The next afternoon, Menzies, after explaining the 18-Power Plan, repeated the threats: 'If there is an agreement [by the 18 Powers] to create a users' committee, you say there will be trouble, but if there is no such agreement, I can assure you that there will be trouble.' Nasser replied, 'If Menzies was trying to convey the idea that rejection of these proposals would lead to trouble, he was quite prepared to let it come at once.' Only then did Menzies retreat:

¹ For Egyptian impressions of Menzies, Peter Lyon, Eisenhower: Portrait of a Hero (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 694; Hoopes, p. 356.

Nasser had misunderstood his meaning; we certainly did not intend to make direct or implied threats; he was trying to point out that the international tension would continue to exist until satisfactory arrangements for the future of the canal could be concluded.²

On the evening of 5 September, Nasser rejected the 18-Power Plan as a 'restoration of collective colonialism' and a form of 'domination or seizure' but expressed his willingness to consult with user nations over rates and freedom of transit. Menzies later claimed that his position was undermined by Eisenhower's press conference that morning, in which the President said, 'We are determined to exhaust every feasible method of peaceful settlement....[The U.S. position] is not to give up, even if we do run into other obstacles.'³

Eisenhower's statement might have removed the threat of force carried by Menzies to Cairo, but it did not prevent a possible settlement. Given the seven-hour time difference between Cairo and Washington, Nasser could not have learned of Eisenhower's statement before the meeting with the Committee. Even if Nasser knew, British Ambassador Trevelyan noted:

[The statement] was not crucial at this point.
Nasser would not have given way in any case.

Henderson had informed Washington on 4 September that the Committee could not get Egyptian agreement and Menzies wanted to break off talks, only the efforts of Henderson and the Iranian and Swedish members persuading him to

² Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, p. 151; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 2, 5 September 1956.

³ PRO, PREM11/1100, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1919, 5 September 1956; PRO, FO371/119126/JE14211/1339, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1808, 5 September 1956

continue. Menzies' report of 5 September did not mention Eisenhower's speech as an influence upon Nasser.cc4

Nasser's counterproposal for a new convention fixing tolls for Canal passage divided the Committee. Menzies said the mission could not discuss the counterproposals, but Henderson, backed by the Iranian and Swedish representatives, insisted on a further meeting to discuss Nasser's views. Menzies, instructed by the British that Nasser's rejection of the 18-Power Plan had to be publicised by 8 September so Britain could appeal to the Security Council, stemmed dissent by giving an aide-memoire of the Committee's position to the Egyptians on 7 September.⁵ Nasser replied at length two days later. Both documents were 'memoranda for the record' rather than efforts at negotiation.⁶

Menzies, writing Eden, launched a vitriolic diatribe against Nasser:

Egypt is not only a dictatorship, but it has all the earmarks of a Police state. The tapping of telephone lines, the installation of microphones, the creation of a vast body of security policy --- all these things are accepted as commonplace.

In his memoirs, Menzies recorded:

4 Trevelyan, p. 98; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-556, Cairo to State Department, Cable 613, 5 September 1956; PRO, PREM11/1100, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 1919, 5 September 1956. See also PRO, PREM11/1101, Menzies to Eden, 9 September 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-956, Cairo to State Department, Cable 674, and State Department to Cairo, Cable 722, 9 September 1956.

5 PRO, PREM11/1100, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cables 1936 and 1942, 6 September 1956, and Cable 1980, 7 September 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 3, 6 September 1956; PRO, FO800/740, Foreign Office to Cairo, Cable 2745, 6 September 1956.

6 PRO, PREM11/1100, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 2010, 9 September 1956.

Nasser was a man of imposing physique and presence; obviously the master of his Government, of much intelligence, but with some marks of immaturity and inevitable lack of experience. But he was impressive and clearly courageous.

However, he wrote Eden at the time, 'So far from being charming, [Nasser] is rather gauche, with some irritating mannerisms, such as rolling his eyes up to the ceiling when he is talking to you and producing a quick, quite evanescent grin when he can think of nothing else to do.' Menzies also failed to mention the Egyptian offer to consult with user nations on tolls and freedom of transit, giving Eden the false impression that Nasser had not put counterproposals to the Committee.⁷

Britain now wanted perfunctory discussions at the U.N. followed by military action. Allen Dulles learned from Lloyd 'that if the 18-power proposals were rejected, then military intervention by the British should be regarded as a very serious possibility,' and the U.S. Embassies in London and Paris, reported British and French eagerness to invade Egypt.⁸

Spending Labour Day weekend at his vacation home in Canada, Foster Dulles 'reflect[ed] in semi-retirement.' The 1888 Constantinople Convention affirmed the right of ships to pass 'freely' through the Suez Canal. Since 'probably 98 percent of the traffic would voluntarily

7 PRO, PREM11/1101, Menzies to Eden, 9 September 1956; Robert Menzies, Afternoon Light (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 164.

8 D.R. Thorpe, Selwyn Lloyd (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), p. 222; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, September 1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable 1249, 1 September 1956, and Paris to State Department, Cable 1050, 2 September 1956. See also William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 20 September 1956.

follow non-Egyptian guidance,' Britain, France, and other user nations could supply pilots for ships, and any problems could be handled 'through the Naval craft authorized to be stationed at each end of the Canal.' If Egypt did not keep the Canal clear of obstructions, the user nations had a right to keep the Canal 'free.' Foster Dulles thought the plan would...

..."deflate" Nasser and be a better alternative than force....It rests squarely on the 1888 Treaty and, if Nasser uses force to obstruct this program, he would be violating the [U.N.] Charter and its "renunciation of force" Covenant.⁹

On 4 September, the Secretary told John Coulson, the British Charge d'Affaires:

The users would run the Canal themselves....Nasser would thus see the dollars slip out of his hands. He was much more likely to be deflated by the loss of these revenues than by the threat of force.

Eden welcomed the 'promising suggestion,' provided that the U.S. employed the pilots of the user nations to guide ships through the Canal and paid transit dues to a users' account. Lloyd cabled Foster Dulles on 6 September that it was 'most urgent' to coordinate the move to the U.N., but an users' association could be included in the presentation of the 18-Power plan to the Security Council.¹⁰

The introduction of Foster Dulles' plan coincided with a British review of MUSKETEEER. The military operation

9 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, White House, Box 4, Meetings with the President, Foster Dulles memorandum, 2 September 1956.

10 PRO, PREM11/1100, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1804, 4 September 1956, and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4032, 5 September 1956, and Cables 4062 and 4069, 6 September 1956.

had every chance of success until 26 September, but because of deteriorating weather in the Mediterranean, it could not be launched after 6 October until the spring. With the 17-day interval between the decision to launch operations and the invasion, the Egypt Committee had to act by 19 September. With Nasser's reply to the Menzies mission coming on the 9th, there was insufficient time to complete discussions in the Security Council and convene a special Parliamentary session to endorse an attack against Egypt.

General Keightley, the Commander-in-Chief of MUSKETEER, was also concerned about the political effects of operations:

It is...of the greatest importance that this invasion of Egypt is launched with our moral case unassailable and the start of the war clearly and definitely Nasser's responsibility and no one else's....The problem is whether it appears likely that this moral case can be achieved within the next few weeks and, if not, whether some other plan which can be launched at a much later date is required.

Keightley devised a new plan, MUSKETEER REVISE, which could be operational until the end of October and required only eight days between decision and implementation. Instead of an assault upon Alexandria followed by an advance upon Cairo, economic, air, and naval action, supported by psychological warfare, would 'lead to the breakdown of Egyptian resistance to Western operation of the Suez Canal and enable Allied forces to secure the Canal Zone.' In Phase I, Allied bombing would destroy the Egyptian Air Force to prevent counterattacks against British and French forces on Cyprus. When this was accomplished, Phase II, an air offensive upon key military

and economic targets accompanied by propaganda from 'black' radio stations, leaflets, and announcements from 'voice' aircraft, would turn the Egyptian population against Nasser, forcing his resignation or a coup d'etat. After Nasser's fall, British and French troops would land at Port Said in Phase III, taking control of the Canal Zone before occupying Cairo and establishing a Military Government.¹¹

Eden's immediate reaction was consternation, as REVISE had no provision for a quick occupation of Alexandria and Cairo. He disputed the estimate of 'unpredictable' autumn weather in the Mediterranean, the assumption of an 18-day lead time for MUSKETEEER, and the claim that MUSKETEEER could not be maintained beyond 6 October. On the morning of 7 September, he confronted the Chiefs of Staff, claiming that the devastation and loss of life caused by REVISE's extensive air assault would be greater than that of MUSKETEEER, since Egypt would not resist a landing at Alexandria. General Templer, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, replied that the advance from Alexandria to Cairo would take 23 days if the Egyptians resisted the invasion. Eden retorted that the Egyptians were cowards, an assertion challenged by Mountbatten and Keightley.¹²

However, because of his inability to establish a diplomatic pretext to launch MUSKETEEER in the near-future, Eden had no choice but to give way. He told the Egypt

11 PRO, PREM11/1104, EC(56)43, 'Operation MUSKETEEER: Implications of Postponement,' 6 September 1956.

12 PRO, PREM11/1104, EC(56)43, 'Operation MUSKETEEER: Implications of Postponement,' 6 September 1956, Rhodes James, p. 501; AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 7 September 1956.

Committee that the new plan had advantages given 'a reasonable certainty that it would be effective.' The Committee agreed to resume their discussion of REVISE in three days' time.¹³

To prepare a pretext for the use of REVISE, the Committee decided 'that no further advice should be given' to Suez Canal Company employees to remain at their posts. The Foreign Office informed the French, and the stoppage of work was scheduled for 15 September.¹⁴ Minister of Transport Harold Watkinson linked the employees' withdrawal to American plans, as well as military action. Britain and France, followed by the U.S. and other maritime nations, would instruct their ships to withhold transit dues from Nasser and join the Suez Canal Users Association. Meanwhile, Operation PILEUP would congest the Canal with enough ships to bring complaints from shipowners and the maritime nations. 'All offers [by Egypt] of compromise methods of transit [would] be refused as unsafe,' and Operation CONVOY would station pilots, employed by SCUA, on warships at each end of the Canal. If Nasser refused passage to ships with these pilots, the warships would lead a convoy through the Canal. Further resistance by Egypt would bring war, while acceptance of the convoy by Nasser would render Egyptian control of the Canal worthless.¹⁵

Anticipating the British review, the Americans acted

¹³ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)25th meeting, 7 September 1956.

¹⁴ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)25th meeting, 7 September 1956; PRO, FO371/119134/JE14211/1549, Foreign Office to Paris, Cable 1623, 8 September 1956; PRO, FO371/119135/JE14211/1590G, Anglo-French meeting, 8 September 1956.

¹⁵ PRO, FO371/119141/JE14211/1784G, Watkinson minute, 10 September 1956.

quickly to block military action. When the Foreign Office notified the State Department that it could not delay announcing recourse to the Security Council for more than 24 hours, Foster Dulles told British Charge d'Affaires Coulson, 'What [Britain was] proposing was in effect to enlist support to force upon Egypt the conclusion of treaty bestowing new rights on the users of the Canal.'¹⁶ He refused to co-sponsor a draft resolution with Britain and France and would not promise opposition to any amendment prohibiting the use of force against Cairo.¹⁷

Lloyd cabled Makins that Britain and the U.S. were...

...further apart than at any time since July 26. I cannot accept the present U.S. thinking that the two problems of settling the Canal issue and deflating Nasser can be separated...and there appears to be little common ground between us at the moment as to how to achieve either of those objectives.¹⁸

Foster Dulles reassured Makins about American intentions:

Of course, Nasser could not be allowed to win in this contest....The President did not exclude the use of force in the last resort. Between us we could get Nasser down, and the U.S. Administration were quite determined that this should happen.

However, Foster Dulles reminded Makins, '[The U.S.] saw no end to the consequences of military intervention....She did not believe the methods and the tempo which [Britain and France] were advocating were the right ones.'¹⁹

Britain's hope for American cooperation lay in strong economic sanctions. To make SCUA attractive to London,

16 PRO, PREM11/1100, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1823, 7 September 1956.

17 PRO, PREM11/1100, Washington to Foreign Office, Cables 1827-1832, 7 September 1956.

18 PRO, PREM11/1100, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4102, 8 September 1956.

19 PRO, PREM11/1100, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1838, 8 September 1956.

Foster Dulles offered help with emergency oil shipments and economic measures against Egypt. He concluded:

We were in a position to bring great pressure on Nasser short of armed force. Nasser could be forced to accept cooperation with the West or else take the onus of the consequences of his action....His proposal was therefore three-pronged: the Users Association, the oil operation, and other economic pressures.²⁰

Makins optimistically cabled, 'Mr. Dulles' statement that the Administration are determined to join with us in cutting Nasser down seems to me very significant,' although he warned that the American attitude was conditional upon British abstinence from military action.²¹

Kirkpatrick told U.S. Minister Walworth Barbour that the combination of Eisenhower's message of 9 September to Eden, which emphasized 'alternative measures' to topple Nasser, and Foster Dulles' presentation to Makins 'encouraged' the Foreign Office to believe 'there [was] a large measure of identification of views between' Britain and the U.S. Neither he nor Makins realised, however, that Foster Dulles' immediate motive was appeasement of British opinion rather than action against Nasser. He told Eisenhower:

We had to keep the initiative and to keep probing along various lines, particularly since there was no chance of getting the British and the French not to use force unless they had some alternatives that seemed to have in them some strength of purpose.²²

20 PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to State Department, Cables 1845-1847, 9 September 1956.

21 PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to State Department, Cable 1849, 9 September 1956.

22 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 6, 11 September 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-1056, London to State Department, Cable 1366, 10 September 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers,

On 10 September, the Egypt Committee met for final decisions on REVISE, U.N. proceedings, and SCUA. Ministers could support Foster Dulles' plans while refraining from the use of force or they could proceed with a new timetable for military action. They sought the best of both worlds. The approach to the U.N. was postponed to explore Foster Dulles' 'ingenious' proposals, although they might be 'more in the nature of delaying tactics to provide time for further reflection and negotiation in an election year.' At the same time, REVISE was approved and Watkinson was authorised to proceed with Operations PICKUP and CONVOY.²³

REVISE's adoption increased the emphasis upon psychological warfare and covert operations to overthrow Nasser. At the outset of the Suez Crisis, the Chiefs of Staff 'strongly supported' General Templer's plan for psychological warfare as an element of military operations, and the Egypt Committee authorised its development.²⁴ An interdepartmental working party established the Information Coordination Executive (ICE), which had members from the Foreign, Commonwealth Relations, and Colonial Office, Ministry of Defence, Chiefs of Staff, MI6, Central Office of Information, and the BBC. The ICE oversaw the work of a psychological warfare unit, commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel in London with a forward element in Cyprus. By early September, a

Subject, Alphabetical, Box 4, Miscellaneous Paper - U.K. (1), Foster Dulles memorandum, 8 September 1956.

²³ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)26th meeting, 10 September 1956.

²⁴ PRO, DEFE4/89, COS(56)77th meeting, 2 August 1956; AP, AP20/28, EC(56)9th meeting, 2 August 1956.

special 18-man unit was formed at Aldershot.²⁵

Phase II of REVISE formally authorised 'all necessary resources for carrying out an intensive campaign of propaganda which will have the object of inducing the Egyptian Government, people, and armed forces to cease resistance, of raising popular pressure on the Government, and of intensifying the effects on Egyptian morale of [Anglo-French] air attacks.'²⁶ Meanwhile, the buildup of British propaganda services in the Middle East was accelerated. The number of stories 'planted' with British newspapers, the BBC, and the London Press Service increased, and a BBC relay station in Cyprus, broadcasting in medium-wave through the Middle East, was completed in October. The Information Research Department and MI6 supervised covert operations, with 'black' radio stations operating from Aden, Libya, and Cyprus.²⁷

Propaganda operations were complemented by extensive collection of intelligence and development of covert operations against Nasser. Since spring 1956, the Egyptian Embassy in London was a priority target for code-breaking by Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5. Specially-modified Washington aircraft of 192 Squadron carried out electronic surveillance of Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries and sent the results to the General Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Cheltenham. On 20 September, Lloyd congratulated E.M. Jones, the Director of GCHQ, 'Since the tension in the Middle East

25 PRO, WO288/38/File.

26 PRO, PREM11/1104, COS(56)360, 'Alternative to MUSKETEEER,' 18 September 1956.

27 PRO, PREM11/1149/File.

began to grow and particularly since Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal, I have observed the volume of material which has been produced by GCHQ relating to all the countries in the Middle East area.²⁸

Although MI6 drafted plans for Nasser's assassination, the service recognised that this would probably make Nasser a martyr and reinforce anti-British opinion in Egypt unless the public was turned against the regime and a successor government was groomed for power. Instead, MI6 linked Nasser's overthrow to REVISE. An Anglo-French attack upon Egypt, supported by psychological warfare, would arouse so much public discontent that dissident Egyptian politicians and military officers could seize power.²⁹

MI6 suffered a blow in late August when the Egyptians broke up the service's operations in Cairo, arresting thirty people, including three British and one Maltese, and expelling two officials of the British Embassy. The arrests, however, did not affect the contacts between dissident Egyptian officers, 'The Supporters of Justice,' and MI6 outside Egypt, and Conservative MP Julian Amery and two MI6 officers met the conspirators in France. The officers conferred with Saleh ed-Din, Foreign Minister in the Wafd Government from 1950 to 1952, and Abdul Fattah Hassan, another Minister in the Wafd Government, about the assassination of Nasser and his Ministers and the installation of a Government headed by Saleh ed-Din.³⁰

28 Wright, p. 81; AIR20/10216/File; PRO, AIR20/10621, Lloyd to Jones, 20 September 1956.

29 Author's interview with Sir Patrick Reilly.

30 PRO, FO371/118304-118307/JE1693/File; PRO, FO371/125423/JE1019/ File; PRO, FO371/125612-

In another plot, the British worked with Squadron Leader Mohammed Khalil, the Chief of Intelligence for the Egyptian Air Force, after representatives of Mustafa al-Maraghi, a former Wafd Minister of the Interior, and Husayn Khayri and Prince Namouk, relatives of King Farouk, contacted Khalil about the assassination of Nasser. Meetings between MI6 operatives and Khalil occurred in Beirut, Rome, Geneva, and Munich.³¹

Critics of British operations against Egypt later argued that Britain never found an alternative to Nasser. Assistant Undersecretary Ross had noted on 28 July:

Nasser's grip is strong. There is no alternative in sight; the man who expelled foreign troops from Egypt, the spokesman of Arab nationalism and the champion of Arab military strength has a powerful hold over the people.³²

Yet a specific alternative to Nasser was not a prerequisite for implementation of REVISE. A military intelligence report admitted, 'One of the main strengths of the present regime is the absence of any coherent opposition in the country and the at-least outward unity of the Army,' but added that there was 'a considerable element of the population which, if not disillusioned by the unfulfilled promise of EUTOPIA [sic], are at least critical of the regime' and that the unity of the armed forces might 'well be only skin deep even in the Army....Rifts have outwardly been healed but it is considered likely that little would be needed to reopen

125621/JE1691/File; West, pp. 113ff. See also PRO, FO371/125423/JE1019/1, Brenchley minute, 26 July 1957, and subsequent minutes.

31 *Ibid.* See also PRO, FO371/125423/JE1019/7, Brenchley minute, 24 December 1957, and subsequent minutes.

32 PRO, FO371/118864/JE1053/79, Ross minute, 28 July 1956.

them.' The report set the priorities of 'increasing diversity or rivalry as between the services and within the Army itself, making the paramilitary forces and even armed civilians feel that they have been let down by the Regular Army and Air Force' and 'the weakening of popular support for the regime which will, as it weakens, progressively reduce the internal security threat facing the Allied Task Force.' The Egypt (Official) Committee further hinted at MI6's confidence:

There were good reasons to believe that, given the defeat of the Egyptian Army and the collapse of the Nasser regime, a successor Government could be formed which are able to maintain law and order....This prospect would be enhanced if the functioning headquarters, in or near Cairo, of such Nasser agencies as Army Intelligence, the Liberation Rally, and the National Guard could be eliminated at an early stage by Allied military action.³³

The Foreign Office was told little, if anything, about MI6's plotting with the dissidents. In September 1956, the British Embassy in Cairo was asked for 'names, addresses, telephone numbers, and background of any people who should be borne in mind' as successors to Nasser. The Oriental Counsellor, Trefor Evans, visited London to give an oral appreciation of the situation, but the only candidate to lead Egypt, as in 1955, was Ali Maher, the former 'independent' Prime Minister. According to J.B. Flux, expelled from Egypt after the round-up of the British spy ring, Ali Maher said he was ready to form a Government and had names of Cabinet members 'in his pocket.'³⁴

33 Author's interview with Julian Amery; PRO, WO288/38, Maguire to Phillips, 1 September 1956; PRO, CAB134/1225, EOC(56)1, 5 September 1956.

34 PRO, FO371/118897/JE11924/61G, Murray minute, 4

REVISE's flaw was that, without full knowledge of MI6's operations, civil servants and military planners could only assume, on the strength of MI6's assurances or on blind faith, that an alternative to Nasser would emerge after the launch of Anglo-French military operations. The ad hoc committees established in July 1956 were no solution, as their brief was administrative, defining political control of Egypt after the landing of British troops and the installation of a new Egyptian Government. Technically, the Egypt Committee oversaw REVISE and MI6's activities, but it had neither the time nor the expertise to concentrate on operational details.

Only Kirkpatrick, Patrick Dean, the head of the Permanent Undersecretary's Department, and Geoffrey Macdermott, Dean's deputy and the Foreign Office Adviser to MI6, received intelligence and information of British plans against Egypt, and Macdermott was rarely informed about operations. Kirkpatrick privately expressed concern at Eden's wish to 'murder' Nasser, but he never tried to check MI6's plans. Furthermore, from September, Eden increasingly circumvented Kirkpatrick, as Dean, promoted from Assistant Undersecretary (Grade 4) to Deputy Undersecretary (Grade 2) became the Prime Minister's channel for ad hoc action. According to Ross:

As things began to hot up, [Eden] did take Dean over as his Foreign Office man....As the crisis developed and decisions became more and more crucial, it wasn't so much the Foreign Office submitting advice as Eden using a member of the Foreign Office to do what he thought had to be done.³⁵

September 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, FO371/118832/JE1015/50, Flux minute, 29 September 1956.
 35 Author's interview with Sir Archibald Ross.

Meanwhile, the Egypt Committee's 'hawks' were determined to proceed with military action. They were supported by French Premier Mollet and Foreign Minister Pineau, who visited London on 10 September. To prevent the British straying too far towards accommodation with Egypt, Mollet revived Winston Churchill's 1940 proposal for Anglo-French union. Press Secretary Clark wrote that the proposal was 'impossible at present because of the Commonwealth.' With no alternative, Mollet and Pineau deferred to the new British position on SCUA and REVISE.³⁶

The revised British strategy was presented to the Cabinet on 11 September. Lloyd contended that SCUA would 'directly involve the U.S.' with Anglo-French planning and deprive Egypt of 80 percent of transit dues. Leading the 'hawks,' Macmillan only accepted SCUA 'as a step towards the ultimate use of force.' Dismissed fears that the Treasury could not afford a military operation, he turned the economic argument against opponents of force: 'A quick solution to the crisis would restore confidence in the pound but delay would 'undermine our financial position.'

Minister of Defence Monckton again opposed the military option, but, as in the 28 August debate, Lords Kilmuir and Salisbury supported the use of force. Even Butler conceded that Tory MPs would support military action 'if they were satisfied that all practicable steps had been taken, without success, to secure a settlement by peaceful means.' Eden summarised, 'If [peaceful means] should fail, we should be justified in last resort in

³⁶ PRO, PREM11/1101, 'Declaration d'Union,' undated, and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4159, 11 September 1956; Clark, p. 185.

using force to restore the situation.³⁷

It remained to be established publicly that SCUA would be an economic instrument, possibly providing the pretext for force against Nasser. Eden would tell the special Parliamentary session on 12 September that SCUA would exercise its rights under the 1888 Constantinople Convention, that it would provide pilots for all ships transitting the Canal, and...

that all dues payable by the users' ships would forthwith be paid to the new organisation....If the Egyptian Government sought to interfere with the operations of the organisation or refused to extend the necessary cooperation on land, then the Egyptian Government would be regarded as being in breach of the Convention of 1888, and users could take such steps assumed fit to them to enforce their rights.³⁸

Presented with Eden's draft announcement, Foster Dulles commented, significantly, that the U.S. could not commit itself to the provision, 'Users could take such steps as seemed fit to them to enforce their rights,' although users might individually exercise their rights. He repeated his assumption that Britain was prepared for the cost of sending ships around the Cape of Good Hope. The Foreign Office replied that Britain was prepared to face 'economic consequences,' but with the long-term approach, rather than a 'short, sharp struggle' against Egypt, Britain must rely upon American assistance for payments for oil.³⁹

Foster Dulles was in a difficult position. Secretary

37 PRO, CAB128/30, CM64(56), 11 September 1956.

38 PRO, PREM11/1101, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4136, 10 September 1956.

39 PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1865, 10 September 1956, and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4155, 11 September 1956; PRO, FO800/740, Kirkpatrick to Makins, 10 September 1956.

of the Treasury Humphrey opposed 'hand-outs' to the British and any grant might require Congressional approval. On the other hand, Britain could not accept a plan which crippled its economy. Foster Dulles tried to escape by arguing that Nasser would not obstruct navigation by SCUA's ships if he was aware of diversion around the Cape as an alternative, rather than an obligatory step, for the users. However, 'the U.S. Government would only be able to ensure that U.S. flagships paid [dues] to the new organisation and...the application of this requirement to [U.S.-owned] ships under the Panamanian and Liberian flags would require further consultations.' Since 90 to 95 percent of U.S.-owned ships sailed under other countries' flags, Foster Dulles effectively allowed them to pay dues to Egypt.⁴⁰

Despite Foster Dulles' provisos, Lloyd, reassured by Makins,⁴¹ thought SCUA could still provide a pretext for force. Ambassador Aldrich reported, 'Lloyd expects if...Nasser should refuse the proposed plan, the U.K. and France would be on as firm ground as possible in taking whatever measures then seem to be desirable.'⁴²

Eisenhower now made his first important intervention since July. While Foster Dulles apparently did not exclude the possibility of force if Nasser blocked Canal traffic, provided the U.S. did not have to join the action, the President believed, 'We are sitting on a keg of dynamite.'

40 PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to Foreign Office, Cables 1869, 1873, 1875, and 1879, 11 September 1956.

41 See PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1896, 11 September 1956.

42 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 7, 13 September 1956.

Asked at a press conference if Britain and France would be justified in the use of force if pilots walked out and traffic through the Canal broke down, Eisenhower replied:

Justified, probably, in taking steps and conferring with Nasser....That doesn't mean that they are justified at that moment in using force....We established the United Nations to abolish aggression, and I am not going to be a party to aggression if it is humanly possible.⁴³

The Egypt Committee was undeterred, agreeing on the morning of 12 September that Lloyd should arrange consultations to establish SCUA. The Committee even saw merit in Foster Dulles' proposal that SCUA compensate Egypt from transit dues. Macmillan accepted that a loan from the Export-Import Bank, the only aid that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey would allow, would not help Britain, since the loan would have to be repaid in dollars, but 'with Congress not in session and the Presidential election pending, the U.S. Government could scarcely be expected to volunteer any wider undertaking.'⁴⁴

By stating that Britain and France 'would be free to take steps to assure their rights,' a concession Eisenhower did not accept, while avoiding SCUA's use as an economic instrument against Nasser, Foster Dulles made promises he could not fulfill. The Egypt Committee recognised the apparent contradiction in American policy but believed withdrawal of pilots and the success of Operation PILEUP would halt traffic through the Canal, forcing the U.S. to support Anglo-French restoration of

43 PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1891, 11 September 1956.

44 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)27th meeting, 12 September 1956

order.

Eden ruined the strategy in his Commons statement. Neglecting to inform Labour leader Gaitskell about SCUA, Eden failed to ensure Opposition agreement. He then highlighted the threat of force:

THE PRIME MINISTER: I must make it clear that if the Egyptian Government should see to interfere

HAROLD DAVIES [Lab, Leek]: Deliberate provocation.

THE PRIME MINISTER: --- with the operations of the Association, or refuse to extend to it the essential minimum of cooperation, then that Government will once again be in breach of the 1888 Convention. (Hon. Members: Resign!) I must remind the House that what I am saying (An Hon. Member: What a peacemaker!) is the result of exchanges of views between three Governments. In that event HMG and others concerned will be free to take such further steps ---

Mr. S.O. DAVIES: [Lab, Merthyr Tydfil]: What do you mean by that?

THE PRIME MINISTER: --- as seem to be required -
--

Mr. S.O. DAVIES: You are talking about war.

THE PRIME MINISTER: --- either through the United Nations or by other means, for the assertion of their rights. (Hon. Members: Oh!)

Eden concluded his speech with a clear warning to Nasser:

In these last weeks I have had constantly in mind the closeness of the parallel of these events with those of the years before the war. Once again we are faced with what is, in fact, an act of force which, if it is not resisted, if it not checked, will lead to others.⁴⁵

Foster Dulles was furious. He had approved a British statement without the threat of force, but he now faced a call to war. He told a colleague:

[I am] embarrassed because Eden kind of knocked

⁴⁵ Hansard, 12 September 1956. See also Clark, p. 187; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-1356, London to State Department, Cable 1442, 13 September 1956.

this whole plan down....Eden went a little out-of-bounds...He wants to show [the Canal] is a lifeline and it can't be cut --- and so justify war. That is where our policy splits.⁴⁶

Foster Dulles had agreed to a press conference on 13 September to support Eden's 'idea' of SCUA, but he deviated from his prepared text. Asked if users' ships would travel around the Cape rather than force their way through the Canal, Foster Dulles replied:

It is not our purpose to try to bring about a concerted boycotting of the Canal. I think, under those conditions, each country would have to decide for itself what it wanted its vessels to do.

Foster Dulles was even more devastating when asked if rerouting of ships was, in effect, a boycott. He answered:

It is not a boycott of the Canal as far as I know to refrain from using force to get through the Canal. If force is interposed by Egypt, then I do not call it a boycott to avoid using force to shoot your way through. We do not intend to shoot our way through.

Asked whether SCUA would guarantee the passage of Israeli ships, Foster Dulles completed the demolition of his plan, responding, 'Well, I am afraid that the Users Association is not going to be in the position to guarantee anything to anybody; we can't even guarantee anything to our own ships.'⁴⁷

Technically, Foster Dulles did not retract his promise to allow other powers to protect their rights, since he only said that the U.S. would not use force. Journalists, however, knew that Foster Dulles, not Eden, had created SCUA and assumed that he was speaking for all

⁴⁶ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Flemming to Foster Dulles, 12 September 1956.

⁴⁷ PRO, PREM11/1101, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1916, 13 September 1956.

members. To them, Foster Dulles had publicly withdrawn the 'last resort' of force as a bargaining lever against Egypt.

The effect was immediately felt in the Commons. Gaitskell asked, 'Is [the Prime Minister] prepared to say on behalf of HMG that they will not shoot their way through the Canal?' Eden, deprived of American support for force, Eden fell back upon recourse to the Security Council:

Would HMG give a pledge not to use force except after reference to the Security Council?...It would certainly be our intention, if circumstances allowed, or in other words, except in an emergency, to refer a matter of that kind to the Security Council. Beyond that, I do not think that any Government can possibly go.⁴⁸

Eden had intended, in response to public opinion and the wishes of some Tory MPs, to announce Britain's appeal to the U.N.,⁴⁹ but Gaitskell's badgering forced him to alter his speech and reveal his intentions prematurely. The impression was given that recourse to the U.N. was a desperate response to Foster Dulles' abandonment of SCUA. Eden's previous commitment to the use of force seemed hollow, and the press widely labelled his statement a 'climbdown.'⁵⁰

The public outbursts of Eden and Foster Dulles ruined six weeks' of Anglo-American negotiations. Foster Dulles decided that SCUA's effectiveness as a sanction against Nasser was no longer an issue. Only a peaceful settlement mattered. He told Humphrey after his press conference of

⁴⁸ Hansard, 13 September 1956.

⁴⁹ See Clark, p. 188; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-1756, London to State Department, Cable 1520, 17 September 1956.

⁵⁰ Clark, p. 188.

13 September:

We are not at war yet. [I] feel better today than for some time....We never expected the plan to work anyway.

He informed Eisenhower that he would attend the second London Conference to establish SCUA: 'All [my] associates feel very strongly the British and French will mess it up and no one of less stature than [me] can handle Eden, Lloyd and Pineau.'⁵¹

In contrast, Eden saw no possibility of a peaceful settlement that would punish Egypt, as '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.' Pineau complained about the...

lack of definite policy in Washington....The U.S. inability to agree on sanctions is bringing about the very result it seeks to avoid, namely, the use of military force.⁵²

Anglo-French hopes hinged upon the walkout of the 165 non-Egyptian pilots of the Egyptian Canal Authority. Only 40 Egyptian pilots remained, and Lloyd's of London raised the cost of war-risk insurance by 250 percent to ships using the Canal. Operation PILEUP failed miserably, however. The Authority maintained the flow of traffic with the Egyptian pilots, supplemented by 30 Egyptian and 11 Greek recruits, by organising convoys and allowing some captains to pilot their vessels through the Canal. On 16 September, 40 ships, an above-average figure, passed

⁵¹ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Humphrey, 13 September 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House, Box 10, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 13 September 1956. See also DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Smith, 14 September 1956.

⁵² Eden, p. 484; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 6, 11 September 1956.

through the canal, 254 transitted during the next week, and a record 57 ships passed through the canal on 7 October. Lloyd's reduced its premiums and shippers withdrew the 15 percent surcharge placed on cargoes. By 18 September, Watkinson told the Egypt Committee and shipowners that PILEUP had failed.⁵³

With the problems with SCUA and PILEUP, Eden returned to the plans of late August, proposing 'reference to the Security Council immediately.' Lloyd was cautious, asking for time to persuade the U.S. to adopt a stronger position on financial and military sanctions.⁵⁴ Other Ministers embarked upon private initiatives, including the idea of collaboration with Israel. In early September, Colonel Robert Henriques MBE, writer, soldier, and member of a prominent Anglo-Jewish family, consulted Minister of Defence Monckton about a forthcoming trip to Israel. On Monckton's advice, Henriques spoke to General Oliver, the Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and General Charles Haydon, chief of intelligence in the Middle East, before lunching with Minister of War Head, who served at Combined Headquarters with Henriques in World War II.

Head cautioned that Henriques' trip 'could do untold harm in Israel just at this moment,' but when Henriques asked if he could do any good, Head asked him to tell Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion:

53 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 774.00/9-2156, Port Said to State Department, Cable 39, 21 September 1956, and 774.00(W)/10-1156, SANA (Cairo) to State Department, 11 October 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56) 29th meeting, 17 September 1956; PRO, FO371/119140/JE14211/1757, Giles to Logan, 18 September 1956.

54 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)29th meeting, 17 September 1956.

At all costs, Israel must avoid war with Jordan, but if, when Britain went into Suez, Israel were to attack simultaneously, it would be very convenient for all concerned. Britain would denounce Israel's aggression in the strongest possible terms, but at the peace negotiations afterwards, Britain would help Israel to get the best possible treaty.

Henriques transmitted the message about 20 September. Ben-Gurion smiled and said, 'We have heard such promises before.'⁵⁵

Even Lloyd, who opposed cooperation with Israel, asked Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson...

...whether, if things dragged on, Israel might not take advantage of the situation by some aggressive move against Egypt....This might help Britain out of some of her more immediate difficulties.

Lloyd eventually agreed with Pearson 'that the long-range results and, indeed, even the short-range results of such action would be deplorable and dangerous; that such action by Israel would certainly consolidate Arab opinion behind Egypt; that even Arab leaders who might now be worrying about Nasser's moves would have to rally behind him.'⁵⁶

Foster Dulles had second thoughts about his burial of SCUA, saying, 'Despite the fact that the Users Association proposal had gotten off to a bad start through Eden's presentation, it was now being better understood and...might be widely acceptable,' but Eisenhower pursued

55 Robert Henriques, 'The Ultimatum: A Dissenting View,' The Spectator, 6 November 1959, p. 623, and 'The Ultimatum,' The Spectator, 4 December 1959, p. 823; Michael Bar-Zohar, The Armed Prophet: A Biography of Ben-Gurion (London: Arthur Barker, 1967), p. 222.

56 Lester Pearson, Memoirs, Volume II, 1948-1957, The International Years (London: Victor Gollancz, 1974) pp. 231ff.; Canadian National Archives, DEA 50372-40, Vol. 4, London to Department of External Affairs, Cable 1200, 3 September 1956. I am grateful to Brian Hearndon for bringing the Canadian document to my attention.

Saudi mediation between Britain, France, and Egypt. Makins again warned that the U.S. would not support force:

While the Administration has so far shown an unusual and commendable disposition to eschew domestic political consideration in their handling of the Suez problem, it remains true that the Great Republican trump card, which the Democrats do not yet know how to overtrump, is peace. So, although the President and Dulles have been careful not to exclude the possibility that force may have to be used, there is in my judgement no prospect that the U.S. will themselves participate in military action before November 6 [Election Day].⁵⁷

⁵⁷ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with the President, Foster Dulles memorandum, 17 September 1956; PRO, FO371/119136/JE14211/1613, Jedda to Foreign Office, Cable 292, 15 September 1956; PRO, PREM11/1102, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1896, 11 September 1956.

CHAPTER 12

19 SEPTEMBER-4 OCTOBER 1956: THE ILLUSION OF SCUA

On 19 September, representatives of the 18 nations who sanctioned the proposals of the first London Conference reconvened at Lancaster House. The previous day, Foster Dulles met Lloyd and Pineau in the afternoon and Macmillan and Salisbury in the evening. He reported to Eisenhower:

My general impression is that the British and the French have quite isolated themselves, even from what are naturally their closest friends....The United States is the only bridge between the British and the French and the rest of the countries here.¹

Yet 24 hours later, the British thought they had won over Foster Dulles. In his opening speech to the Conference, the Secretary simply introduced SCUA, but in the afternoon, he became worried about 'a series of very weak speeches which put all the emphasis upon the necessity for peace and no emphasis at all upon the need for what the United Nations Charter calls a settlement "in accordance with the principle of justice and international law",' he stated:

I do not care how many words are written into the Charter of the United Nations about not using force; if in fact there is not a substitute for force, and some way of getting just solutions of some of these problems, inevitably the world will fall back again into anarchy and chaos.²

Foster Dulles had not sanctioned the use of force;

1 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, September 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable DULTE 2, 19 September 1956.

2 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, September 1956 (1), Cable DULTE 6, 20 September 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-1956, London to State Department, Cable SECTO 11, 19 September 1956.

however, conscious of Anglo-French anger after his press conference of 13 September, he used a tone which implied that a 'just solution' would be imposed upon Nasser, if necessary. At the least, this indicated that the U.S. would use SCUA as an economic sanction. The British even inferred that Foster Dulles had reverted to the statement originally agreed on SCUA, allowing each power to take necessary action to preserve its rights.³

In the long run, the speech was disastrous. Having raised British expectations, Foster Dulles had no economic or military measures to satisfy them. He admitted to American journalists that there was 'no desire...to use the Users Association to establish a boycott of the Canal' and that 'the Users Association [was] not a device for denying Egypt any income at all with respect to the Canal.'⁴

On 20 September, Clark, Eden's Press Secretary, recorded 'a day of deepening depression.' When the conference concluded the next day, depression turned into near-panic. Foster Dulles' speech had raised other countries' fears that they might become involved in an economic or military war with Nasser, trapping the U.S. between Anglo-French determination and the caution of most of the 18 nations. Even the name for the Association was a cause for dispute. The American suggestion of CASU (Cooperative Association of Suez Canal Users) was highly obscene in Portuguese, and as Lloyd recalled:

Various other combinations were tried. Almost

³ Lloyd, p. 144.

⁴ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-2056, London to State Department, Cable SECTO 20, 20 September 1956.

all of them meant something revolting, usually in Turkish.

Finally, it was discovered that SCUA offended no one.⁵

A more substantial problem was Pakistan's insistence that SCUA's sole purpose was negotiations with Nasser.' The Scandinavian countries were sceptical about the plan, and Spain was close to rejection. When Japanese delegates pressed Foster Dulles to clarify details, British hopes for the 'just solution' faded. The Secretary admitted that 'de facto operating cooperation at the local level' would be necessary. If Egyptian law allowed only Egyptian pilots to transit the Canal, the provision of foreign pilots for SCUA would collapse. The final declaration of the Conference admitted SCUA would 'seek the cooperation of the competent Egyptian authorities pending a solution of the larger issues.' The section on dues gave no indication of pressure, saying only that 'any user of the Canal may pay to SCUA.'⁶

Clark wrote on 21 September:

A ghastly day with all the worst expectations turning up. Dulles pulled rug after rug from under us and watered down the Canal Users Association until it was meaningless....Pineau came in and seemed almost on the edge of dissolving the [Western] alliance.

The French were allegedly pacified by the announcement that Eden and Lloyd would visit Paris the following week and a private agreement that the Queen would tour France in 1957.⁷ Eden, who had informed Winston Churchill on 10

⁵ Clark, p. 191; Lloyd, p. 145.

⁶ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301 Series, London to State Department, Cable SECTO 15, 20 September 1956, and Cables DULTE 8 and SECTO 25, 21 September 1956.

⁷ Clark, p. 191. See also AP, AP14/4, Jebb to Eden, 14 September 1956.

September that 'the Americans seem very firmly lined up with us on internationalism,' now wrote Churchill:

I am not very happy at the way things are developing here....Foster assures me that U.S. is as determined to deal with Nasser as we are -- but I fear he has a mental caveat about November 6th [Presidential Election Day].⁸

Disillusioned with SCUA, the British reverted to U.N. discussions as the pretext for military action. Eden, Lloyd, and Foster Dulles discussed the topic on 20 September, Lloyd arguing for a meeting as early as possible and Foster Dulles asking for a delayed approach.⁹ Eden then confirmed to Lloyd, 'I agree with you that it [the Security Council] must be called together early next week, even if only for a preliminary meeting.' Informed of this by Lloyd after the Conference, Foster Dulles requested ten days for the 18 powers to join SCUA.¹⁰

The British again had to decide between Anglo-American cooperation and the military option. Because of weather conditions and troop morale, REVERSE could not be implemented after the end of October. The decision to launch the operation was required by 23 October. If Britain heeded Foster Dulles' wishes, the Security Council's endorsement of the British position and Parliamentary sanction for military action might not be arranged by then.

Eden decided to present the Americans with a fait accompli. On 22 September, the Foreign Office informed the

⁸ Gilbert, p. 1210; Rhodes James, p. 514.

⁹ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-2156, Foster Dulles memorandum, 21 September 1956.

¹⁰ PRO, PREM11/1102, Eden to Lloyd and Foster Dulles-Lloyd meeting, 21 September 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/9-2156, Foster Dulles memorandum, 21 September 1956.

British Embassy in Washington that the decision to appeal would be announced at 9 p.m. (4 p.m. in Washington). Makins replied frantically that Foster Dulles could not be informed, as he was not landing in Washington before 4 p.m. Fifteen minutes before the announcement, the British, 'from courtesy,' postponed the press release until 3 p.m. on 23 September.¹¹

At the airport, Foster Dulles told British Minister Coulson that the British action was 'sound' but said he thought Eden had agreed to wait for progress on SCUA. Fearing that hasty recourse to the Security Council might dissuade Iran, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and perhaps Sweden and Denmark from joining the Association, he asked for a further 24-hour delay in the announcement. Eden refused, and on the 23rd, Britain proclaimed that it was going to the Security Council.¹²

Foster Dulles said on American television that he thought 'very well' of the British petition to the U.N. Privately, he was livid, telling the Australian Ambassador:

[The British] moved awfully fast without quite knowing what they are doing....There was no decision when he left [London] and he was told when he got off the plane.¹³

Disillusioned with the U.S., the British considered 'going it alone' with the French, but resurrecting the old

¹¹ PRO, PREM11/1102, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4389, Washington to Foreign Office, Cables 1974 and 1975, and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4403, 22 September 1956.

¹² PRO, PREM11/1102, Washington to Foreign Office, 22 September 1956, and Brook minute, 23 September 1956.

¹³ PRO, FO371/119141/JE14211/1791, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 1980, 23 September 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Spender to Foster Dulles, 24 September 1956.

problem: could Britain and France proceed without Tel Aviv? During July and August, the French limited cooperation with Israel to general discussions and deliveries of equipment, but, frustrated by delays in the Anglo-French timetable, France approached the Israelis in early September about military planning against Egypt. The Israeli Chief of Staff, General Dayan, alerted his forces, 'Our political circumstances obliged us to be capable of going into action and operating all our aircraft...and not to be caught in a position in which we would have to pass up favourable political opportunities to strike at Egypt.' Dayan's Chief of Operations, Major-General Meir Amit, was questioned by Admiral Pierre Barjot, MUSKETEER's Deputy Commander-in-Chief, in Paris about Israeli intervention if appropriate political conditions arose in the immediate future.¹⁴

When it became apparent that SCUA was not a vehicle for force, the French decided upon an Franco-Israeli attack against Egypt. The Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, Peres, discussed 'the objectives and methods of REVISE' with French Minister of Defence Bourges-Maunoury on 19 September. Dayan set three conditions for Israeli participation: first, France would treat Israel as 'an ally with equal rights'; second, Israel would not be brought into conflict with Britain; third, Israel would 'rectify its border with the Sinai' and acquire Sharm el-Sheikh and control of the Gulf of Aqaba. After the second London Conference, Bourges-Maunoury sent a birthday card to Ben-Gurion confirming

¹⁴ Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 151ff.

that France would meet Israel's conditions. On 25 September, the Israeli Cabinet instructed Dayan, Peres, and Foreign Minister Meir to travel to Paris.¹⁵

About 23 September, Pineau broached the possibility of Anglo-French cooperation with Israel to Lloyd and Eden. Pineau allegedly claimed:

Eden showed a good deal of interest; Lloyd a great deal of reticence....Nevertheless I was able to persuade them to give me a kind of carte blanche to undertake further negotiations with the Israelis.¹⁶

Pineau later disclaimed this account, but Bourges-Maunoury confirmed to Peres:

When Pineau left London disappointed...he was able to throw this at Eden: 'It seems that we have no choice but to work hand in hand with the Israelis....' The British Prime Minister...reacted in a flaccid tone: 'On condition that they do not hurt the Jordanians....' From this, [I conclude] the English will not attempt to interfere with the operation.

Dayan added that Pineau said, 'The feeling in French Ministry of Defence circles is that military operations against Egypt are essential and that France should launch them --- even if she has to act alone. If she does, they believe that Britain, in the end, will join in the campaign.'¹⁷

A British Minister confirmed Lloyd's 'horrificed' reaction to Pineau's proposals. The British Joint Planning Staff, unaware of the French approach, assessed:

¹⁵ Golan, p. 49; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 230ff; Abel Thomas, p. 145; Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 152ff.; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 25 September 1956, in Troen and Shemesh, p. 299.

¹⁶ Terence Robertson, Inside Story: The Story of the Suez Conspiracy (London: Hutchinson, 1965), pp. 134ff.

¹⁷ Brecher, p. 265; Moshe Dayan, Diary of the Sinai Campaign (London: Sphere, 1967), p. 30; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 25 September 1956, in Troen and Shemesh, p. 299.

Israeli action against Egypt would considerably help us. ...However, our apparent association with Israel could possibly lead to the disintegration of the Baghdad Pact, the loss of our position in Jordan and Iraq, and to a requirement to reinforce the Persian Gulf. It is therefore most important that we should avoid the appearance of any collusion with the Israelis.¹⁸

In essence, Eden refrained from supporting a Franco-Israeli operation but indicated that London would not oppose the initiative. Macmillan was now in a strong position. Not only had he advocated cooperation with France and Israel, he was visiting the U.S. in late September. If the Chancellor could persuade Eisenhower, with whom he had served in World War II, to accept British military action against Nasser, an Anglo-French or even an Anglo-French-Israeli attack upon Egypt could be contemplated.

Furthermore, Macmillan's political future apparently depended upon American financial assistance. By 8 August, Sir Edward Bridges, the Permanent Secretary at the Treasury, warned that the Suez crisis placed Britain's balance of payments and foreign reserves under considerable pressure, and he reiterated on 7 September 'the vital necessity from the point of view of our currency and our economy of ensuring that we do not go it alone and that we have the maximum U.S. support.' Treasury official Leslie Rowan warned Macmillan on 21 September that £250-300 million of foreign reserves had been lost in the last two months, bringing Britain near the Treasury

¹⁸ Hugh Thomas, The Suez Affair (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 91; PRO, DEFE6/37, JP(56)149(Final), 'Implications of Independent Israeli Aggression Concurrent with Operation MUSKETEEER,' 27 September 1956.

'floor' of \$2 billion in dollar balances. Confidence in sterling...

...would not survive a war followed by protracted negotiations, resulting even in the fall of Nasser and the corresponding restoration of our prestige in the Middle East. It is unlikely that...the U.S. would be ready to join in any far-reaching actions in the Middle East prior to the Elections.

Macmillan minuted, 'This is gloomy, but very likely correct.' On the same day, a Treasury paper estimated that Britain would lose £164 million (\$466 million) in foreign reserves if supplies of Middle Eastern oil were halted.¹⁹

The first significant event of Macmillan's mission was a 35-minute meeting with Eisenhower on 25 September. Macmillan cabled Eden that 'nothing very specific had emerged.' He added, 'The President understands our problems about Nasser, but he is, of course, in the same position now as we were in May 1955, with an impending general election.' Macmillan alleged in his memoirs:

On Suez, [Eisenhower] was sure that we must get Nasser down. The only thing was how to do it. I made it quite clear that we could not play it long, without aid on a very large scale --- that is, if playing it long involved buying dollar oil.²⁰

In contrast, Eisenhower's version of events never referred to Nasser's overthrow. He merely told Foster Dulles of a 'nice chat' about the British appeal to the Security Council and Macmillan's opinion that 'the Users Association [was] a good thing. Subsequently he recalled

¹⁹ PRO, T236/4188, Bridges to Macmillan, 8 August 1956, and Rowan to Macmillan, 21 September 1956, and subsequent minutes; PRO, T234/78, 'Suez: The Economic Effects of the Long Haul,' 21 September 1956.

²⁰ PRO, PREM11/1102, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2004, 25 September 1956; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 139.

that 'Harold said that, if it came to the worst, they'd go down with the bands playing, the guns firing, and the flags flying,' but he could not understand what Macmillan was implying.' Ambassador Makins, the only witness to the meeting, recalled:

I was expecting Harold to make a statement, say something important on Suez --- but in fact he said nothing.²¹ Nor did Eisenhower say anything. I was amazed.

Macmillan then attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund. Macmillan later claimed that, to bolster foreign reserves, he requested a drawing from Britain's contribution to the Fund. In fact, the Treasury had not approved the step.²²

Macmillan's day ended with a tense meeting with Foster Dulles. After castigating the manner of Britain's appeal to the U.N., Foster Dulles indicated he would order U.S.-flagged ships to avoid paying dues to Egypt if Britain and France faced the consequences, including blockage of the Canal, but he still insisted that he had no authority over U.S.-owned ships under other countries' flags. Moreover, Britain would have to pay, in dollars, for the diversion of oil from the Western Hemisphere if the Canal were blocked, a cost estimated at \$500,000-\$700,000 per year. Cornered, Macmillan admitted:

The detour [of ships around the Cape of Good Hope] was really not a practicable possibility for any length of time. The U.K. could not afford to borrow more dollars.

21 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 18, September 1956 Phone Calls, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 25 September 1956; AP, AP23/52/65, Middleton manuscript, 'Where Has Last July Gone?'; Horne, p. 421; Author's interview with Lord Sherfield.

22 Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 135; PRO, T236/4188, Ricketts memorandum, 29 September 1956.

As the Foreign Office predicted, Foster Dulles asked for a return to OMEGA: 'The U.S. Government was prepared to do everything it could to bring Nasser down, but...the most effective way of doing so was to let the present situation in the Canal continue and use other means of pressure which would shortly be discussed between us.'²³

Foster Dulles had clearly warned Macmillan of the limits of American action, but the Chancellor put events in a positive light to the Foreign Office. Noting Foster Dulles' readiness to force U.S.-flagged ships to pay dues to SCUA, Macmillan thought, inexplicably, that the Americans would press U.S.-owned ships, short of legislation, to withhold dues. As for Foster Dulles' warning that Britain must finance diversion of oil, Macmillan only said that Foster Dulles believed the economic dangers of Nasser's reaction to withdrawal of dues 'might be very serious.'²⁴

Macmillan went even further in 'unofficial' reports to Eden, hinting at a U.S. 'blind eye' toward, if not support for, force. He noted Eisenhower's anxiety about the election but informed Eden that the President was 'really determined, somehow or another, to bring Nasser down' and understood that Britain 'must win or the whole structure of our economy would collapse.'²⁵

Macmillan also alleged that, after he said that he did 'not think [Britain] could stand for six months' waiting for OMEGA's success, Foster Dulles conceded:

23 PRO, PREM11/1102, Washington to Foreign Office, Cables 2000 and 2001, 25 September 1956.

24 PRO, PREM11/1102, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2002, 25 September 1956.

25 PRO, PREM11/1102, Macmillan to Eden, 25 September 1956.

[He] quite realised that we might have to act by force....Our threat of force was vital, whether we used it or not, to keep Nasser worried.

The Secretary asked, as he and Eisenhower had helped Eden during the May 1955 British general election by agreeing to the Geneva summit with the Soviets, if Britain 'could not do something in return and hold things off until after November 6th?' Macmillan's implication was clear: because of the Presidential election, the Americans could not intervene against military action. In fact, Foster Dulles, indicating that the U.S. would proceed with OMEGA after 6 November, was warning Macmillan that the Americans could not condone a showdown with Nasser before then.²⁷

On 29 September, Deputy Undersecretary Robert Murphy, reiterated Foster Dulles' message to Macmillan. Significantly, Makins recorded that nothing Murphy said was inconsistent with the views of Eisenhower or Foster Dulles. Murphy again asked that Britain refrain from acting before Election Day. OMEGA could then be implemented:

The position would be quite different....Between us, we should be able to encompass [Nasser's] downfall within a few months. It was high time that Nasser's pretensions and those of the other Arab states were deflated.²⁷

Makins later assessed that there was 'no basis at all for Harold's optimism.' Given Macmillan's political experience, it is unlikely that he misinterpreted the American sentiment against force. Instead, the Chancellor was trying to bolster Eden with the impression that Eisenhower and Foster Dulles would not risk public

²⁶ PRO, PREM11/1102, Macmillan to Eden, 26 September 1956.

²⁷ PRO, FO371/120342/AU1057/1, Makins memorandum, 29 September 1956.

division with two NATO allies and oppose Anglo-French action.²⁸ On the other hand, if nothing was done, Britain would drift into negotiations with Egypt, with disastrous political and economic consequences. As Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, complained:

In two years' time, Nasser will have deprived us of our oil, the sterling area fallen apart, no European defence possibly, unemployment and unrest in the United Kingdom, and our standard of living reduced to that of the Yugoslavs or Egyptians.²⁹

Ironically, Macmillan's influence had been eclipsed by events, and he returned from Washington to find the Egypt Committee considering genuine negotiations. Foreign Office officials, almost all of whom except Kirkpatrick were wary of force, turned the decision to approach the U.N. to their advantage, and Lloyd, concerned with the American attitude and world opinion, was ready to support them. He told the Egypt Committee on 25 September that it was impossible to reject all proposals for negotiations and introduced a plan, drafted by Indian Foreign Minister Krishna Menon, for a 'system of guarantee, controlled by arbitrators,' between the Egyptian Canal Authority and Canal users for development of the Canal and transit dues. Ministers noted that arrangements for international consultation were 'probably more satisfactory than any proposal that could be agreed with Egypt after the expiration of the original concession [to the Suez Canal Company] in 1968.' Although 'such a scheme would...need some effective sanctions,' Lloyd was authorised to speak

²⁸ See Horne, p. 422.

²⁹ Shuckburgh, p. 360.

with Menon.³⁰ Even Eden was considering negotiations, telling the Cabinet that he hoped to persuade the French 'that it would not be possible to reject at the Security Council all suggestions for further negotiations between the parties to the dispute.'³¹

British moderation led to a 'very difficult' meeting of more than two hours with Mollet and Pineau on 26 September in Paris. Eden recorded that the French 'did not like [U.N. negotiations] at all....They [stood] by the 18-Power proposals and [were] not prepared for any modification of them.' Eden concluded:

My own feeling is that the French, particularly M. Pineau, are in the mood to blame everyone, including us, if military action is not taken before the end of October. M. Mollet...would like to get a settlement on reasonable terms if he could. I doubt whether M. Pineau wants a settlement at all.³²

Privately, Eden was impressed with French determination,³³ but without a pretext for military action, he saw no way to reverse British acceptance of negotiations. Lloyd told the Egypt Committee that, although he would stand by the 18-Power proposals, 'This need not mean that the Western Powers should refuse to consider any counterproposals put forward by Egypt.' The Committee noted that the Menon plan 'would at least provide for international supervision' and could be

30 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)31st meeting, 25 September 1956.

31 PRO, PREM11/1102, Bishop minute and Eden revisions, 25 September 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.(56)67, 26 September 1956.

32 PRO, PREM11/1102, Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 337, 26 September 1956.

33 See DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 19, 28 September 1956; Gilbert, p. 1214.

developed to allow international control of the Canal.³⁴

On 3 October, the Cabinet reached the same conclusion, although the 'hawks,' possibly using the idea of cooperation with Israel,³⁵ protested:

Our objectives would not be fully attained if we accepted a settlement of the Suez Canal dispute which left Colonel Nasser's influence undiminished throughout the Middle East....There was evidence that he was already seeking to foment discontent with the existing regimes in other Arab countries. Disturbing reports had been received of dissident movements in Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

Eden rationalised, 'If [the Egyptians] continued to be obdurate, world opinion might be ready to support a recourse to forceful measures.'³⁶

MI6's continued pressure upon the Prime Minister had been eclipsed,³⁷ although Eden decided, before embarking upon negotiations, to test Eisenhower with another personal appeal:

You can be sure that we are fully alive to the wider dangers of the Middle Eastern situation. They can be summed up in one word --- Russia.... There is no doubt in our minds that Nasser, whether he likes it or not, 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....

Eden pleaded for U.S.-owned ships to pay transit dues to SCUA as a sign of American intentions.³⁸

'Abandoned' by Britain, France sought final agreement on action with Israel. On 30 September, Meir, Peres, and Dayan met Pineau, Bourges-Maunoury, and General Maurice

34 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)32nd meeting, 1 October 1956.

35 See Hugh Thomas, p. 96.

36 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.68(56), 3 October 1956.

37 See DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, October 1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable 1932, 9 October 1956.

38 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower, 1 October 1956.

Challe, the Chief of the Air Staff, in Paris. Pineau suggested that, if Israel attacked Egypt, Britain and France could 'intervene' as peacekeepers and control the Suez Canal. He insisted that the invasion of Egypt must occur before 6 November:

[The Americans] would not take the responsibility of deliberately breaking the Atlantic alliance before the elections....They could not alienate...the great number of pro-Israeli voters in the U.S. by taking a position against Israel.

On the other hand, if Eisenhower is elected, Dulles will no longer hesitate to make an agreement with the Russians, at our expence, to protect the interests of the oil lobby in the U.S. He will no longer hesitate to impose sanctions against Israel in the event of her intervention [in Egypt].

Meir wanted to consult the U.S., but Pineau refused and asked for Franco-Israeli planning, with or without British participation. Dayan and Meir agreed, although the latter requested a guarantee that Britain would not attack Israel if Israeli-Jordanian fighting followed action against Egypt.³⁹ French Chief of Staff Ely, in discussions with Dayan, agreed to the supply of additional equipment, notably 100 Sherman tanks and 300 half-tracks, to Israel, although he declined to commit French forces in a simultaneous attack upon Egypt. A date of 20 October was set for the military operation.⁴⁰

The Americans were excluded from the discussions in London, Paris, and Tel Aviv, the Americans lost the diplomatic initiative. Foster Dulles complained to Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador at the U.N.:

³⁹ Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 157ff.; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 231ff.; Golan, pp. 50ff; Abel Thomas, pp. 145ff.

⁴⁰ Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 161ff.

We don't know what they are after. The French are eager to get into a fighting war....The British Cabinet is divided; I don't know where the balance of power lies.⁴¹

Foster Dulles responded hastily at a press conference on 2 October. First, he rejected economic pressure upon Egypt, within or without the Users Association. Asked about collapsing the price for Egyptian cotton through the 'dumping' of American cotton surpluses, he replied:

It may be that ways can be found if they are sought... which would be somewhat disturbing to Egypt's cotton market, but we are not now engaging in any economic war against Egypt.

Second, he repeated that 'there were never "teeth" in [SCUA], if that means the use of force.' Finally, he attacked upon Britain and France:

The U.S. cannot be expected to identify itself 100 percent either with the colonial powers or the powers uniquely concerned with the problem of getting independence as rapidly and as fully as possible....I hope that we shall always stand together in treaty relations covering the North Atlantic, [but] any areas encroaching in some form or manner on the problem of so-called colonialism find the U.S. playing a somewhat independent role.⁴²

Foster Dulles' outburst resulted from pique rather than policy, but it was a catastrophic failure of judgement. As Nasser asserted that his struggle against Britain was a fight against colonialism, Foster Dulles' remark implied American support for Cairo. The following day, Foster Dulles told Makins that 'he had been drawn into a line of discussion which was in itself undesirable' and 'his remarks had been given a connexion which he did not intend.' Moreover, the typescript of his answers was

41 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Lodge, 2 October 1956.

42 PRO, PREM11/1174, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2046, 2 October 1956.

released to the press before he saw it.⁴³

Despite Foster Dulles' repentance, American and British journalists speculated that he was privately pursuing an American 'middle course' between Egypt and the Anglo-French position. The Times commented, after a private briefing by Press Secretary Clark:

Mr. Dulles' wavering course over the Suez issue has been watched in Britain with patient understanding because of the realisation that the U.S. is on the eve of a presidential election and whatever he does or says has to pass the test of that scrutiny, but some of his words at yesterday's press conference can hardly claim the indulgence of that understanding any longer.⁴⁴

Eden protested to Washington:

It would be...dishonest to pretend that the press conference did not give a severe shock to public opinion here.... Anything which could be said by Mr. Dulles to redress that balance will buttress peace.⁴⁵

It was too late to 'redress the balance.' At the NSC, Foster Dulles complained that 'never before in recent years' had the U.S. been in an international crisis with no idea of British and French intentions. Eisenhower, who was receiving reports of top-secret talks between CIA officials and Wing Commander Ali Sabri, a member of Nasser's ruling council, reaffirmed:

The U.S. would be dead wrong to join in any resort to force. We should instead hold out for honest negotiations with the Egyptians.⁴⁶

43 PRO, PREM11/1174, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2052, 3 October 1956, and Makins to Eden, 4 October 1956.

44 William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 2 October 1956; PRO, PREM11/1174, The Times, 3 October 1956.

45 PRO, PREM11/1174, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4592, 4 October 1956.

46 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 7, 299th NSC meeting, 4 October 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 43, Suez Summaries, Number 20, 1 October 1956, and Number 21, 2 October 1956.

Renewed Anglo-American cooperation depended upon British adherence to OMEGA. On 20 September, Eden and Foster Dulles discussed 'setting up a very secret working party...in London to consider continued economic and political means of weakening and lessening the prestige of the regime of Colonel Nasser.' Two weeks later, Foreign Office and MI6 personnel, including Patrick Dean, the head of the Permanent Undersecretary's Department, met State Department and CIA personnel, including the Roosevelts, in Washington to discuss OMEGA. It was agreed that the coup against the Syrian Government through Operation STRAGGLE would be implemented by the end of October.⁴⁷

Even this cooperation was undermined by MI6's independent activities. During the summer of 1956, the intelligence service worked with the Iraqis, the banned Syrian group Parti Populaire Syrienne (PPS), and Syrian military conspirators. While the Americans cleared their operation with British officials, MI6 withheld information from the Americans. MI6 probably consulted the Iraqis in summer 1956 about the return to power of the former dictator Adib Shishakli before the Americans, who doubted Shishakli had widespread support within Syria, forced his departure from the Lebanon.⁴⁸

By October, the British Military Attache in Beirut and General Daghestani, the Iraqi Deputy Chief of Staff, were discussing the details of a new plan. A PPS para-

⁴⁷ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 11, Miscellaneous Paper - U.K. (4), Foster Dulles memorandum, 21 September 1956; AP, AP20/34/4, Eden memorandum, undated.

⁴⁸ PRO, FO371/121858-121859/VY1015/File; PRO, FO371/128220/VY1015/File.

military force would seize Homs, and Salah Shishakli, the former dictator's brother, led his men against Hama. Other PPS troops would occupy key positions in Damascus and assassinate left-wing Army officers. Tribes, such as the Druze in the south and the Alawites in the west, supplied with Iraqi arms, would simultaneously rebel. Politicians involved in the plot included Adnan Atassi, former Ambassador to France; his cousin Faydi Atassi, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs; former Minister of Justice Mounir Ajlani; and former Minister of State Hassan Atrash, a Druze leader. It is not clear if Ilyan, the chief American contact for STRAGGLE and well-known to the Iraqis and the British, played a role in the Anglo-Iraqi planning.⁴⁹

The Anglo-American 'alliance' in the Middle East was not dormant by early October. At working level, the State Department, CIA, and Foreign Office collaborated over OMEGA and relations between the military staffs were close. However, American influence with the Egypt Committee had effectively been replaced by the influence of France and, through the French, Israel. Yet, the Committee, struggling for independence from the U.S., played into the hands of British officials who sought a negotiated settlement. The appeal to the Security Council was not overseen by ad hoc committees but by the regular Foreign Office machinery. Lloyd, accused by some of being 'Eden's poodle,' now became the most important figure in British policymaking.

49 PRO/FO371/128220/VY1015/File.

CHAPTER 13

5 OCTOBER - 14 OCTOBER: FORCE DISMISSED

Foster Dulles, upset with Eden, misinterpreted by Macmillan, and ignored by the Egypt Committee, had one last card to play. If he could personally influence Lloyd, he could tilt the balance in London against force. Before the Security Council considered Suez, he warned Lloyd and Pineau:

There must be some international participation in the operation of the Canal. [The U.S.] also believed, however, that every possible effort must be made to secure this objective by peaceful means and that the use of force would be a desperate remedy.

Lloyd stood firm, using words reminiscent of Kirkpatrick and Eden:

We knew the Egyptians were planning a coup in Libya; they had arms ready there for use and there was a plot to kill the King. King Saud was also threatened. In Iraq Nuri was now in control but there was dissatisfaction amongst some of the younger officers and this was likely to grow if we continue to do nothing. Jordan was already penetrated and Syria was virtually under Egyptian control.

Pineau added, 'Nothing less than the existence of NATO was at stake.'

Foster Dulles insisted, 'If force were used, we could write off Pakistan, Iran, and Ethiopia. The position in Africa would be worse and not better,' but again he made his position palatable by allowing force in the last resort:

The potential use of force must be kept in existence....We must make it clear in the Security Council that if a real effort to get a peaceful settlement were made failed, it would then be permissible to consider force as an

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Pineau added, 'Nothing less than the existence of NATO was at stake.'

Foster Dulles insisted, 'If force were used, we could write off Pakistan, Iran, and Ethiopia. The position in Africa would be worse and not better,' but again he made his position palatable by allowing force in the last resort:

The potential use of force must be kept in existence....We must make it clear in the Security Council that if a real effort to get a peaceful settlement were made failed, it would then be permissible to consider force as an

alternative.¹

Eden was temporarily absent from British policymaking. Visiting his wife Clarissa in University College Hospital, he was struck by a high fever, a recurrent effect of his 1953 gall bladder operation, and admitted to the hospital. By 7 October, his temperature returned to normal, he cabled Lloyd with renewed vigor:

In the last resort, action will be necessary. It is therefore very important that, while appearing reasonable, we shall not be inveigled away in negotiation from the fundamentals to which we have held all along and that we should not be parted from the French.²

Eden's absence, however, revealed the split within Britain's 'official' policy. Lloyd, supported by the Foreign Office and confronted by Foster Dulles' refusal to support significant economic measures, was ready for negotiations, but in London, Macmillan, regaining his former influence, steered the Egypt Committee towards a firmer position.

Lloyd urged Foster Dulles to 'give [SCUA] a few vitamins.' Foster Dulles indicated that the Administration would demand withholding of dues from Egypt by U.S. ships after British and French ships began payments to SCUA. If the U.S. acted first, American ships might be denied passage through the Canal while the vessels of Britain, France, and other countries freely transitted. Lloyd realised Foster Dulles was playing for time, since no dues could be paid to SCUA until it was organised and

¹ PRO, PREM11/1102, Foster Dulles-Lloyd-Pineau meeting, 5 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/10-556, Lodge memorandum, 5 October 1956.

² PRO, PREM11/1102, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1070, 7 October 1956.

compensation arranged for the old Suez Canal Company.³

Foster Dulles insisted that he 'was in full agreement with [Britain] on every point except the wisdom of the ultimate use of force,' but the Egypt Committee instructed Lloyd to insist that the U.S. pay dues to the Association. Lloyd was also told to stand firmly upon the 18-Power Plan in the Security Council.⁴ The position of Macmillan, who allegedly threatened to resign if a compromise was struck with Egypt, was expected. More intriguing was the emergence of Anthony Nutting, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office as a 'hawk.'

On 8 October, Nutting met Indian Foreign Minister Menon, who was promoting his plan for international cooperation in the Canal's administration. Although India would not propose military sanctions, Menon proposed binding arbitration and possible economic sanctions in a dispute between Egypt and the Canal users. Nutting minuted, 'There might even be some slight improvement for us' in the package but warned, 'At present...[it is] unwise to treat the plan as other than a piece of Indian private enterprise.'⁵ The next morning, Nutting persuaded Eden to reject the Menon proposals. He argued that cooperation between SCUA and the Egyptian Canal Authority should not extend beyond advice proffered at joint sessions and rejected any reference of disputes to the International Court of Justice or the U.N.⁶

3 PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 798, 7 October 1956, and Cable 801, 8 October 1956.

4 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)33rd meeting, 8 October 1956.

5 PRO, PREM11/1102, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1075, 8 October 1956.

6 PRO, PREM11/1102, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1086, 9 October 1956, and Cable 1106, 10 October 1956.

Lloyd, however, was already discussing variants of the Menon plan with Pineau and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi. The Security Council adjourned on 9 October to allow the three to confer under the auspices of U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. Fawzi said the Egyptians would accept the 1888 Convention or a new agreement concerning the Canal. They would designate a percentage of revenues for the Canal's development and fix the level of tolls through negotiation. They would endorse an arbitration tribunal, with one Egyptian member, one member from SCUA, and an impartial chairman. Finally, they would welcome Britain's ideas on enforcement of the tribunal's decisions.⁷

Eden had forced to accept the negotiations, since halting the talks would put Britain in the wrong before world opinion and ruin any pretext for force. Instead, he suggested to the Egypt Committee that Lloyd ask Fawzi for details of Egyptian proposals. Meanwhile, Foster Dulles would be pressed to agree that dues could be withheld from Egypt if the Egyptians violated any agreement reached with SCUA. Just in case the Egyptians were conciliatory, Eden added the proviso that Egypt should abandon her blockade of Israeli shipping through the Canal, an almost impossible condition for Cairo to accept.⁸

Unfortunately for Eden, Lloyd continued to obtain concessions, as Fawzi agreed, without qualification, that the Canal should be insulated from Egyptian politics. Lloyd warned the French that negotiations with Egypt meant

⁷ PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 814, 9 October 1956.

⁸ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)34th meeting, 10 October 1956.

'any resort to force would be ruled out in the immediate future' and cabled Eden, 'I doubt whether Pineau really believes that a peaceful settlement is possible and I am not entirely convinced that he wants one.'⁹

Considering the reply to Lloyd, Eden met Minister of Defence Monckton, Minister of Transport Watkinson, Cabinet Secretary Brook, and Kirkpatrick and A.D.M. Ross of the Foreign Office. Finally, the 'hawks' were defeated. Macmillan was absent, Watkinson was disillusioned by the failure of Operation PILEUP, and Monckton's aversion to force was unabated. The meeting conceded:

The present proposals would at least provide a system of international cooperation with a considerable measure of financial control. Moreover, the consortium of the Users Association and the Egyptian Board to some extent satisfied the requirements for an international authority postulated in the 18-Power proposals.

Participants suggested a clause, linked to the U.N. Charter, that any Egyptian breach of the principle of free navigation would 'constitute an act of aggression which justified the injured country in taking action to protect its interests.'

The Egypt Committee intended to end the U.N. talks by 12 October to allow the 'consultation' of Parliament about the launching of REVISE. The Committee now accepted Eden's recommendation:

Provided the present pressure was maintained on Egyptian representatives in these negotiations, [the Foreign Secretary] should not feel himself bound to terminate the discussions by the end of this week [12 October] if at the time it appeared that a satisfactory agreement would shortly be obtained.

⁹ PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 819, 10 October 1956, and Cable 821, 11 October 1956.

Eden cabled Lloyd that he was 'delighted to see that [you] fought so hard' in the negotiations and concluded, 'I know you will do your best to keep the French in line.'¹⁰

Lloyd's antagonist was no longer Fawzi but Pineau. He cabled Eden on 11 October:

Pineau's heavy cold has now translated itself into a fever and his influence upon our discussions is almost entirely negative....I am doing my best to keep him in line, but he seems determined (a) to prevent any agreement, (b) to present our negotiations in the worst possible light, (c) to end up with an expression of opinion by the Security Council which would tie our hands.

Late in the evening, however, the talks produced 'Fawzi's quite definite statement that Egypt would leave the Users to organise themselves as they wished. Egypt would recognise the association and would accept the dues paid through it.'¹¹

On 12 October, Lloyd and Fawzi accepted 'Six Principles' for operation of the Canal:

1. There should be free and open transit through the Canal without discrimination, overt or covert;
2. There should be respect for Egyptian sovereignty;
3. The operation of the Canal should be insulated from the politics of any country;
4. The level of dues should be fixed by agreement between users and owners;
5. A fair proportion of the dues should be allotted to development [of the Canal];
6. Affairs between the Suez Canal Company and the Egyptian Government should be settled by arbitration, with suitable terms of reference and suitable provision for the payment of the sums found to be due.¹²

10 PRO, PREM11/1102, Ministerial meeting, 11 October 1956, and Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1125, 11 October 1956.

11 PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 829, 11 October 1956.

12 PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 830, 11 October 1956, and Cable 835, 12 October 1956.

All eleven members of the Security Council, including the Soviet Union, supported the Principles. The issue, Lloyd wrote, was 'how were these principles to be implemented?'¹³ Pineau insisted that he could not stay in New York beyond 14 October, and Lloyd realised that a detailed agreement could not be reached in 48 hours. Therefore, he and Pineau introduced the 18-Power Plan as the 'most appropriate' means to implement the Six Principles. Lloyd recognised the Soviet Union would veto this but hoped that a substantial majority for the plan bolster Britain's negotiating position.¹⁴

The Americans were now optimistic about the prospect of a peaceful settlement. Foster Dulles told the NSC that Britain appeared 'to favor a compromise settlement but are deeply concerned on how they can square such a compromise with the strong positions which they have taken publicly.' To reinforce British 'moderates,' Foster Dulles finally suggested that, once SCUA was established, U.S.-flagged ships would be mandated to pay Canal dues to the Association and U.S.-owned ships would be encouraged to do likewise.¹⁵

In his relief, Eisenhower spoke too freely, telling a press conference:

It looks like here is a very great crisis that is behind us. I do not mean to say that we are completely out of the woods, but...in both [Foster Dulles'] heart and mine there is a very great prayer of thanksgiving.¹⁶

¹³ Lloyd, p. 159.

¹⁴ PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cables 835 and 845, 12 October 1956.

¹⁵ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 8, 300th NSC meeting, 12 October 1956.

¹⁶ Lloyd, p. 160.

Lloyd, incensed that the President spoke before the Security Council vote on the 18-Power Plan, told Foster Dulles that he 'was disgusted by the way in which our hand is weakened at every stage of this business by what is said over here.'¹⁷

Despite Lloyd's pessimism, nine countries supported the 18-Power Plan in the Council, with only Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, using the veto, opposed. Lloyd informed Eden, 'The suspicion that we were treating the United Nations simply as formality has been dissipated.' The option of military action was still open, since Britain emerged...

...without any result enjoining us against force or to set up a negotiating committee....With the changed atmosphere here, we can count on a more understanding reaction if we have to take extreme measures.

This could only be undertaken, however, if Egypt refused to continue discussions. Lloyd concluded, 'We are now committed to further interchanges with Egypt without a time limit.'¹⁸

On the morning of 14 October, Eden and Nutting read Lloyd's final report. The Prime Minister could have overruled Lloyd's call for genuine negotiations. He told the Conservative Party Conference the previous day, 'We have refused to say that in no circumstances would we ever use force.' To rapturous applause, Eden repeated that Britain would not accept Egyptian control of the Canal. Two days earlier, Nutting delivered a similar statement

¹⁷ PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 852, 13 October 1956.

¹⁸ Lloyd, p. 160; PRO, PREM11/1102, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 854, 14 October 1956.

with the same results.¹⁹

Privately, however, Eden's resolve for military action had disappeared. A cable to Lloyd, drafted by Nutting and approved by Eden, suggested further negotiations:

Should not we and the French now approach the Egyptians and ask them whether they are prepared to meet and discuss in confidence with us on the basis of the second half of the resolution which the Russians vetoed? If they say yes, then it is for consideration whether we and the French meet them somewhere, e.g. Geneva. If they say no, then they will be in defiance of the view of nine members of the Security Council and a new situation will arise.²⁰

Why did Eden change his mind between 10 October, when he rejected Menon's ideas, and 14 October, when he accepted negotiations on similar proposals? One could speculate that Eden expected the Egyptians to reject the talks in Geneva 'on the basis' of the 18-Power proposals, but the Prime Minister knew that discussions with Egypt had progressed beyond international 'control' of the Canal to international 'cooperation' with the Egyptian Canal Authority.²¹

Eden and Nutting's decision was forced by a lack of options. British and French commanders, with the declining morale of their forces²² and the approach of winter weather, could no longer maintain REVERSE. On 12 October, the British Chiefs of Staff approved the 'Winter Plan,' to

19 Eden, p. 507; Rhodes James, pp. 526ff.; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 741.00/10-1856, London to State Department, Cable 2134, 18 October 1956.

20 PRO, PREM11/1102, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1198, 14 October 1956.

21 See Lamb, p. 227.

22 See PRO, WO32/16709, Middle East Rear Command to War Office, Cable 78719/PSZ, 3 October 1956, and Troopers to Forces, Cable 06161/AG, 10 October 1956.

take effect in a week. While the Plan, like REVISE, used an aerial assault and psychological warfare in Phases I and II, the bombing of Egypt 'might occupy 10 to 14 days or even longer' because of adverse weather conditions, shorter daylight hours, and selective targeting to ensure few civilian casualties. More importantly, because of the release of reservists and shipping from duty, no landing of troops on open beaches could be attempted until Spring 1957.²³

As long as Fawzi negotiated and Nasser allowed traffic to transit the Canal, Lloyd and Pineau could not end discussions. American expectations of a peaceful settlement were confirmed by Eisenhower's statement of 12 October. Finally, Nutting was a significant influence, acting as Eden's closest adviser while the Prime Minister rested at Chequers and attended the Conservative Party Conference between 8 and 14 October. As in March, when he advised against punishment of Jordan for Glubb's dismissal, Nutting, belatedly accepting Lloyd's efforts in New York, presented retreat from military action as a diplomatic alternative which would eventually pay dividends.

²³ PRO, PREM11/1104, COS(56)380, 'Operation MUSKETEER: Winter Plan,' 12 October 1956.

CHAPTER 14

14 OCTOBER-29 OCTOBER 1956: FORCE RESURRECTED

Eden's telegram proposing negotiations with the Egyptians in Geneva was despatched to Lloyd at 1:30 p.m. on 14 October. At 3 p.m., Eden intended to inform two French envoys of the change of policy, but Acting Foreign Minister Albert Gazier and General Maurice Challe, the Chief of Air Staff, had their own surprise for the Prime Minister. By 4 p.m., the Anglo-French military option was revived.

Gazier opened the discussion by unexpectedly asking about British policy if Israel attacked Egypt. Puzzled, Eden noted that Britain, France, and the U.S. agreed in the Tripartite Declaration to oppose any aggression across Arab-Israeli frontiers, but Gazier persisted, inquiring if Britain would act under the Declaration when Israel invaded Egypt. The Prime Minister, finally recognising the French plan, asked Nutting, 'Didn't your agreement [the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty] say something about our not being obliged to send troops if Egypt was attacked by Israel?' Nutting correctly answered that the treaty had nothing to do with the Egyptian-Israeli question and did not nullify British obligations under the Tripartite Declaration. Eden was crestfallen but 'could scarcely contain his glee' when Gazier noted that Nasser recently stated that the Declaration did not apply to Egypt.

Challe then revealed the French plan. Hours after Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula, Britain and France would order the Egyptians and Israelis to withdraw their

forces either side of the Suez Canal, and an Anglo-French force would occupy the Canal Zone. Eden said he would answer the proposal by 16 October, but revealed his thoughts when he dismissed Nutting's request to question the French about the secret delivery of more than 60 Mystere IV fighters to Israel.¹

To prompt the British into an operation including Israel against Egypt, some cause had to be found, and the French discovered it in the Israeli-Jordanian conflict and British sponsorship of the Iraqi-Jordanian axis. Gazier and Challe only had to convince Eden that, if he rejected their approach, Israeli-Jordanian troubles would lead to Anglo-Israeli war.

On 10 September, seven Israeli soldiers were slain in Jerusalem, allegedly by Jordanian attackers. Israel's Force 101, the specialist commando unit, demolished a police post near Hebron the next evening, killing 19. After three Israeli watchmen were killed on 12 September, 10 Jordanians died in an Israeli attack upon the police post at Gharandal.²

Jordan's King Hussein was desperate. Hoping for Egyptian assistance, he supported Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, but Egypt was preoccupied with Anglo-French military preparations. General Nuwar, the Jordanian Chief of Staff, asked Saudi Arabia for £12 million in military equipment, but King Saud only agreed to £2-3 million, spread among Arab states, 'mostly in ships and dates.' Syrian forces were inadequate and its

¹ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, pp. 90ff.

² PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/278, Laurence minute, 26 September 1956.

government unstable. So Hussein, despite dissatisfaction at earlier Iraqi-Jordanian staff talks and lack of Iraqi aid, met King Feisal II, Crown Prince Abdul-Illah, Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id, and the Iraqi Chief of Staff on 14 September to request that the Iraqis immediately send a division to Jordan. Unwilling to put troops under Nuwar's command, the Iraqis refused, but they offered to send two or three brigades if Jordan accepted a 'proper plan with command structure and defined roles.'³

Hussein's approach gave Britain a new opportunity to forge an Iraqi-Jordanian defence system. Lloyd wrote that the despatch of an Iraqi division into Jordan 'would have the advantage that were Jordan to disintegrate, a substantial portion of Jordan would remain under Iraqi control.' The Chiefs of Staff suggested 'approaching the Iraqis with a view to informing the Jordanian Government that, in the event that [Iraq] put forces into Jordan, [Jordan] could expect to have air support from the RAF stationed there.'⁴

Tension rose as the Iraqi-Jordanian staff talks stalled over the question of command and the Israelis stepped up reprisals. After an attack upon Israeli archaeologists by a deranged Jordanian soldier, Israeli troops overwhelmed another police post near Jerusalem in the 'biggest actual military operation since the 1948 armistice,' killing more than 30. On 27 September, Nuri

3 PRO, FO371/121486/VJ10393/60, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1048, 15 September 1956.

4 PRO, FO371/121587/VJ10393/106G, Extract from Lloyd minute, 17 September 1956; PRO, DEFE4/90, COS(56)94th meeting, 18 September 1956; PRO, FO371/121486/VJ10393/60, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 1872, 20 September 1956.

invited British Ambassador Wright to join discussions with the Jordanian Foreign Minister.⁵

The Foreign Office had a difficult decision. Wright's attendance would indicate British approval of the Iraqi deployment, but Teddy Kollek, Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's chief aide, told U.S. Ambassador Edward Lawson that Israel would occupy Jordanian territory if 'a single Iraqi soldier moved into Jordan.' On the other hand, Iraq and Jordan would interpret refusal to uphold the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty as British abandonment of her Arab allies. The Baghdad Pact would be undermined and Jordan might join the Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian bloc.⁶

The Foreign Office stood by the Iraqi-Jordanian axis. If Israel attacked Jordan, Britain would provide air and naval support to Amman, and Nuwar's forces could draw upon £7 million of British stocks. Israel would be told that Britain would honour the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, and U.S. support would be sought for the Iraqi deployment. Wright presented the decision to Nuri and the Jordanian Foreign Minister on 29 September.⁷

On 1 October, the Egypt Committee endorsed the measures, although the Defence Committee, unwilling to risk Israeli opposition without American backing, modified the instructions from 'all available air and naval

5 PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/278, Laurence minute, 26 September 1956; PRO, FO371/121486/VJ10393/69G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1097, 27 September 1956.

6 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 685.87/9-2756, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 295, 27 September 1956; PRO, FO371/121486/VJ10393/69G, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 1947, 28 September 1956.

7 PRO, FO371/121486/VJ10393/69G, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cables 1947-1949, 28 September 1956, and VJ10393/72G, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1110, 29 September 1956.

support' to 'air and naval support....to the greatest extent possible in the circumstances obtaining at the time.' The Foreign Office's hand was strengthened, however, when the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Abba Eban, told Foster Dulles that Israel would not object to the Iraqi deployment if it had advance notice, no heavy equipment was moved into Jordan, no 'unreasonably large number' of Iraqi troops was moved, and no Iraqi troops were put on the West Bank. Reassured, Foster Dulles urged Britain to 'clinch the matter immediately.'⁸

On 6 October, Ben-Gurion asked Ambassador Lawson for further information on the size of the Iraqi force and an assurance that it would be far from the Israeli-Jordanian border. Lawson warned the State Department that Israeli assurances were based on information that the Iraqi deployment was a token force of several hundred troops. The Foreign Office dismissed Lawson's concern, however, since Iraq now planned to deploy only one battalion, far from the Israeli border.⁹

Diplomatic confusion now caused an important delay. The State Department, believing the Iraqi deployment was imminent, told Lawson to wait before approaching Israeli officials, but the despatch of the battalion was delayed by the Iraqi-Jordanian dispute over command. The British

8 PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)32nd meeting, 1 October 1956; PRO, CAB131/17, DC(56)7th meeting, 2 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121487/ VJ10393/82, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2053, 3 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85/10-356, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 310, 3 October 1956; Israeli State Archives, 2409/18, Eytan to Eban, 3 October 1956.

9 PRO, FO371/121487/VJ10393/102, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 467, 6 October 1956, and Holmer minute, 8 October 1956.

charge d'affaires in Tel Aviv, Peter Westlake, finally asked the Foreign Office on 9 October if Lawson could give Ben-Gurion details of the deployment.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Israel seized the diplomatic and military initiative. Foreign Minister Meir told Ambassador Lawson that conditional agreement to the Iraqi deployment was withdrawn because of Nuri's statement, printed in The Times of 7 October, that Israel should accept a frontier settlement based on the 1947 borders, ceding territory to the Arabs. She warned:

Israel will not sit by while these events develop. We will not make it so comfortable for them. We are not going to be destroyed without a struggle.¹¹

At 11:55 p.m. on 10 October, 'very heavy Israeli artillery and mortar fire' began on a 12-mile front from Qalqilya to Tul Karra in Jordan. An Israeli division was involved, one brigade crossing the border and two waiting in reserve. Tanks shelled the Jordanians across the border, and light aircraft carried out reconnaissance. The police station in Qalqilya was destroyed by mortar fire, and by 1:47 a.m., some Israeli troops were five miles inside Jordan. More than 70 Jordanians were killed and more than 40 wounded before the attack ended, and the IDF lost 18 men, an unusually high total for a 'reprisal' operation.¹²

10 PRO, FO371/121487/VJ10393/109, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 471, 9 October 1956, and Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 2077, 10 October 1956.

11 PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/297, Makins to Foreign Office, Cable 2096, 10 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85 Series, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 340, 9 October 1956, and Cable 346, 10 October 1956.

12 USNA, RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographical File, 1954-56, Box 14, S. 42, Collins to Radford, 11 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85/10-

The Israelis claimed the raid was a 'hastily planned, organised, and carried out' reprisal for the murder of two Israeli farm labourers on 9 October. Dayan also asserted that four fedayeen who killed three Israeli Druze on 12 September, released by Hussein, subsequently murdered five Israelis. On 8 October, the Israelis allegedly transmitted the names of the fedayeen to Jordan but received no response.¹³

Dayan's argument is belied by the nature of the raid. An entire Israeli division had never been used for a 'reprisal,' and the operation required days of advance preparation. As Duke, the British Ambassador to Jordan, noted, 'The types and numbers of weapons employed in the...incident were not justified by the opposition to be expected.' Abel Thomas, the chief aide of French Minister of Defence Bourges-Maunoury and a participant in secret Franco-Israeli discussions, summarised, 'Under the pretext that Iraqi troops had expressed their intention to invade Jordan and had made some incursions there,...Israel had created the casus belli' for an Israeli-Jordanian war.¹⁴

In one sense, Qalqilya warned Britain and Jordan to halt the Iraqi deployment. The day after the raid, the Israeli Government publicly stated, '[Iraqi] action would

1856, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 220, 18 October 1956.

¹³ Dayan, Story of My Life, p. 172; PRO, FO371/121782/VR1091/359, Chancery (Tel Aviv) to Levant Department, 18 October 1956. See also PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/301, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 480, 11 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/319, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 1462, 15 October 1956.

¹⁴ PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/334A, Higgins to Levant Department, 25 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/316G, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 1459, 13 October 1956; Abel Thomas, p. 164.

be a direct threat to the security of Israel and to the validity of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement.'¹⁵ On 12 October, an 'anxious and indecisive' Meir requested that British Charge Westlake provide information within 48 hours on the size of the Iraqi deployment, its destination, and the type of equipment involved. When Westlake repeated that Britain would honour her obligation to defend Jordan, Meir replied that this 'amounted to an ultimatum...creating a radical change in the situation.'¹⁶

Two days later, a public statement by Meir claimed, 'The movement into Jordan of Iraqi troops would be part of a scheme designed to serve the territorial ambitions of Iraq and to bring about a radical change in the status quo in the area.' A further Cabinet statement expressed 'concern and astonishment' at 'the threat of the British Foreign Office that Britain will implement the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty against Israel.' The Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, Peres, told his senior officials:

I don't know whether we'll be able to wait until the Iraqi thing begins and reaches us before we fight....I am convinced that the French sincerely wanted, and still want, to fight Nasser, [but] I am very suspicious of British machinations.¹⁷

The Israelis threatened to seize the West Bank of the Jordan River if the Iraqi deployment was completed. On 7

15 PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/310, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 491, 12 October 1956.

16 PRO, FO371/121488/VJ10393/126G, Westlake to Foreign Office, Cable 488, 12 October 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.85/10-1256, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 365, 12 October 1956.

17 PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/311, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 494, 14 October 1956, and VR1091/323, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 506, 15 October 1956.

October, the Jerusalem Post, recognised as the voice of the Israeli Government, had hinted, 'If Jordan crumbles, Israel could not sit with folded hands and Egypt would not inherit [her].' 'Reliable' informants told the British Consulate in Jerusalem and Embassy in Tel Aviv that the Israeli Cabinet, upset by the information from Westlake 'about the number of Iraqi troops and their length of stay in Jordan,...intended to take part of the West Bank from Ramallah to Nablus and the North,' as it thought both the U.S. and France would remain neutral. On 15 October, Israeli Ambassador Eban, told Foster Dulles, '[We] think Jordan is breaking up and it is a question of grabbing the pieces.' Although Foster Dulles discouraged Israeli action, a high-level meeting, with Eisenhower present, assumed that Jordan would be partitioned between Israel and Iraq. This was unwelcome, but a British or American war against Israel was worse.¹⁸

Yet Israel had assumed a great risk with Qalqilya. CORDAGE, the British military plan to punish Israeli aggression against Jordan, was operational despite the Suez Crisis. On 9 October, the Chiefs of Staff reinforced the air defences of Cyprus, not only against Egypt, but also Israel. The next day, the Chiefs concluded, '[We] should bring home very forcibly to Ministers that we could

¹⁸ PRO, FO371/121488/VJ10393/113, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2085, 9 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/321, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 497, 14 October 1956, and VR1091/320, Jerusalem to Foreign Office, Cable 385, 15 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/332, Jerusalem to Foreign Office, Cable 390, 16 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 15 October 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 6, 'U.S. Opportunities in the Middle East,' undated memorandum.

either go to the aid of Jordan against Israel with sea and air power, or we could launch MUSKETEER [REVISE]; we could not do both.'¹⁹

Ben-Gurion had recognised the risk, telling the Knesset on 19 June, '[War with Jordan] would bring Israel into conflict with the British army and...he would never send Israeli defence forces to fight any European, American, British, Russian, or French army.' He knew that a large-scale Israeli attack upon Jordan might prevent Britain joining a Franco-Israeli attack upon Egypt, writing on 6 October, 'In my opinion, France will not act without Britain, so we must not give the British any pretext just now to slip out of the affair.' Meir, however, was willing to brave British retaliation to stop the Iraqi deployment, and Ben-Gurion accepted the Foreign Minister's argument at a 7 1/2-hour Cabinet meeting on 7 October. Dayan also agreed, but his motive may have involved a conspiracy with French planners to draw Britain into a tripartite attack upon Nasser.²⁰

Dayan believed a Franco-Israeli operation could overwhelm Egypt, but his hopes were blocked by Ben-Gurion's insistence upon British participation. Salvation came from an idea of Pineau's, broached at the Franco-Israeli discussions in Paris on 30 September. A week earlier, Eden, referring to the Israeli-Jordanian tension, allegedly exclaimed to Pineau, 'What a pity that these

19 PRO, DEFE4/90, COS(56)97th meeting, 9 October 1956;

PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)98th meeting, 10 October 1956;

20 PRO, FO371/121728/VR1073/185, Chancery (Tel Aviv) to Levant Department, 21 June 1956; Bar-Zohar, The Armed Prophet, p. 222; Ben-Gurion Archive, Sde Boker, Israel, Ben-Gurion diary entry, 6 October 1956..

incidents were not taking place on the Egyptian border!' Pineau assumed that, if the British Cabinet faced a possible Israeli-Jordanian war, they would choose the lesser evil of cooperating with Israel against Egypt. At Ben-Gurion's discussion of 3 October with the French military planners, General Challe and Colonel Mangin, Dayan noted cryptically, 'If the thing [the Franco-Israeli operation] is postponed at present, it might be that something will be cooked up in France and Jordan.'²¹

While the raid on Qalqilya was planned, Dayan and the French assumed that operations against Cairo would proceed. Admiral Barjot, the Deputy Commander of REVISE, issued a 'Secret and Personal Instruction' with 'Hypothese I [for Israel],' which assumed 'benevolent neutrality on the part of Great Britain,' including permission for France to use airfields in Cyprus. On 10 October, Peres and Abel Thomas signed a politico-military agreement, and Franco-Israeli staff conferences in Tel Aviv established the invasion's details. Teddy Kollek, the director of Ben-Gurion's office, told American officials on 13 October, before the Gazier-Challe mission to London, that Israeli activity might shift towards Egypt.²²

It is possible that not even Challe or Mangin knew the operational details of Qalqilya in advance, but they probably knew of its general aim. General Andre Beaufre, the commander of French land forces for MUSKETEEER, later wrote, 'It seems that the [French] Colonial Office tried

²¹ Abel Thomas, p. 150; Ben-Gurion Archives, Ben-Gurion diary entry, 3 October 1956.

²² Beaufre, p. 69 and p. 77; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 674.84A/10-2456, Tel Aviv to State Department, Despatch 229, 24 October 1956.

some complicated manoeuvre in Jordan to incite Nasser to attack Israel and so provide justification for our operations.' On 13 October, Eden asked Nutting if France had put the Israelis up to attack Jordan. Nutting replied that Foreign Office experts thought this was possible. The French Ambassador to Israel, Pierre-Eugene Gilbert, who knew of the talks between Dayan and the French planners, told his British counterpart, John Nicholls, that France had not encouraged recent Israeli reprisals but 'some Ministers might well have taken the line that a good display of aggressiveness on any of Israel's frontiers would be helpful to the West in the context of the Suez situation.'²³

The secretive nature of Franco-Israeli consultations produced the seemingly erratic behaviour of French officials in early October. Pineau knew of Ben-Gurion's initial agreement to the Iraqi deployment into Jordan but never informed officials of the French Foreign Ministry.²⁴ The Foreign Ministry, citing Israeli opposition, repeatedly warned Britain against the Iraqi deployment and French officials in Tel Aviv told the Israelis that 'they fear[ed] that the English want to conquer Jordan [and] Syria with the help of the Iraqis.' However, the French Embassy in Washington told the State Department that Pineau did not object to the plan. A British Foreign Office official noted the conflict in French thought and came close to the truth: 'One cannot help suspecting that

²³ Beaufre, p. 77; Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 88ff.; PRO, FO371/121782/VR1091/363, Nicholls to Rose, 17 October 1956.

²⁴ See Israeli State Archives, Elath to Israeli Foreign Ministry, 10 October 1956.

the French and Israel are in collusion over all this.²⁵

Pineau, who had obstructed negotiations with Fawzi and Lloyd, suddenly embraced the talks after the raid on Qalqilya and a visit by General Challe, who informed him of Franco-Israeli military planning. Challe's probable task, given Ben-Gurion's insistence that the British consent to Franco-Israeli military operations, was to ensure that Pineau spun out negotiations while Ben-Gurion's wishes were met.²⁶

Eden's immediate priority after the Gazier-Challe visit was blocking British intervention for Jordan against Israel. When Nutting, supporting Ambassador Duke in Amman, suggested that Britain defend Jordan, Eden allegedly replied, 'I will not allow you to plunge this country into war merely to satisfy the anti-Jewish spleen of you people in the Foreign Office.' He directed Nutting to instruct Duke:

It is manifestly not in our interest nor in Jordan's interest to treat raids as an act of war and intervene....[The Jordanians] seem to be nurturing the idea that they can safely destroy the military value of the Arab Legion, dispense with British land assistance, and rely on the RAF to win the land battle, but that is a lethal illusion.²⁷

Eden suspended the Iraqi deployment, the Foreign Office

25 PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/297, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2096, 10 October 1956, and Laurence minute, 11 October 1956; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 9 October 1956, in Troen and Shemesh, p. 301.

26 PRO, FO800/725, Lloyd minute, 'M. Pineau and Mr. Dulles in New York,' 18 October 1956; Abel Thomas, p. 162; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 15 October 1956, in Troen and Shemesh, p. 302.

27 PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/316G, Amman to Foreign Office, Amman to Foreign Office, Cable 1459, 13 October 1956, and subsequent minutes and VR1091/315G, Foreign Office to Amman, Cable 2008, 14 October 1956; Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 89.

instructing Ambassador Wright on 15 October:

There are reasons which cannot be divulged but which make it essential that [the] move should not take place for 48 hours....You may tell Nuri for his own information that the Prime Minister personally attaches great importance to this.

Four days later, Eden instructed Kirkpatrick, 'No Iraqi troops or stores into Jordan at present.'²⁸

Eden's sudden decision to work with France and Israel threw British policy into disarray. Although the Foreign Office and Air Ministry tried to defuse Israeli-Jordanian tension, agreeing only to 'demonstration' flights of Hunter fighters from Cyprus to Jordan and supply of 25-pound ammunition to the Arab Legion, but CORDAGE was still in effect. After Qalqilya, half of Britain's Middle Eastern air force was placed on six-hour readiness, with the remainder on 12-hour alert. General Sir Charles Keightley, the Commander-in-Chief of REVISE, assured the Chiefs of Staff, 'With forces now available, [we] were in a strong position to overcome any Israeli opposition in a few days.'²⁹

The British Defence Coordinating Committee for the Middle East, was not as confident and suggested immediate readiness for CORDAGE of the RAF squadrons earmarked for REVISE, transfer of Venom fighters from Germany to Cyprus, and assignment of bombers at Malta 'for offensive action against Israel as well as Egypt.' The Carrier Task Group

²⁸ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p. 95; PRO, FO371/121488/VJ10393/131G, Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 2164, 15 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121489/VJ10393/166, Cairncross to Cloake, 19 October 1956.

²⁹ PRO, FO371/121780/VR1091/303, Amman to Foreign Office, Cables 1948-1950, and subsequent minutes and cables; PRO, AIR8/2093, ACAS (Ops) to SASO (MEAF), Cable 2147/ACAS, 12 October 1956; PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)101st meeting, 15 October 1956.

in the Eastern Mediterranean would be placed on 24-hour alert, while the British land force at Aqaba in southern Jordan prepared to seize the Israeli port of Elath.³⁰

The situation neared the level of farce. Eden allowed Nutting to inform two Foreign Office colleagues of events but objected to the briefing of the Foreign Office Legal Advisor, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice:

That's the last person I want consulted. The lawyers are always against our doing anything. For God's sake, keep them out of it. This is a political affair.

Nutting consulted Kirkpatrick and Assistant Undersecretary Ross. Despite Kirkpatrick's advocacy of force against Egypt, he and Ross objected vehemently to the French plan. Lloyd's work in New York would be undone, the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 would be ignored, the U.S. would oppose the plan and the U.N. would condemn it, the Commonwealth would be divided, the stability of pro-Western regimes in the Middle East would be jeopardised, and the security of British and French oil installations would be endangered.³¹

Eden rejected the brief out of hand and presented the Challe-Gazier plan at an 'informal' meeting on 16 October with Secretary of State for War Head, Minister of Defence Monckton, the President of the Board of Trade, Peter Thorneycroft, and Lord Chancellor Kilmuir. Nutting summarised his objections and Monckton mildly protested, but the other Ministers agreed with Eden.³²

30 PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)102nd meeting, 16 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121535/VJ1192/116G, BDCC (ME) to COS, Cable MECOS 186, 16 October 1956.

31 Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 95ff.

32 Lamb, pp. 231ff.

Lloyd, ordered by Eden to return from New York, arrived at 10 Downing Street as the meeting was in progress. Nutting greeted him with the news that negotiations with Egypt were suspended. Lloyd allegedly said, 'We must have nothing to do with the French plan.' In the meeting, however, Lloyd held his objections. Afterwards, Nutting tried to change his Minister's mind, but Lloyd, resigned to following Eden's wishes, rationalised that negotiations with Egypt were useless because Nasser would not honour any commitment.³³

Eden and Lloyd flew to Paris that afternoon to meet Mollet and Pineau in discussions that lasted until 1:30 a.m. At the meeting with Mollet and Pineau, Lloyd made a final attempt to save negotiations with Egypt, arguing that, while Britain and France could not obtain the 18-Power Plan, they might arrange 'international control,' with strict regulations on the level of tolls and percentage of revenues devoted to the Canal's development. Differences would be referred to an independent body, whose decisions would be enforced through appropriate sanctions. Mollet, supported by Pineau, said this was 'quite unsatisfactory.'

Pineau then indicated that Israel would act before the Arabs received more Soviet arms. Eden repeated, 'If Israel attacked Jordan, we were bound to go to Jordan's help,' but added, 'We did not regard ourselves as under any obligation towards Egypt under the Tripartite Declaration.' Eden and the French agreed that the United Nations was not a serious impediment, as 'it was not

³³ Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 97ff.

thought likely that the Security Council would reach agreement on any action to be taken.' More significantly, Eden argued, 'The U.S. Government would be no more anxious than the French or British Government to take action under the Tripartite Declaration' to punish Israel for her aggression.' It was agreed 'that if Israel were to act before the end of the American election campaign, it was most improbable that Congress could be resummoned or, if resummoned, would give this authority [for the intervention of U.S. forces].' Non-military action by the U.S., notably economic sanctions against an aggressor, was not discussed.

Finally, Mollet established Eden's position: 'If Israel attacked Egypt, would U.K. feel bound to intervene under the Tripartite Declaration?' Eden 'thought the answer to that would be "no" but he would confirm that to M. Mollet after he got back to London.' Mollet asked, 'In the event of the likelihood of hostilities in the vicinity of the Canal, would the U.K. Government intervene to stop them?' Eden 'thought the answer to that question would be "yes".'³⁴

A disheartened Lloyd told Nutting the next morning that 'he hoped that [Britain] would not have to be directly associated with these [Franco-Israeli] talks, at any rate at the political level.'³⁵ A more enthusiastic Eden told Iveragh MacDonald of the Times of the Gazier-Challe approach and the meeting in Paris,³⁶ but he

³⁴ PRO, FO800/725, Lloyd minute, 18 October 1956.

³⁵ Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 98ff.

³⁶ See Iveragh MacDonald, The History of the Times: Volume V, Struggles in War and Peace, 1939-1966 (London: Times Books, 1984).

withheld the details from the Egypt Committee, merely telling them that Iraqi troops were to be held at the Jordanian frontier 'at the suggestion of Jordan....Meanwhile, the French Government were urging the Israelis to refrain from any precipitate action.' Regarding Suez, Lloyd reported that Egypt had proposed further negotiations and 'it would be inexpedient to reject such a suggestion.'³⁷

Only at the Cabinet on 18 October, after Lloyd had spoken to Butler, the Lord Privy Seal and potentially Eden's most powerful opponent, did the Prime Minister and Lloyd refer to the talks with the French. Like Gazier, they cited Jordan as the reason for a new policy:

The political situation in Jordan was unstable, and there were signs that Israel might be preparing to make some military move....[We] had our obligations under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, but it would be contrary to our interests to act, at this time and alone, in support of Jordan against Israel.

Eden then presented the Gazier-Challe formula:

If [Israel] contemplated any military operations against the Arabs, it would be far better from our point of view that they should attack Egypt....He had therefore thought it right to make it known to the Israelis, through the French, that in the event of hostilities between Egypt and Israel, the U.K. Government would not come to the assistance of Egypt.

According to Lloyd and Butler, the Prime Minister also asked that 'Britain and France should go in to safeguard the Canal and the shipping in it' when Israel attacked Egypt. Butler vaguely suggested 'an agreement with the French and the Israelis designed to free the Canal and eventually to internationalise it,' and Lloyd expressed

³⁷ PRO, CAB134/1216, E.C.(56)35th meeting, 17 October 1956.

his anxiety over the effect upon Arab opinion of Anglo-French operations with Israel. Neither was willing, however, to oppose Eden.³⁸

The Cabinet endorsement of Eden's action confirmed Britain's estrangement from the U.S. On 13 October, Foster Dulles, trying to further negotiations with Egypt, indicated that SCUA would transfer up to 90 percent of the revenues it received to the Egyptian Government. Anxious that any agreement with Egypt should contain effective sanctions, Lloyd appealed to Foster Dulles to modify his position, but the U.S. Secretary had already informed the Foreign Office:

I gather that it is now your view that SCUA should serve as a means of exerting pressure on the Egyptian Government by withholding dues. Our idea, made clear from the beginning, is that it was to be a means of practical working cooperation with the Egyptian authorities which would seek to establish de facto international participation in the operation of the Canal.³⁹

The Americans knew from U-2 reconnaissance flights about Israel's acquisition of 72 Mysteres, but they expected the Israelis to attack Jordan. When Foster Dulles complained to Allen Dulles, 'I do not think that we have really any clear picture as to what the British and French are up to there,' he was reassured that the CIA was 'fairly well' aware of developments in Egypt.⁴⁰ In fact,

38 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.71(56), 18 October 1956; Lloyd, p. 177; Butler, The Art of the Possible (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), p. 192.

39 PRO, PREM11/1102, Dixon to Foreign Office, Cables 846 and 847, 13 October 1956; PRO, PREM11/1103, Lloyd to Foster Dulles and Foster Dulles to Lloyd, 15 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Rountree, 15 October 1956.

40 DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Lodge to Dulles, 17 October 1956, and Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 18 October 1956.

the CIA missed the first public hint of Israeli cooperation with Britain and France. Addressing the Knesset on 15 October, Ben-Gurion read a poem about Israel's strength, a disguised reference to arms shipments from France, and commented, 'I am as confident, as every one of our commanders, that any conflict with the Egyptians or the rest of the Arab armies will end in victory.'⁴¹

Privately, Ben-Gurion maintained pessimistic resistance to the Israeli military and Ministry of Defence. On 15 October, Joseph Nachmias, the Israeli Military Attache in Paris, transmitted the Challe-Gazier plan but, to persuade Ben-Gurion of Britain's desire to work with Israel, implied that the proposal came from Eden. Ben-Gurion saw 'the height of British hypocrisy' in the plan and wrote, 'The British plot, I imagine, is to get us involved with Nasser and bring about the occupation of Jordan by Iraq.' However, Ben-Gurion accepted Mollet's invitation to tripartite discussions in Paris.⁴²

Meanwhile, Eden prepared for implementation of the Gazier-Challe plan. When the British representative to the U.N., Pierson Dixon, suggested that Jordan was entitled to defend herself against Israeli attacks, Eden wrote Lloyd:

I am much concerned by the line taken by Sir Pierson Dixon over the Jordan complaint. The blame is not entirely on one side, but he makes it appear that it is, and aligns himself with the Russians....I am really concerned about the effect of this on Israel. The French warned us

41 PRO, FO371/121781/VR1091/327, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 511, 15 October 1956; Brecher, p.248.

42 Golan, p. 53; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 234; Mordechai Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sevres Collusion,' in Louis and Owen, pp. 149ff.

how suspicious of us the Israelis are.⁴³

Eden told his military enough to halt REVISE's replacement with the Winter Plan but not enough to stand down the British alert against Israel. The Chiefs of Staff vetoed the British Defence Coordinating Committee's plan to capture Eilat, but they agreed to 'A) air operations at maximum intensity to neutralise the Israeli Air Force, B) blockade and naval bombardment as soon as the air situation permits, and C) such operations as are necessary to secure Aqaba [in Jordan].' Six squadrons of bombers were sent to Cyprus and 1 1/2 to Malta. Hunter fighters were reinforced on Cyprus by Venoms from Germany. The operational headquarters for CORDAGE moved from Malta to Cyprus on 21 October and took precedence over REVISE's command structure.⁴⁴

The Foreign Office's Levant Department knew of the measures on 16 October, but the Permanent Undersecretary's Department, the liaison with Eden for covert action and planning, was not informed of CORDAGE's development until the 18th.⁴⁵ Eden only acted to halt CORDAGE on 22 October when he received a request to retain the New Zealand cruiser Royalist for the operation. He wrote Lord

43 PRO, FO371/121745/VR1074/412, Dixon to Foreign Office, Cable 876, 17 October 1956, and DeZulueta to Graham, 19 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121746/VR1074/436, Eden to Lloyd, 20 October 1956.

44 PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)103rd meeting, 18 October 1956; PRO, AIR20/9965/File.

45 PRO, FO371/121535/VJ1192/118G, COS to BDCC (ME), COSME 150, and Rose to Ross, 18 October 1956.

The Permanent Undersecretary's Department discussed the military preparations, but its action, including the vital question of when it informed Ministers of the alert against Israel, is in a file that is missing from the Public Record Office. (PRO, FO371/121536/VJ1192/122 (missing from PRO))

Hailsham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, 'I trust that there is no likelihood of our fighting Israel on behalf of Jordan and we have done all we can to discourage Israel from follies in this direction.'⁴⁶

By the time Eden wrote Hailsham, British, French, and Israeli representatives had met at Sevres outside Paris. On 21 October, Challe and Mangin arrived in Jerusalem to 'escort' the Israeli delegation. Ben-Gurion threatened to turn back if the French still favoured a unilateral Israeli invasion followed by Anglo-French intervention and warned the envoys, 'If you intend to present the British proposal to us, the only benefit of my journey to France [will be] that I will make the acquaintance of your premier.'⁴⁷

The first formal Franco-Israeli meeting occurred over lunch on 22 October, with Mollet, Pineau, and Bourges-Maunoury leading the French delegation. Ben-Gurion tested support for a 'master plan' for the Middle East, involving, 'before all else, naturally, the elimination of Nasser,' the partition of Jordan between Iraq and Israel, the division of Lebanon, with portions to Israel and Syria and the remainder as a Christian state, the installation of a pro-Western government in Syria, and international status for the Suez Canal.⁴⁸ When the French offered no reaction, Ben-Gurion challenged them by arguing that operations against Egypt should not be undertaken

⁴⁶ PRO, PREM11/1508, Hailsham to Eden, 22 October 1956, and Eden to Hailsham, 23 October 1956.

⁴⁷ Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 175ff.; Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, pp. 234ff.

⁴⁸ See also Israeli State Archives, Ben-Gurion-Gilbert meeting, 19 October 1956.

immediately. The Soviets might intervene, and Eisenhower would 'feel freer after the elections' to adopt a position of benevolent neutrality towards the invasion and to warn off Moscow. Mollet protested:

Perhaps, in the end, we would convince the U.S. in favour of a common programme...but we would lose valuable time, and possibly even the chance to act....As for British participation, any delay is likely to be fatal. I know Eden personally, and I am absolutely convinced that he is an enthusiastic supporter of common action...but his domestic situation is deteriorating.

Pineau added that the Soviets were busy with uprisings in Hungary and that the U.S. was preoccupied with the Presidential elections. Bourges-Maunoury argued that, if the operation was not launched within a few days, 'France would have to withdraw....The beginning of November is the final date.' He then offered French planes and pilots to operate from Israeli bases and support the Israeli land advance while French ships patrolled the Israeli coast and bombarded Egyptian ports. Ben-Gurion's 'objections' to an operation led by an Israeli advance suddenly disappeared. Dayan proposed an Israeli paratroop drop in the Sinai, followed by a French ultimatum to Egypt to cease resistance and the bombing of Egyptian airfields. Ben-Gurion concluded that the invasion could start 'tomorrow' if Britain cooperated.⁴⁹

On 21 October at Chequers, Eden consulted an inner circle of Ministers, including Lloyd, Macmillan, Butler, Head, Kilmuir, and Home about the invitation to meet with the Israelis. Cabinet Secretary Brook, and the Permanent

⁴⁹ Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 236ff.; Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 177ff.; Brecher, p. 271.

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence, Richard Powell, were also present. Powell declined Eden's invitation to go to Sevres. Eden then suggested Dean, the head of the Permanent Undersecretary's Department, but Ministers finally decided that Lloyd, using the excuse of a cold, should cancel his appointments and travel to France.⁵⁰

Lloyd, still unhappy about cooperation with Israel, was further shaken when his automobile, en route from Villacoublay airfield to Sevres, was nearly hit by a speeding car. Ben-Gurion's secretary, Mordechai Bar-On wrote:

[Lloyd's] voice was shrill and started with an unpleasant tone of cynicism and a humour dry as a clay shard. His face gave the impression of something stinking hanging permanently under his nose.⁵¹

Ben-Gurion again tried the gambit of a Middle Eastern 'master plan.' Lloyd ignored the scheme but, unlike the French, seized the initiative, arguing that 'it was possible to reach agreement with Egypt over the Suez Canal within seven days.' Lloyd restated the 'British' plan: if Israel would attack Egypt alone, Britain and France would subsequently intervene to safeguard the Suez Canal and stop the fighting. He refused the proposal of Ben-Gurion and Dayan for a limited Israeli paratroop drop since Britain needed a 'real act of war' to justify Anglo-French intervention as 'peacekeepers.' Bourges-Maunoury unveiled his idea of French air cover for Israeli operations, but Lloyd objected that this would prove Anglo-French

50 Author's interview with Sir Richard Powell; Thorpe, p. 236; AP, AP20/30/2, Chequers Book, 21 October 1956, and AP23/44/83A-B, Hill to Lloyd, 26 April 1967.

51 The Times, 2 January 1987; Bar-On, in Louis and Owen, p. 157.

'collusion' with Israel.⁵²

The Anglo-Israeli dispute centred upon the interval between a large-scale Israeli invasion of Sinai and Anglo-French bombing of Egypt. Ben-Gurion wanted 12 hours; Lloyd offered no less than 48. A compromise suggestion that France intervene 12 hours and Britain 48 hours after the Israeli attack was unacceptable because the French did not have the bombers to neutralise the Egyptian Air Force. Ben-Gurion proposed a loan of British bombers to the French on the lines of the 'Destroyers for Bases' deal between the U.S. and Britain in World War II, but Lloyd snapped that the American destroyers had not been worth anything.⁵³

Discussions continued past midnight without compromise, and Lloyd returned to Britain, thinking that the 'collusion' had been aborted. Eden told the Cabinet on 23 October:

From secret conversations which had been held in Paris with representatives of the Israeli Government, it now seemed unlikely that the Israelis would launch a full-scale attack against Egypt. The U.K. and French Governments were thus confronted with the choice between an early military operation or a relatively prolonged negotiation [with Egypt].

However, Eden still thought a British concession, such as French use of facilities on Cyprus, be made. Lloyd loyally supported the Prime Minister and insisted that there would be no settlement with Egypt.⁵⁴

In effect, Lloyd gave up the Foreign Office's effort to control policy. He told Nutting, 'You, my dear Anthony,

⁵² Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 179ff.; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 238ff.

⁵³ Dayan, Story of My Life, p. 182.

⁵⁴ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.72(56), 23 October 1956.

will no doubt be delighted to hear that it doesn't look as if the French plan will come off,' but, asked what he would do, said:

I am so confused and exhausted that I honestly have no advice to offer any more. It would really be better to leave it to a group of the colleagues, such as [Minister of Agriculture] Derry Heathcoat-Amory or [Minister of Works] Patrick Buchan-Hepburn to decide.⁵⁵

At Sevres, the French and Israelis searched for compromise. Ben-Gurion rejected Challe's idea that Israel bomb one of her cities, Beersheba, and blame it on Egypt to justify Anglo-French intervention. Peres proposed that the Israelis send a ship through the Suez Canal, forcing an Egyptian response that would justify war. Most importantly, Dayan modified his original plan. Israeli paratroopers would launch a surprise attack on the Mitla Pass, 70 miles inside Egypt and 30 miles from the Suez Canal, while armoured columns crossed into Sinai. Britain and France would intervene 36 hours later.⁵⁶

Pineau took Dayan's plan to London that evening. Lloyd, with Eden absent, refused to abandon hope of a peaceful settlement and described the advantages of the solution sought at the U.N., but he gave way when the Prime Minister joined the meeting. Eden and Pineau decided that they 'might serve notice on the parties to stop and withdraw a certain distance from the Canal and threaten them with military intervention by France and Britain if that was not done.' Consultation with the U.S. was rejected 'owing to their preoccupation with the election

⁵⁵ Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p. 102.

⁵⁶ Bar-Zohar, p. 240; Dayan, *Story of My Life*, p. 184; 'Ben-Gurion's Diary,' 22-25 October 1956, in Troen and Shemesh, pp. 305ff.

campaign and the generally unsatisfactory nature of our exchanges with Mr. Dulles about U.S. action of any character.⁵⁷

The British Cabinet were informed the following morning that France had just captured the Athos, a ship allegedly loaded with Egyptian arms for Algerian rebels; however, 'they were unwilling to use the gun-running incident as a ground for taking military action against Egypt; they preferred that such action should be based on grounds which concerned the U.K. as well as France.' It was hinted:

It could...be assumed that if [REVISE] were launched, Israel would make a full-scale attack against Egypt, and this might have the effect of reducing the period of preliminary [aerial] bombardment. The second objective of the operation would be to secure the downfall of Colonel Nasser's regime in Egypt.⁵⁸

With Lloyd scheduled to make a speech in the Commons that afternoon, Eden instructed Dean to return to Sevres with Donald Logan, Lloyd's Private Secretary.⁵⁹

At the same time, Ben-Gurion finally accepted Dayan's plans. While paratroopers dropped into Mitla Pass, armoured columns would attack toward Rafah on the northern coast of the Sinai, Abu al-Agheila in the centre, and Sharm-el-Sheikh at the southern tip. The assault would begin on the afternoon of 29 October with Anglo-French bombing of Egypt at first light on the 31st and the airdrop of two French paratroop brigades into the Canal Zone two days later. To disguise the Mitla Pass operation

57 PRO, FO800/725, Lloyd minute, 24 October 1956.

58 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.73(56), 24 October 1956.

59 Lloyd, pp. 186ff.; Author's interview with Donald Logan.

as a 'raid,' decreasing the chance of Egyptian aerial counter-attack, Israeli armoured columns would not seize the towns of Rafah and Gaza until the Egyptians realised that the paratroop drop was part of a coordinated invasion.⁶⁰

The ensuing tripartite talks in Sevres were an anti-climax. Dean's duty was simply ensure that Israeli action against Egypt was significant enough to justify Anglo-French intervention, as Pineau had indicated the previous evening. Indeed, Pineau told the Israelis 30 minutes before Logan and Dean arrived that Eden had agreed to strike Egypt 36 hours after Israel crossed into the Sinai.

After 'a somewhat desultory recapitulation' of issues with Dean and Logan, the French and Israeli delegations surmised that, while the British officials were not empowered to take further decisions, enough had been done to secure an agreement. Soon after the meeting adjourned, Dean and Logan overheard a typewriter in the next room producing the Sevres Protocol. The Protocol, a three-page document in French on plain paper, confirmed that Israel would launch 'a full-scale attack' on the afternoon of 29 October. The next day, the British and French Governments would demand that Egypt and Israel cease fire and withdraw 10 miles either side of the Suez Canal while Anglo-French forces established a 'temporary occupation of the key positions on the Canal.' The inevitable Egyptian refusal of the ultimatum would bring an Anglo-French attack 'early on October 31st.' An annex, signed by France and Israel

⁶⁰ Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 241; Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 189ff.

and withheld from the British, stated that French fighters and pilots would be based on Israeli airfields and French ships would protect the Israeli coast.⁶¹

Dean reported to Eden, Butler, Macmillan, Head, and Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, at 10 Downing Street at 11 p.m. The Ministers were satisfied with the Protocol, but Eden, dismayed that the collusion had been recorded, ordered Dean and Logan to return to Paris in the morning to destroy all copies of the agreement. The French left the two in a locked room for hours, without food or drink, while Pineau phoned the Israelis. Ben-Gurion, still sceptical that Britain would abide by the Protocol, refused Eden's request.⁶²

Eden told the Cabinet on 25 October:

The Israelis were, after all, advancing their military preparations with a view to making an attack on Egypt....The French Government were strongly of the view that intervention would be justified in order to limit the hostilities and that for this purpose it would be right to launch the military operation against Egypt which had already been mounted.

If Israel attacked Egypt, Britain and France would issue their ultimata, and the Anglo-French force would act against any country refusing the terms. Eden admitted 'the risk that we should be accused of collusion with Israel' but gave a confused justification:

If an Anglo-French operation were undertaken against Egypt, we should be unable to prevent the Israelis from launching a parallel attack themselves; and it was preferable that we should seem to be holding the balance between Israel and Egypt rather than appear to be accepting Israeli cooperation in an attack on Egypt alone.

61 Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp. 242ff.; Dayan, Story of My Life, pp. 191ff.; Author's interview with Donald Logan.

62 Lloyd, p. 188; The Times, 2 January 1987; Author's interview with Donald Logan.

Ministers supporting Eden alleged that the British action was 'defensible in international law, for we should be intervening to prevent interference with the free flow of traffic through the Canal,' a flimsy excuse since the Egyptians, despite British and French efforts, had ensured passage through the Canal. Others rationalised:

A crisis in the Middle East could not now be long delayed. If...force might ultimately have to be used, would it not be used more effectively and with more limited damage if we acted promptly now when an Anglo-French operation was already mounted?

The Cabinet was not unanimous, however, and dissenters produced a range of arguments. An ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to hold their forces at least 10 miles from the Suez Canal would 'not appear to be holding the balance between Israel and Egypt,' since it would allow Israel to establish a line 90 miles inside Egypt. The U.N. might object to Britain and France usurping its peace-keeping function. Most significantly, the dissenters foresaw:

Our action would cause offence to the U.S. Government and might do lasting damage to Anglo-American relations. There was no prospect of securing the support or approval of the U.S. Government.

Despite these objections, the Cabinet accepted Eden's statement.⁶³

While Eden indicated that Britain knew of an impending Israeli attack, that is different from revealing British collusion in an Israeli invasion. The Prime Minister, to maintain security and minimise the possibility of a Cabinet split, probably limited the

⁶³ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.74(56), 25 October 1956.

details of Sevres to an inner circle of Ministers. Eden's 'official' biographer criticised dissidents, especially Monckton and Heathcoat-Amory for not pressing their objections, but the Minister of Defence continually reminded Eden of his opposition to the use of force except as a last resort. Given the agreement between senior Ministers to proceed, Monckton and junior Ministers could not upset Eden's strategy. A dissenter could have resigned, at the cost of his career, but as of 25 October, he had no cause to present to Commons or to the public. An Israeli attack was anticipated but it had not yet occurred.⁶⁴

Those who knew of Sevres never challenged Eden. Macmillan remained a fervent 'hawk,' and Commonwealth Secretary Home and the new Minister of Defence, Head, fully supported the decision to act with Israel against Nasser. Butler had doubts but would not vote against the Prime Minister. Instead, he told Hugh Massingham, the political editor of the Observer, that his fellow Ministers were 'mad' without elaborating further.⁶⁵

Moreover, no senior Minister heeded possible U.N. and U.S. opposition to Anglo-French intervention. Eden himself later wrote that he...

...thought that [the U.S.] would be indignant with us and lecture us and the Israeli Government and Egyptian Government for having seized the Canal and that they would then 'watch the Bear [the Soviet Union].' Convinced as I was that the Soviet Government would take no action, I thought that the U.S. Government would then

⁶⁴ Rhodes James, p. 535; Walter Monckton Papers, File 7, Monckton to Eden drafts, September 1956; David Astor, 'The Observer and Suez,' paper at ICBH/LSE Summer School, 15 July 1989.

⁶⁵ Astor, op. cit.

seize this unique opportunity and put forward their own proposals for the future of the Suez Canal...and also put forward proposals for an Arab-Israeli settlement.⁶⁶

Macmillan admitted that, while it was 'absolutely vital to humiliate Nasser..., we must (if we possibly can) keep the Americans with us, or we shall have no chance of getting out of our financial ruin.' Unlike France, Britain had not withdrawn reserves from the International Monetary Fund, for fear of triggering a run against the pound. Yet the Chancellor took no action to ensure that military operations were not upset by economic weakness and refused to inform his Treasury staff informed of developments. Makins, the former British Ambassador to the U.S., arrived on 15 October to take up his duties as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. He discovered:

Selwyn didn't want to see me --- Anthony didn't want to see me --- even Harold....I knew absolutely nothing, was told absolutely nothing, but I knew enough to realise that something very big was in the wind.⁶⁷

Makins discovered the plans, but he was not informed by Macmillan of the imminent Israeli attack upon Egypt until 28 October. Makins responded, 'We've got to make preparations,' but Macmillan insisted, 'You can't tell anyone about this.' It was finally agreed that Makins could speak to Cabinet Secretary Brook.⁶⁸

Macmillan may have expected the U.S. to take no action against the British even if the Americans were not supportive. In his memoirs, he admitted 'a heavy responsibility' for the mistake and said in 1971:

⁶⁶ AP, AP33/7, Eden record, October 1972.

⁶⁷ Horne, p. 402 and p. 417; Author's interview with Lord Sherfield.

⁶⁸ Author's interview with Lord Sherfield; Horne, p. 434.

My judgement was wrong....[My] instinct [was] that the Americans didn't wish to be informed when we took the final action...because that would embarrass them...but would support us when action was taken.⁶⁹

This explanation rests upon Macmillan's claims after Suez. The Chancellor, a prolific diarist, left no entries between October 1956 and February 1957. Instead, he later maintained that Anglo-American division would not have occurred if he had been Foreign Secretary: 'I would have persuaded Eisenhower, or Foster, to back us - or say to the Cabinet, "we can't move".' Since Macmillan, as Chancellor, had that opportunity after his visit to Washington, his claim was whimsical, if not outright deception.

Likewise, Macmillan tried to absolve himself of blame for the collusion by insisting:

I can't honestly say I liked it....I was in a difficult position; I took no part in the details (looking back on it, they weren't very clever) and therefore didn't wish to criticise....I think if I'd perhaps had more experience, I would have taken a stronger position in insisting on knowing just exactly how they were going to bring it about; and what were the chances of its success and what were the dangers.

Since Macmillan was the foremost proponent of British cooperation with Israel and approved the collusion when he was informed of it by Eden, the excuse is somewhat misleading.⁷⁰

Still, it is puzzling that Macmillan misinterpreted Eisenhower's and Foster Dulles' emphasis on OMEGA and aversion to the use of force. Eden's private secretaries allegedly speculated that Macmillan 'was planning to

⁶⁹ Horne, p. 444.

⁷⁰ Horne, p. 430 and p. 447.

overthrow Eden,' but it is more likely that the Chancellor decided that Britain had to risk attacking Egypt, even without assurances of American support. In his last surviving diary entry for 1956, dated 4 October, Macmillan wrote:

We must, by one means or another, win this struggle. Nasser may well try to preach Holy War in the Middle East and (even to their own loss) the mob and the demagogues may create a ruinous position for us. Without oil, and without the profits from oil, neither U.K. nor Western Europe can survive.⁷¹

Whatever Britain's economic situation, Macmillan wanted war. On 26 October, he told the Cabinet that Britain would lose up to £300 million in foreign reserves in November. Sterling's role as an international currency could only be saved if the pound was devalued and all of Britain's financial resources were mobilised. Despite this grim picture, the Chancellor never mentioned the impending attack upon Egypt.⁷²

British commanders of REVISE were unable to object to Sevres, as they were given misleading information about collusion. After the signature of the Protocol, Keightley and General Hugh Stockwell, the commander of REVISE's land forces, were informed that REVISE might be implemented at less than the 10 days' notice required in the plan, but they were not told that the operation was authorised until 26 October. An unsigned memorandum for Eden argued that Keightley 'should...be directed to go ahead' with preparations for an assault against Egypt under the cover of Operation BOATHOOK, a communications exercise between

⁷¹ Horne, p. 429.

⁷² PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.85(56), 26 October 1956.

Cyprus and warships in the Mediterranean.⁷³

Keightley was not told that plans had been coordinated with Israel. When he expressed his anxiety about military operations, 'Eden gave him a severe dressing down and told him that these were questions with which military commanders should not concern themselves.' Keightley was probably informed that British intelligence knew of an imminent Israeli attack which would provide the excuse for Anglo-French seizure of the Suez Canal. For unknown reasons, Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, did not give details of Sevres to Keightley. He simply informed Admiral Guy Grantham, the Commander-in-Chief of Britain's naval forces in the Mediterranean:

We have definite reports that Israel is mobilising and requisitioning civilian transports. Our estimate is that they are likely to be ready for war about Monday [29 October] or possibly Tuesday, but no overt step may be taken by us at present.⁷⁴

Stockwell, who left London for Malta on 26 October, was the first British commander to learn of the new plans. During a stopover outside Paris, he was informed by his French subordinate, General Andre Beaufre, of the 'Israeli plan and timings,' although Beaufre probably did not tell Stockwell that this was coordinated between British, French, and Israeli politicians.⁷⁵ Upon arrival in Malta,

73 Stockwell Papers, Liddell-Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEER, p. 38; PRO, ADM205/118, unsigned note to Prime Minister, 26 October 1956. See also PRO, PREM11/1103, EC(56) 63, 'Military Implications of Mounting Operation MUSKETEER,' 25 October 1956.

74 Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEER, p. 33; Ziegler, p. 544.

75 Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEER, p. 39; British Broadcasting Corporation Radio Four, A Canal Too Far (1987), interview with Kenneth Darling.

Stockwell passed the news to Grantham and Vice-Admiral L.F. Dunford-Slater, REVISE's naval commander. The trio acted without instructions from London, re-deploying carrier groups from Malta to Cyprus, loading the amphibious assault force, and sailing H.M.S. TYNE, the headquarters ship for the British commanders, to Cyprus under the cover of Operation BOATHOOK.⁷⁶

REVISE's air commander, Air Vice-Marshal Denis Barnett was told nothing of developments. On 25 October he asked that his forces be stood down from the six-hour alert for CORDAGE and that, with the reduction in tension, formal responsibility for REVISE and CORDAGE be given to the Air Officer Commanding Levant, the peacetime British commander. The Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Plans flew to Cyprus to 'clarify the situation,' but Barnett only learned of plans for Anglo-French intervention when Keightley arrived in Cyprus. As Barnett entered Keightley's office, a paper blew onto the floor: 'Hooknoses D-Day 29 Oct.'⁷⁷

There was now little coordination between British political and military planning. Stockwell noted the unsolvable problem. To make the Anglo-French ultimatum appear genuine, Eden insisted that there should be no alert before 30 October. Yet the landing in Egypt in Phase III of REVISE, planned for 20 days after the announcement of an alert, was now scheduled for 8 November. Only ad hoc

⁷⁶ Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEER, pp. 39ff.

⁷⁷ PRO, AIR20/9965, CINCMEAF to CAS, Cable CINC190, 25 October 1956, and CAS to CINCMEAF, Cable A2988/CAS, 27 October 1956; A Canal Too Far, interview with Denis Barnett.

preparations by Stockwell, Grantham, and Dunford-Slater could narrow the gap between the plans in REVISE and the Cabinet's demand for a quick occupation of the Canal Zone.⁷⁸

In contrast, the mobilisation of Israeli troops began on 25 October, and French assault troops left Toulon and Marseilles on the 27th. Three French fighters supplied high-octane jet fuel to Lydda airfield in Israel, and large deliveries of French arms were off-loaded on the Israeli coast. To deceive Egypt, the U.S., and the Soviet Union, Dayan ordered a 'deception to produce an impression that mobilisation [was] aimed against Jordan because of entry of Iraqi forces.'⁷⁹ 'Extremist' parties, notably the anti-Western National Socialists, had gained seats in Jordanian elections on 21 October. Three days later, Jordan joined the Egyptian-Syrian military command. Dayan's mobilisation no longer appeared to be directed against an Iraqi-Jordanian axis but an Egyptian-Jordanian-Syrian grouping.⁸⁰

For the Americans, the first indication that something was amiss came when the U.S. Embassy in London could not provide an account of the Anglo-French meeting of 16 October to the State Department. Concern increased when French Cabinet Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas told U.S. Ambassador Dillon that Britain and France were

⁷⁸ Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEEER, p. 39.

⁷⁹ Dayan, Story of My Life, p. 193; Bar-Zohar, The Armed Prophet, p. 234; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/12-1056, Tel Aviv to State Department, Cable 317, 10 December 1956.

⁸⁰ Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 103; PRO, FO371/121469, V1015/ 274, Duke to Foreign Office, Cable 1522, 23 October 1956.

collaborating with Israel to attack Egypt on or about 10 November. Foster Dulles told Eisenhower on 21 October that he was 'baffled to know the real purposes of the British and the French.' Although Britain and the U.S. were working on 'long-term economic projects,' i.e. OMEGA, the British were considering 'alternatives.' Foster Dulles, drawing upon his conversation with Macmillan, could only be...

...confident that the British and the French would not resort to any of these measures before [the Presidential] election....[He] was more fearful as to what might happen after the election.⁸¹

The signs were increasingly ominous. U-2 flights photographed the Israeli mobilisation and the sailing of British and French ships to the Eastern Mediterranean. The French, after the capture of the Athos, hijacked a plane carrying five leaders of the Algerian nationalists. Monckton told Ambassador Aldrich that he had resigned as Minister of Defence because he believed the use of force against Egypt would be a 'great blunder.'⁸²

The 'Watch Tower' committee of representatives from the State Department, CIA, and the military was convened after the U.S. Military Attache in Israel reported that his driver, a reservist with one arm and one leg and blind in one eye, was called up for service. The Committee noted that British intelligence had 'crawled into a shell' and

⁸¹ PRO, FO371/119156/JE14211/2180, Coulson to Foreign Office, Cable 2136, 18 October 1956, and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5875, 21 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/10-1956, Paris to State Department, Cable 1839, 19 October 1956; US DDCS, US85 000227.

⁸² DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 6, October 1956 (1), London to State Department, Cable 2215 (Classified).

that Dayan was reportedly in France. Robert Amory, the CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence, reported that Eden was so mad at Nasser that he would 'team up with anyone' to overthrow the Egyptian leader. Only James Angleton, the head of the CIA's counter-espionage, with close contacts with the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, dismissed the chances of an Israeli attack.⁸³

On 27 October, a White House meeting drafted a message from Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion requesting 'no forceful initiative on the part of your Government which would endanger the peace and the growing friendship between our two countries.' However, the Americans saw 'Jordan as the most probable direction' for an Israeli attack. Eden and Lloyd had told General Al Gruenther, the outgoing Supreme Commander of NATO forces, that the Israeli-Jordanian situation and Egyptian involvement in Jordan was 'of more fundamental importance' than the Suez Crisis. Ambassador Eban, summoned by Foster Dulles, found the Secretary studying an 'enormous map of Israel and Jordan.' Foster Dulles 'strongly expressed concern and the difficulty [the U.S.] had in interpreting Israeli mobilization as purely defensive.' Eban maintained that Israel had no aggressive intentions.⁸⁴

83 USNA, Record Group 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographical File, 1954-1956, Box 14, S. 42, JCS to Posts, Cable 912329, 26 October 1956; Mosley, p. 411.

84 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, October 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster record, 27 October 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 29, Israel (5), Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion, 27 October 1956; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 244; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/10-2656, London to State Department, Cable 2295, 26 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Series, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles memorandum, 28 October 1956; Abba Eban, An Autobiography (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 210.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Aldrich saw Lloyd, who blatantly lied to cover up the collusion. Aldrich reported to Washington:

[Lloyd] said with feeling and...evident conviction that a major Israeli attack either on Jordan or Egypt at this time would put Britain in an impossible situation....He was unwilling to believe the Israelis would launch a full-scale attack upon Egypt despite the temptation to do so in the present circumstances. He also said categorically that his recent conversations with the French gave him no reason to think the French were stimulating such an Israeli venture.

Lloyd predicted that negotiations with Egypt would resume within a few days and assured Aldrich that the Cabinet was 'prepared to give him a reasonable period in which to seek a negotiated solution.' He even carried out the charade of agreeing 'a five-step program' with Aldrich for SCUA and collection of Canal dues.⁸⁵

Eisenhower sent a second message to Ben-Gurion, requesting that Middle Eastern countries 'refrain from any action which can lead to hostilities.' Foster Dulles was informed by John McCloy, a director of Chase Manhattan Bank, that there had not been 'a significant transfer of funds from Israeli bank accounts.' McCloy did not realise that Israel had withdrawn most of its balances weeks earlier.⁸⁶ Only on the late evening of 28 October did the Watch Tower Committee conclude that Egypt was the Israeli target, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed U.S.

⁸⁵ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/10-2956, London to State Department, Cable 2322, 29 October 1956; Winthrop Aldrich, 'The Suez Crisis: A Footnote to History,' Foreign Affairs, April 1967, pp. 541ff. See also Alistair Hetherington, Guardian Years (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), p. 19.

⁸⁶ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 28, Israel (5), Eisenhower to Ben-Gurion, 28 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to McCloy, 28 October 1956.

military posts:

Past Egyptian provocations, the key role of Egypt in the Arab threat [to Israel], and U.K. involvement with Jordan indicate the attack will be launched against Egypt in the near-future, under the pretext of retaliation and exceeding past raids in strength.⁸⁷

At 5 p.m., local time, on 29 October, four low-flying Israeli Mustangs cut Egyptian telephone lines in the Sinai, and 395 Israeli paratroopers dropped into the Mitla Pass. Eban was explaining to Rountree that Israeli mobilisation was a 'security measure,' unconnected to Anglo-French conflict with Egypt, when news of the attack reached the State Department. Rountree commented drily, 'I am certain, Mr. Ambassador, that you will wish to get back to your embassy to find out exactly what is happening in your country.'⁸⁸

Foster Dulles did not react until 3:40 p.m. (10:40 p.m. in Egypt), as an advance Israeli land force linked up with paratroopers at the Mitla Pass. He phoned Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.:

The Israelis have moved into Egyptian territory. We don't know yet in what force or whether it is [a position] from which they will retire....The British and French are coming in and we will see if they will act in the U.N. calling upon the Israelis to withdraw. Partly it is to smoke them out to see where they stand.⁸⁹

The Anglo-American 'alliance' in the Middle East, reconstructed in the previous two years, was about to undergo its sternest test.

87 USNA, RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographical File, 1954-56, Box 14, S. 42, JCS to Commands, Cable 912389, 29 October 1956.

88 Neff, p. 362.

89 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Lodge, 29 October 1956.

CHAPTER 15

29 OCTOBER-6 NOVEMBER 1956: WAR

The 'hawks' finally had a war with Nasser, but Britain's diplomatic, economic, and military forces were unprepared for the conflict. On 28 October, Coulson, the British Charge d'Affaires in Washington,¹ reassured Deputy Undersecretary Murphy that John Nicholls, the British Ambassador to Israel, was approaching Foreign Minister Meir about the Israeli mobilisation. Coulson told the truth, but only because Levant Department officials, ignorant of collusion with Israel, had instructed Nicholls to express 'grave concern at recent moves and [the] hope that no action will be taken to endanger the peace.' Eden halted the despatch of the instructions.²

Nicholls, on earlier instructions, had approached Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion to say Britain 'hoped no further action is contemplated against Jordan.' Ben-Gurion replied, 'I think you will find your government knows more about this than you do.' Nicholls took the initiative and asked Meir on the morning of 29 October for an assurance that Israel would not attack Jordan. Meir said drily, 'I think I can give you that assurance.'³

Eden and Lloyd waited until 6:10 p.m., more than two hours after the Israeli attack, to advise Coulson. Britain

1 The new British Ambassador, Harold Caccia, did not even leave for the U.S. until 1 November.

2 PRO, FO371/121763/VR1076/122, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2190, 28 October 1956, and subsequent minutes.

3 Author's interview with Sir Harold Beeley; PRO, FO371/121782/VR1091/368, Foreign Office to Tel Aviv, Cable 1025, 27 October 1956, and VR1091/377, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, Cable 575, 29 October 1956.

welcomed tripartite consultations, but the Tripartite Declaration was not applicable, since Nasser had stated that the Declaration did not give Britain and the U.S. the right to intervene in Middle Eastern affairs. Eden and Lloyd speculated that Israel had acted because of Egyptian mobilisation, Nasser's public assertion that Israel should be liquidated, and Jordan's accession to the Egyptian-Syrian military command.⁴

Foster Dulles told Coulson and French Ambassador Herve Alphand that the U.S. was ready to request in the Security Council that Israel withdraw while U.N. members suspended aid to Tel Aviv. Foster Dulles agreed with Coulson that military intervention under the Tripartite Declaration was inappropriate but suggested financial and economic sanctions. Coulson innocently replied that he thought London would favour this procedure.⁵

Foster Dulles was not so trusting, telling William Knowland, the Republican leader in the Senate, '[Our] guess is it [the Israeli attack] has been worked out with the French at least and possibly with the British.'⁶ He arranged a meeting at the White House with Eisenhower, Undersecretary of State Hoover, Secretary of Defence Wilson, Admiral Radford, Allen Dulles, and Eisenhower's staff. Allen Dulles still thought the Israeli attack was a 'probing action,' but Foster Dulles noted the French supply of Mysteres to Israel and 'a very large number of messages between Paris and

4 PRO, FO371/121763/VR1076/122, Millard and Ross minutes and Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 4987, 29 October 1956.

5 PRO, FO371/121476/VR1074/429, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2197, 29 October 1956.

6 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Knowland, 29 October 1956.

Israel,' which the CIA had not been able to decode, on 28 October. He speculated, 'The French and British may think that --- whatever we may think of what they have done --- we have to go along with them.'

The French assumption that Eisenhower would not intervene because of the election was immediately shattered. The President 'did not really think the American people would throw him out in the midst of a situation like this, but if they did, so be it.' He favoured an immediate approach to the U.N. while notifying Britain, 'We recognise that much is on their side in the dispute with the Egyptians but...nothing justifies double-crossing us.' Wilson held out against support of Egypt, but Hoover, worried that Arab States would ally with the Soviets if the U.S. backed Britain and France, and Radford agreed with the President. Foster Dulles also favoured pressure on the British, although he thought there was 'still a bare chance to "unhook" the British from the French.'⁷

After the meeting, Eisenhower told Coulson that the U.S. 'planned to get [to the Security Council] first thing in the morning - when the doors open - before the U.S.S.R. gets there' and asked the British to do likewise. Coulson, still without instructions from London, reasserted that Britain would approach the Council 'if only because, otherwise, the belief would spread throughout the Arab world that we were behind the Israeli move.'⁸

⁷ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, October 1956, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 29 October 1956.

⁸ PRO, FO800/741, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2200, 29 October 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, October 1956, Staff Memoranda, Foster Dulles-Eisenhower-Coulson meeting, 29 October 1956.

The first sign of trouble came when U.N. Secretary-General Hammarskjöld asked for an immediate Council session. British representative Dixon agreed that the Council should 'at least call on Israel to withdraw her forces' but said he had no instructions from London. U.S. delegate Lodge, normally on good terms with Dixon, reported, 'It was as though a mask had fallen off, [Dixon] was ugly and not smiling.' Dixon allegedly chastised Lodge, 'Don't be so damn high-minded,' and described the Tripartite Declaration as 'ancient history and without current validity.'⁹

While the British Cabinet approved the draft ultimatum to Egypt and Israel, to be issued by Eden in the Commons on the afternoon of 30 October, Ministers realised that the American attitude could not be ignored. Before the meeting, Lloyd protested to Aldrich about the American resolution condemning Israel, since the Israeli action was 'a clear case of self-defence.' Aldrich warned that, if the U.S. and Britain took opposing positions in the Security Council, the impression would be given that 'the Israeli action had been contrived with the United Kingdom and France as a move to get rid of Nasser.'¹⁰

Lloyd asked the Cabinet, in light of Aldrich's position, to consider whether Britain 'should attempt to persuade [the U.S.] to support the action which we and the French were proposing.' The bombing of Egypt could be

⁹ PRO, PREM11/1103, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 967, 30 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Lodge, 29 October 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 18, October 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 30 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/10-3056, New York to State Department, Cable 443, 30 October 1956.

¹⁰ Aldrich, Foreign Affairs, op. cit.; PRO, FO371/121783/VR1091/418, Lloyd minute, 30 October 1956.

deferred for 24 hours while an approach was made to Washington. Supporting Lloyd, Macmillan belatedly admitted that, in a protracted war, American financial help might be needed. Ministers concluded:

Even though it was unlikely that the U.S. Government would respond to such an appeal, we should do our utmost to reduce the offence to American public opinion which was liable to be caused by our notes to Egypt and Israel. Our reserves of gold and dollars were still in need of assistance, and we could not afford to alienate the U.S. Government more than was absolutely necessary.¹¹

Eden cabled Eisenhower that 'Egypt has to a large extent brought this attack on herself by insisting that the state of war [with Israel] persists, by defying the Security Council [over Egypt's ban on Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal], and by declaring her intention to marshal the Arab States for the destruction of Israel.' The last line of the letter, however, held out the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation:

We feel that decisive action should be taken at once to stop hostilities. We have agreed to go with you to the Security Council and instructions are being sent this moment [to Dixon].¹²

Eden's cable crossed Eisenhower's request for 'help in clearing up my understanding as to what exactly what is happening between us and our European allies - especially between us, the French, and yourselves.' Citing the French sale of weapons to Israel, increased radio traffic between Paris and Tel Aviv, and Dixon's 'completely unsympathetic' behaviour, Eisenhower concluded:

It seems to me of first importance that the U.K. and the U.S. quickly and clearly lay out their

¹¹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.75(56), 30 October 1956.

¹² PRO, PREM11/1177, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5010, 30 October 1956.

present views and intentions before each other...so that we may not, in any real crisis, be powerless, to act in concert because of misunderstanding of each other.¹³

The letter concealed the fury of Eisenhower, who was being restrained by Foster Dulles. At a White House meeting on the morning of 30 October, the President complained:

He wondered if the hand of Churchill might not be behind this, inasmuch as this action is in the mid-Victorian style....He did not see much value in an unworthy and unreliable ally and...the necessity to support them might not be as great as they believed.

Eisenhower only sought Anglo-American agreement because of Foster Dulles' assessment that 'the U.S. could not sit by and let [Britain] go under economically.' The Secretary told Lodge, 'We are anxious to carry the Br[itish] - it is basic and goes to the heart of our relations all over the world and we have to give them a reasonable time.'¹⁴

Any possibility of Anglo-American reconciliation was soon dispelled. Because of the collusion, Britain could not allow a Security Council resolution which condemned the Israeli invasion. Dixon refused to endorse an American letter to the Security Council that stated Israel had 'penetrated deeply into Egyptian territory' and spoke of 'steps for the immediate cessation of the military action of Israel against Egypt.' Lodge, again 'shocked by [Dixon's] attitude and tone,' told Foster Dulles that Britain would only support the U.S. resolution if references to Israeli action were removed. Foster Dulles, after speaking with

¹³ DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, State Department, Box 1, State Department to London, Cable 3080, 30 October 1956.

¹⁴ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, October 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 30 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Lodge, 30 October 1956.

Eisenhower, told Lodge to proceed, simply modifying the reference to 'the military action of Israel against Egypt' to 'the military action of Israel in Egypt.'¹⁵

Eisenhower and Foster Dulles now knew that Britain, to some degree, had accepted or encouraged the Israeli attack. The President was especially bitter:

We will not help [Britain and France]. [I do] not think we should call a special session of our people to get dollars to help them out....They are our friends and allies and suddenly they put us in a hole and expect us to rescue them.

He concluded, '[I] want [Eden] to know that we are a Government of honor and stick by what we say.'¹⁶

Meanwhile, Eden informed the Commons at 4:30 p.m. on 30 October of the Anglo-French demand that Egypt and Israel cease fire, withdraw their forces 10 miles from the Suez Canal within 12 hours, and allow an Anglo-French force to occupy the Canal Zone. Refusal by either side would subject it to Anglo-French military action. The 'impartial' ultimatum was blatantly transparent. At the time of Eden's announcement, the main Israeli force was between 50 and 100 miles from the Canal, so Israel could advance 40 to 90 miles and still comply with British demands.¹⁷ Labour leader Gaitskell, given only 15 minutes' notice of the ultimatum, criticised Eden's refusal to ask the Security Council for prompt Israeli withdrawal from Egypt and stressed the Government's failure to consult the U.S. and the

15 PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 989, 30 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/10-3056, New York to State Department, Cables 443, 445, and 452, 30 October 1956.

16 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 30 October 1956.

17 Hansard, 30 October 1956.

Commonwealth.¹⁸

The damage of Eden's announcement was compounded by a lack of diplomacy. Aldrich called at the Foreign Office at 1:30 p.m. for Lloyd's answer about an approach to the Security Council, but Lloyd's Private Secretary asked Aldrich to return later in the afternoon. Aldrich did so and was told that Lloyd was in the Commons. Only when Eden was speaking that Kirkpatrick present Aldrich with the ultimatum.¹⁹

Eden's telegram to Eisenhower justifying the ultimatum was not despatched to Washington until 5:45 p.m. He disingenuously stated that his 'first instinct would have been to ask you to associate yourself and your country with the declaration, but I know the constitutional and other difficulties in which you are placed.' The message did not reach Eisenhower's desk until 8:30 p.m., London time.²⁰ Eden claimed that 'cyphering delays' had occurred, but the Americans suspected that he presented them with a fait accompli. Foster Dulles complained to Senator Knowland:

The evidence is that the Israelis were used as a decoy [for Britain and France]....He had solemn assurances they would not - though they were private.

An hour later, he told Eisenhower that the ultimatum was 'about as crude and brutal as anything he has ever seen.' The President agreed.²¹

¹⁸ Hansard, 30 October 1956; Rhodes James, p. 544.

¹⁹ Aldrich, Foreign Affairs, op. cit. See also PRO, FO371/118902/ JE1094/4, Kirkpatrick minute, 30 October 1956.

²⁰ PRO, PREM11/1177, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5025, 30 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 30 October 1956.

²¹ PRO, PREM11/1177, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5180, 5 November 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers,

Adding insult to injury, Britain and France requested suspension of the Security Council session, scheduled for 3 p.m. in New York, so Eden's speech could be studied. Foster Dulles was in no mood to consent. Nor was Eisenhower: 'All right with him that [the U.S. delegation] go ahead - after all [Britain and France] haven't consulted with us on anything.' Another message to Eden and Mollet, intended for publication, emphasized Eisenhower's 'deep concern at the prospect of this drastic action.'²²

Dixon's position was sabotaged. The British delegate obtained an adjournment of the Security Council's morning session of 30 October but, 'obviously shaken,' had to read the ultimatum at the afternoon meeting. Lodge refused Dixon's plea for another delay and tabled the U.S. resolution, which not only called for Israeli withdrawal but, in a clause directed at Britain and France, for all U.N. members to refrain from the threat or use of force. Dixon publicly asked Lodge not to press for a vote, but the U.S. delegate demanded an immediate decision. Dixon and the French representative, Henri Cornut-Gentille, vetoed the measure. The Soviet representative cleverly resubmitted the American resolution without the requirement that U.N. members refrain from force. Britain and France again cast vetoes, indicating support of the Israeli invasion.²³ Dixon

Telephone Calls, Box 5, Knowland to Foster Dulles, 30 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 30 October 1956.

²² DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 30 October 1956; DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, State Department, Box 1, State Department to London, Cable 3083, 30 October 1956.

²³ PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cables 975-977 and 989, 30 October 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/

reported to London that 'the Anglo-French action [has] been greeted by our friends with shocked surprise' and desperately hoped for Anglo-American reconciliation: 'Mr. Lodge did his best, but was clearly under firm instructions to oppose us at every point.'²⁴

Dixon received no assistance. Nasser, 'completely relaxed and at his ease,' told British Ambassador Trevelyan that Egypt would defend her rights against aggression. British commanders, fearing effective Egyptian use of anti-aircraft fire and fighter aircraft at dawn on 31 October, delayed the bombing of Egyptian airfields for 12 hours, but Eden told the Cabinet that air operations would begin at dusk.²⁵

Foster Dulles' was to safeguard American 'moral' leadership of the world, condemning British and French 'colonialism,' if necessary:

Two things are important from the standpoint of history. It is the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Empire [because of the Hungarian uprising]. The second is the idea is out that we can be dragged along at the heels of British and French policies that are obsolete. This is a declaration of independence for the first time that they cannot count upon us to engage in policies of this sort.

Vice-President Richard Nixon noted, 'We will lose some Israeli votes [in the election]' but agreed with Foster Dulles that the great majority of Jewish voters already supported the opposition Democratic Party.²⁶

10-3056, New York to State Department, Cable 452, 30 October 1956.

24 PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 989, 30 October 1956.

25 PRO, FO371/121783/VR1091/406, Cairo to Foreign Office, Cable 2590, 30 October 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.76(56), 31 October 1956.

26 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Nixon to Foster Dulles, 31 October 1956.

The immediate question was whether Foster Dulles would invoke the United for Peace Resolution in the Security Council. Under the Resolution, established during the Korean War, an issue before the Council could be referred to the General Assembly if at least seven of the Council's 11 members agreed. When Senator Knowland asked on 31 October if an Assembly meeting was scheduled, Foster Dulles hesitated and 'doubted we can have one before the regular one in two weeks.' However, the Secretary soon had news of Anglo-French bombing of Egypt, and an American journalist told him that collusion with Israel...

...started with the French and the British were not in on it until a few days ago and...wanted to be sure there was no danger of war between Israel and Jordan....When they got the assurance that would not be the case, they got in.²⁷

Britain's only hope was delaying the passage of an Assembly resolution long enough to take control of the Suez Canal. Even Eisenhower might accept a fait accompli if intervention was quick and successful. After reading the ultimatum, he drafted a message for Eden:

It is hard for me to see any good final result emerging from a scheme that seems certain to antagonise the entire Moslem world....I assume, however, that you have gone too far to reconsider so I must further assume that your plan is so worked out that you foresee no dreary and unending prospect stretching out ahead.

I think I faintly understand and certainly I deeply sympathise with you in the problem you have to solve. Now we must pray that everything comes out both justly and reasonably peacefully.

Foster Dulles thought 'the last part is a bit too much, assuming it is all going to happen.' Eisenhower agreed to

27. DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Knowland to Foster Dulles and Lawrence to Foster Dulles, 31 October 1956.

hold the letter until the next morning.²⁸

Dixon tried to save the British position, asking Lodge on 31 October for 'a cooling-off period of only 24 hours.' Lodge informed Foster Dulles that an issue could be referred to the Assembly through a petition by a majority of the Assembly's members. Britain and France favoured this because 'it takes longer and both have hope of being able to work something out.' The Secretary gave way: 'Get it [the Council session for 3 p.m.] called off and say we would sign and do it by petition.'²⁹ Dixon was finally undone by the Soviets. At 5:13 p.m., Lodge told Foster Dulles that the Soviet Union would only refrain from introducing a Council resolution condemning Britain, France, and Israel if the matter was referred to the Assembly. Foster Dulles instructed Lodge, 'Go ahead and vote for [reference to the Assembly]' but added, '[I] would not have the [Assembly] meeting before Friday [2 November].'³⁰

Foster Dulles' ambivalence was apparent throughout the U.S. Government. When the Royal Air Force first bombed Egypt, U-2 reconnaissance flights from the American base at Adana, Turkey, were passing over the area. The Americans passed the photographs to the British, who replied, 'Warm thanks for pictures. It's the quickest bomb damage assessment we've ever had.'³¹

28 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, October 1956 (1), Eisenhower to Eden draft, 30 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Lodge to Foster Dulles, 31 October 1956.

29 PRO, FO371/121746/VR1074/451, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 993, 31 October 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Lodge to Foster Dulles, 31 October 1956.

30 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Lodge to Foster Dulles, 31 October 1956.

31 Mosley, pp. 417ff.

Other U.S. commanders prepared for confrontation. Asked by Foster Dulles if the Sixth Fleet could prevent the Anglo-French carrier force from reaching Egypt, Admiral Arleigh Burke, the Chief Naval Officer, answered:

We can stop them, but we will have to blast hell out of them....The British, the French, and the Egyptians and the Israelis, the whole Goddamn works of them we can knock off, if you want, but that's the only way we can do it.

Burke ordered the Commander of the Sixth Fleet 'to have his bomb[er]s up, to be checked out, so as to be able to fight either another naval force or against land targets, and to make sure of all his targeting data.' When the Commander asked, 'Who's the enemy?', Burke instructed, 'Don't take any guff from anybody.'³²

Eisenhower, uninvolved in discussions of U.N. strategy, was a catalyst for American public opinion rather than an actor in policymaking. Although moderate in tone, his national broadcast of 31 October concentrated on the faults of the invasion of Egypt. The U.S., 'not consulted in any way' by Britain, France, or Israel, retained its right to oppose the attack, and the matter would be pressed in the U.N. The President concluded with a subtle warning to Britain and France: 'The peace we seek...means the acceptance of law, and the fostering of justice, in all the world.'³³

American criticism was not the only source of pressure upon the Eden Government. On 31 October, Nutting decided to resign as Minister of State in the Foreign Office.³⁴ Assistant Undersecretary Ross, who also knew about

³² Ibid.

³³ Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p. 81.

³⁴ See Nutting, No End of A Lesson, pp. 122ff.

collusion, recommended adoption of the U.N. resolution for Israeli withdrawal:

We appear to be pitching into the Egyptians but do nothing about the Israelis. We can and should say that we would deal with the Israelis as soon as our hands are free but it would be better if the Assembly would make this their business.³⁵

The First Sea Lord, Lord Mountbatten, who had worried throughout the crisis about British relations with Arab countries and had asked Eden to sign a statement that the military carried no political responsibility for its actions, also submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister, but it was not accepted.³⁶

In the Commons, Gaitskell queried if the U.S. was consulted about the ultimatum and accused the Government of 'violating' its relations with Washington, the Commonwealth, and the U.N. Eden did not deny his 'blackout' of the U.S. but argued that, while the Canal was necessary to British survival, it was only a secondary concern for the Americans: 'I do not think that we must in all circumstances secure agreement from our American ally before we can act ourselves in what we know to be our vital interests.'³⁷ That evening, Lloyd tried to avoid the charge of collusion:

It is quite wrong to state that Israel was incited to this action by Her Majesty's Government. There was no prior agreement between us about it. It is, of course, true that the Israeli mobilisation gave some advance warning, and we urged restraint upon the Israeli Government and, in particular, drew attention to the serious consequences of any attack upon Jordan.

35 PRO, FO371/121748/VR1074/527, Ross minute, 30 October 1956.

36 AP, AP33/7, Eden record, 21 May 1976; PRO, PREM11/1090/File.

37 Hansard, 31 October 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 641.74/10-3156, London to State Department, Cable 2402, 31 October 1956.

In his memoirs, Lloyd claimed the Sevres talks did not meet the Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'collusion' as a 'fraudulent secret understanding,' but this argument avoided the relevant points. The Sevres Protocol constituted a prior agreement, withheld from Parliament, between Britain and Israel to invade and bomb Egypt. Protecting the facade of the Anglo-French ultimatum, Lloyd lied, not only to the Commons but to the world.³⁸ He later admitted:

If I thought it would save British lives, protect British property, and serve British interests to conceal part of the facts from Parliament, I would not hesitate for a moment to do so, particularly when active hostilities were taking place or there was an inflammatory situation.³⁹

The Conservative majority in the Commons allowed the Government to maintain the ruse, but Britain's Arab friends could not be as accommodating. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id warned:

If immediately, or within a day or two at most, action by HMG to compel Israel [sic] forces to withdraw from Egyptian territory could be achieved, position would be altered very much and perhaps decisively for the better. But, failing this, he doubted whether Iraqi regime and government could hold the position much longer. A week was the very outside.

Kirkpatrick weakly replied to Ambassador Wright that Britain's action was 'merely an emergency and temporary fire brigade operation to prevent Israel inflicting a crushing defeat on Egypt.' Wright responded:

My own appreciation is that, unless very early action is taken..., the Government and public security may be in danger....It is now literally imperative that something should be said or done to correct the false impression, which events are creating, that HMG are attacking Egypt in collusion with Israel.⁴⁰

38 Hansard, 31 October 1956; Lloyd, pp. 246ff.

39 Thorpe, p. 249.

40 PRO, FO371/121783/VR1091/4071, Baghdad to Foreign Office,

Even the Commonwealth offered little support for British action. The Indians were bitterly opposed, and the Government of Ceylon expressed 'shock and perturbation.' The Pakistani Government was under public pressure to leave the Commonwealth and evict Britain from the Baghdad Pact. The Canadians, who consistently refused to endorse military action, were infuriated that they learned of the ultimatum from the press. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Stuart Holland, publicly defended Britain but wrote Eden of his concern at Anglo-American conflict and the lack of British consultation with the Commonwealth. Australian Prime Minister Menzies remained Eden's firmest supporter, but the Opposition and members of Menzies' Cabinet were unhappy with British bombing of Egypt.⁴¹

If military operations had quickly brought the collapse of the Egyptian Government or control of the Suez Canal, Britain might have overcome these difficulties. In a draft letter of 1 November, written after the Security Council referred Suez to the General Assembly, Eisenhower advised Eden:

The very second you attain your minimum objectives....I think you could probably ease tension greatly by doing the following. One - instantly call for a cease-fire in the area; two, clearly state your reasons for entering the Canal Zone; three, announce your intention to resume

Cable 1230, and Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 2343, 31 October 1956, and VR1091/416, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1234, and Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 2353, 31 October 1956; PRO, FO371/121489/ VJ10393/176, Baghdad to Foreign Office, Cable 1238, 1 November 1956, and Foreign Office to Baghdad, Cable 2361, 1 November 1956.

⁴¹ Rhodes James, pp. 550ff.; PRO, FO371/121748/VR1074/550, Karachi to Commonwealth Relations Office, Cable 1777, 1 November 1956; Pearson, p. 244; AP, AP20/25, Canberra to Commonwealth Relations Office, Cable 2545, 1 November 1956, Ottawa to Commonwealth Relations Office, Cable 1040, 1 November 1956, and Suhrawardy to Eden, 4 November 1956..

negotiations on the basis of the Six Principles agreed by the U.N.; four, state your intention to evacuate as quickly as the Israelis return to their own national territory and Egypt had announced her readiness to negotiate in good faith on the basis of the Six Principles.⁴²

Eisenhower confirmed in a 1964 interview:

We assumed that, if the three nations did attack, they would all move at one time, and it would be over in almost 24 hours....Had they done it quickly, we would have accepted it...They could have taken over and then got out of there. There'd have been no great crisis in the world.⁴³

When Foster Dulles told Eisenhower of the ultimatum, the Secretary estimated that British and French troops would be in Egypt by 1 November. The President replied, 'Aren't they partially in now?' That evening, with no landing imminent, Eisenhower allegedly commented, 'I've just never seen Great Powers make such a complete mess and botch of things.'⁴⁴ An American military intelligence summary on 1 November concluded:

Landing of French and U.K. troops in Canal Zone expected any moment. U.K. and France, with forces currently available, have capability of seizing key points Canal Area, including Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez, within 36 hours. They have capability securing control Canal Area, including establishing strong points east and west of Canal, within seven to ten days.⁴⁵

In fact, under REVISE, no troops were to be landed until Egyptian resistance was ended through bombing and

42 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 19, Eden, Eisenhower to Eden draft, 1 November 1956.

43 DDE, Oral History Collection, OH-14, Eisenhower oral history, 28 July 1964.

44 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, White House, Box 10, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 30 October 1956; Hughes, p. 216.

45 USNA, RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographical File, 1954-1956, EMMEA (11-19-47), Box 14, S. 46, CINCLANT to Commanders, Cable 5959, 1 November 1956. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/10-3056, U.S. Army Attache (Paris) to State Department, Cable CX 195, 30 October 1956.

psychological warfare, a process estimated to require 10 days. The prerequisite for this, the neutralisation of the Egyptian Air Force, was quickly achieved. Within hours of the bombing on 31 October, most Egyptian planes on the ground were destroyed or forced to distant bases. REVISE's Air Force Headquarters reported: 'It appears likely that Phase II [air offensive against static military targets and psychological warfare]...can start sometime tomorrow [2 November].'⁴⁶

Even Phase I was beset with political problems, however. Bombers despatched to attack Cairo West airfield were diverted, as American civilians were being evacuated along roads adjacent to the airfield. The attack against Cairo Radio was postponed because of fear of civilian casualties - the military thought the main transmitter, Abu Zabal, located 15 miles from Cairo, was in the centre of the city.⁴⁷ Most importantly, the military did not keep the Suez Canal open. The Egyptian blockship Akka, bombed by British aircraft, conveniently sank in the middle of the waterway. Within days, the Egyptians sank 48 more blockships, and Britain faced drastic fuel rationing and the heavy cost of oil purchases from the Western Hemisphere. The problem was compounded on 3 November when Syrian Army troops, probably on Nasser's orders, demolished an Iraqi Petroleum Company pumping station.⁴⁸

46 PRO, AIR24/2426, Air Task Force Directive, Cable AO 476, 1 November 1956.

47 PRO, AIR24/2426, General Summary of Events, 31 October 1956, and AFHQ to SASO, ATF, 31 October 1956.

48 PRO, ADM205/150, 'A Short Account of Operation MUSKETEEER and Its Aftermath, 31 Oct. 1956-Nov. 1956,' undated; PRO, AIR24/2426, Summary of FOA Carriers, 20 November 1956; PRO, WO288/99, Mideast Intelligence Summary No. 201, 28 October-10 November 1956.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Sixth Fleet hindered the Anglo-French carrier group. Aircraft repeatedly buzzed the ships, twice almost battling with British planes, and submarines shadowed the convoy. On 3 November, the Sixth Fleet's Commander assured the British that American submarines would remain on the surface and 'his aircraft [would] be more careful,' but as late as the 5th, the British Chiefs of Staff feared that the Sixth Fleet would block access to Port Said.⁴⁹

Finally, British commanders were plagued by Eden's failure to tell them of collusion. On 31 October, the French asked Admiral Grantham, the British Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, to allow the French destroyer *Gazelle* to resupply Israeli troops and to transport Israeli wounded to hospitals in Israel. Curiously, Grantham, who had no executive responsibility in REVISE, approved the proposal without referring it to Keightley.⁵⁰ In Tel Aviv, REVISE's deputy air commander, General Brohon, supervised French collaboration with Israel, as French planes dropped jeeps, guns and ammunition, cigarettes, and jerricans of water to Israeli paratroopers. *Mystere* and F-84 fighters with French pilots operated from Israel with the markings of the Anglo-French force.⁵¹ The cruiser *Georges Leygues* supported the Israeli advance by shelling Rafah on Sinai's northern coast. Another warship, *Kersaint*, damaged the Egyptian ship *Ibrahim*

49 PRO, ADM205/139-140/File; PRO, AIR8/2097, MUSKETEEER Naval Situation Report #3, 3 November 1956; PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)111th meeting, 5 November 1956.

50 Abel Thomas, p. 110; Bar-Zohar, *The Armed Prophet*, p. 240; PRO, ADM205/139, CINCMED to HMS Newfoundland, 31 October 1956.

51 See PRO, AIR8/2097, HQATF to HQ Bomber Malta, Cable AG611, 1 November 1956.

el-Awal, later captured by Israeli forces.⁵²

Keightley belatedly discovered on 31 October that 'the French have established an effective liaison with the Israelis.' He informed the Chiefs of Staff, 'I would welcome direction at what stage or in what degree it is visualised we fight as the Allies of the Israelis.' Instructed by the Chiefs to warn the French against open cooperation with Israel, Keightley was surprised to learn from a French liaison officer 'that an agreement was made for certain help between governments and, if it is not honoured, the Israelis will publicise and exaggerate the agreement made.'⁵³

Eden cabled French Premier Mollet on 1 November that the French actions were...

...extremely embarrassing....Nothing could do more harm to our role as peacemakers than to be identified in this way with one of the two parties.

Mollet told Ambassador Jebb that he would end the open Franco-Israeli cooperation; however, French F-84s, operating from Israel on 4 November, destroyed 18 IL-28 bombers, which had been moved to Luxor in central Egypt. On 8 November, two French squadrons were still with the Israeli Air Force.⁵⁴

By the end of 1 November, REVISE was collapsing under the strain of political considerations.⁵⁵ Phase II, the

⁵² PRO, ADM205/150, 'A Short Account of Operation MUSKETEEER,' undated.

⁵³ PRO, AIR8/1940, Keightley to COS, KEYCOS 2, 31 October 1956, and KEYCOS 16, 2 November 1956; PRO, DEFE4/91, COS(56)108th meeting, 1 November 1956.

⁵⁴ PRO, PREM11/1132, Foreign Office to Paris, Cable 2863, 1 November 1956, and Paris to Foreign Office, Cable 397, 2 November 1956; Roy Fullick and Geoffrey Powell, Suez: The Double War (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), p. 119; PRO, AIR20/10127, Keightley to Chiefs of Staff, KEYCOS 60, 8 November 1956.

⁵⁵ See PRO, AIR8/2097, AFHQ to Air Ministry, Cable COSAIR/1, 1 November 1956,

bombing of economic and military installations and psychological warfare, which was supposed 'to bring the Egyptians to the verge of surrender in a further six days,' was never implemented. The BBC Arabic Service station at Sharq el-Adna in Cyprus, requisitioned for Government use on 30 October and renamed Voice of Britain, was rendered ineffective when its Arab Staff left.⁵⁶ Bombing of oil tanks, telephone and telegraph systems, and railway lines was suspended by the Egypt Committee on 1 November. Ministers feared Arab retaliation against oil pipelines and long-term damage to the Egyptian economy as well as the effect on world opinion of heavy casualties. Cairo Radio was belatedly reclassified a 'military' target, but it was not attacked until 2 November and was able to resume broadcasting on the 5th. Canberra aircraft proved technically unable to drop leaflets and Air Force Headquarters would not risk 'losing valuable transport aircraft which were needed to mount the airborne assault.' Only one load of 500,000 leaflets was released, and two 'voice' aircraft were never used.⁵⁷

Nasser's position was never threatened. Colonel Hassan Siyam, one of the dissident officers supported by MI6, allegedly asked his civilian conspirators to demand a meeting with Nasser, but they would not act until the military deposed Nasser. On 2 November, Nasser drove in an

56 PRO, ADM205/150, 'A Short Account of Operation MUSKETEER,' undated; PRO, AIR20/10369/File. See also PRO, AIR20/10369, Keightley to Ministry of Defence, Cable CIC/560, 16 November 1956, and Murray to Rennie, 1 December 1956.

57 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)36th meeting, 1 November 1956; PRO, AIR8/2097, 3rd Summary of Operations, 2 November 1956; PRO, FO953/1786/PB1045/13, James minute, 13 June 1957; PRO, AIR20/10369/File.

open-topped car to Friday prayers at Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo and told the crowd:

In Cairo I shall fight with you against any invasion. We shall fight to the last drop of our blood. We shall never surrender.

Suleiman Hafez, a civilian leader who was not involved in the British-backed plots, saw General Abdel Hakim Amer, the Egyptian Chief of Staff, and Wing Commander Hassan Latim Boghdadi to ask that Nasser be replaced by his predecessor, General Mohammed Neguib. Supported by Boghdadi, Nasser resolved, over Amer's objections, to fight for Cairo until open resistance was useless and then to carry out a guerrilla war.⁵⁸

Press Secretary Clark reported a 'curious peace' at 10 Downing Street, but others were not as complacent. At an informal meeting on 1 November, Kirkpatrick bleakly projected that Britain would have to leave the U.N. unless a quick remedy was found. Clark suggested that Britain accept a U.N. commander, and Lloyd agreed that U.N. troops might join the Anglo-French force. The meeting decided, however, that the U.N. could not act immediately, and Minister of Defence Head reminded Ministers that the organisation was unlikely to adopt Britain's objective of overthrowing Nasser.⁵⁹

Minister of Fuel and Power Aubrey Jones told the Egypt Committee that oil consumption would have to be reduced by 10 percent in the next week to prepare for rationing. The Attorney-General, Reginald Manningham-Buller, reopened the

⁵⁸ PRO, FO371/125423/JE1019/1, Brenchley minute, 26 July 1957; 'Abd Al-Latif Al-Bughdadi's Memoirs,' in Troen and Shemesh, pp. 336ff. See also Heikal, Nasser, op. cit.

⁵⁹ William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 12 November 1956.

issue of the invasion's legality, writing Lloyd:

On what is known to me, I am unable to devise any argument which could purport to justify in international law either our demand that [Egypt], who had in no way threatened our nationals, should withdraw her forces from a part of her own territory which she is engaged in defending or the threat to occupy her territory by armed forces should she fail to accede to that demand.⁶⁰

In the Foreign Office, junior officials considered mass resignation, as Assistant Undersecretary Beeley told his predecessor Shuckburgh that everyone except Kirkpatrick was 'equally depressed and astonished' by Anglo-French operations. Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord, said that 'he had spoken out against [the operations] up to the limit of what is possible and [he] was surprised that he was still in the job.'⁶¹

Most ominous was Macmillan's changing attitude. On 29 October, he told Treasury officials and the Bank of England that he was 'to remain firm and see the affair through,' but \$50 million in reserves was lost in the next 48 hours and the Suez Canal was blocked. The Chancellor fretted about domestic support, complaining that people thought oil came out of taps and worried that U.S. reaction 'was much worse than he had expected.'⁶²

In the Commons, tension rose to breaking point when Eden balked at answering Labour's question if Britain was at war. Tempers flared, and the sitting was suspended for the first time in 30 years. Eden finally said that Britain was 'neither at war nor at peace,' but he made a notable

60 PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)36th meeting, 1 November 1956; PRO, PREM11/ 1129, Manningham-Buller to Lloyd, 1 November 1956.

61 Shuckburgh, pp. 363ff.

62 PRO, T236/4188, Rowan memorandum, 31 October 1956, and Ricketts memorandum, 2 November 1956; Clark, p. 203.

concession. Despite the doubts of the informal meeting that morning, Eden invited the U.N. to send a peacekeeping force to Egypt:

The first and urgent task is to separate [Egyptian and Israeli troops] and to stabilise the position....If the U.N. were then willing to take over the physical task of maintaining peace in that area, no one would be better pleased than we.

Eden gambled that it would take days, if not weeks, to organise a force. Britain and France could proceed with the invasion in the interim. The Opposition, awaiting U.N. developments, did not press its challenge, and the Government defeated a censure motion with a comfortable majority.⁶³

The Eisenhower Administration now concluded that Britain and France, failing to occupy the Canal Zone immediately, would continue to antagonise world opinion. Moreover, Anglo-French operations were undermining American objectives in the Middle East, notably Syria, and in Eastern Europe.

The critical NSC meeting occurred on 1 November. When the Council previously met on 26 October, members thought they were witnessing the long-awaited dissolution of the Soviet Empire and 'liberation' of Eastern European peoples. Polish leaders, despite Soviet opposition, had embarked upon a program of political and economic reforms, and street demonstrations in Hungary forced the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.⁶⁴ However, when the protesters,

⁶³ Hansard, 1 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)37th meeting, 1 November 1956.

⁶⁴ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 8, 301st NSC meeting, 26 October 1956; John Ranelagh, The Rise and Fall of the CIA (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 287ff.

encouraged by broadcasts from the CIA's Radio Free Europe, made new demands, including Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev ordered Soviet tanks to to crush the uprising in Budapest. In the face of Anglo-French 'intervention' in Egypt, Allen Dulles vetoed action against the Soviet 'intervention.' American allies had dashed hopes of 'liberation.'⁶⁵

Anglo-French action also doomed implementation of OMEGA against Nasser. After months of planning, the CIA-backed coup in Syria, scheduled for 29 October, was foiled by the Israeli invasion of Egypt. Some American officials even suspected that Mikhail Ilyan, the chief CIA contact, postponed the coup from 25 to 29 October at the instigation of the British and the Iraqis.⁶⁶ The next day, Foster Dulles told his brother, 'The conditions are such [that] it would be a mistake to try to pull [the coup] off.' Allen Dulles was not as conclusive: 'If the assets can be held together for a few days more without taking action, [the CIA] would much prefer it.'⁶⁷

Worse followed. While the American-backed conspiracy was not detected, the Anglo-Iraqi plot was discovered when the Syrian internal police intercepted two Druze leaders with hundreds of rifles and machine guns, allegedly given to them by Iraq. Conspirators and leaders of the Parti Populaire Syrienne were arrested. Ilyan, taking no chances, fled to Lebanon with conspirators connected with Anglo-Iraqi planning. Eventually five defendants were sentenced to

⁶⁵ Mosley, p. 420.

⁶⁶ Private information.

⁶⁷ DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Allen Dulles, 30 October 1956.

death. Eight were condemned in absentia, including Ilyan, PPS leader Ghassan Jedid, and the Iraqi Military Attache in Damascus. The former dictator Adib Shishakli received a life sentence in absentia.⁶⁸

However, the most important consideration for the NSC was the General Assembly debate, scheduled for 5 p.m.. Foster Dulles had to seize the initiative. He summarised:

For many years now, the U.S. has been walking a tightrope between the effort to maintain our old and valued relations with our British and French allies on the one hand, and on the other try to assure ourselves of the friendship and understanding of the newly independent countries who have escaped from colonialism....Unless we now assert and maintain this leadership, all of these newly independent countries will turn from us to the U.S.S.R....In short, the U.S. would survive or go down on the basis of the fate of colonialism if the U.S. supports the French and British on the colonial issue....

It is nothing less than tragic, at this very time, when we are on the point of winning an immense and long-hoped-for victory over Soviet colonialism in the Eastern Europe, we should be forced to choose between following in the footsteps of Anglo-French colonialism in Asia and Africa or split our course away from theirs.

The NSC divided on the methods to implement this policy. Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey, concerned at the cost and inconvenience of financial and trade sanctions, preferred no action until the U.N. formally identified aggressors. Secretary of Defence Wilson echoed the sympathy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the use of force against Egypt. Harold Stassen, the President's special representative for mutual aid, accepted Anglo-French action, since 'the Suez Canal [was] an absolutely vital lifeline for the British.' Desperate to preserve the American position in the U.N., Foster Dulles reminded Stassen 'with great warmth'

⁶⁸ Seale, pp. 268ff.; PRO, FO371/128220/File. See also PRO, FO371/ 128236/VY1022/9, Bowker to Ross, 23 May 1957.

that Britain and France would agree to a cease-fire only 'when they were thoroughly lodged in Egypt.' Unruffled, Stassen asked whether this type of cease-fire was not in the best interests of the U.S. Foster Dulles gave an 'emphatic negative,' alleging, 'What the British and French had done was nothing but the straightforward old-fashioned variety of colonialism of the most obvious sort.'

Eisenhower appeared indecisive, expressing at one moment his 'emphatic belief that these powers were going downhill with the kind of policy that they were...carrying out,' then wondering what the argument was all about and asking Foster Dulles if the U.S. needed 'to do anything beyond' a mild U.N. resolution. He even suggested that the U.S. should 'continue to assist Britain [with military supplies] in order that she meet her NATO requirements,' although he quickly added, 'If the British actually diverted these supplies to other purposes, we would have to consider such an action to represent another case of perfidious Albion.' Finally, the President proposed a draft 'of the mildest things we could do in an effort to block the introduction of a really mean and arbitrary resolution.'

Eisenhower's intervention did not resolve the issue. Foster Dulles argued, 'It is important that we suspend our economic assistance program to Israel,' but Humphrey and Attorney General Herbert Brownell advocated an arms embargo for the entire Middle East, rather than economic sanctions against Tel Aviv. When Stassen insisted upon a resolution with no punitive measures, Foster Dulles, 'in some irritation,' asked if Stassen meant to leave aggressors in possession of their gains. Stassen bluntly affirmed this

view, 'for which there seemed to be some support among other members of the NSC.' Frustrated, Foster Dulles left to draft the American resolution. Eisenhower concluded ambiguously:

Of course, no one in the whole world really expected us to break off our long alliance with Great Britain and France. We must not permit ourselves to be blinded by the thought that anything we are going to do will result in our fighting with Great Britain and France.⁶⁹

Ultimately, the Council's failure to agree strengthened Foster Dulles' hand, as he had already obtained Eisenhower's consent to suspend military supplies and aid 'to the countries of the area of hostilities.' Realising that State Department officials 'would like to go stronger,' Foster Dulles told Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks, 'We have other pressures for [Britain and France] but we don't want it publicly announced at the moment.'⁷⁰

More than seven hours into the Assembly debate, Foster Dulles took the podium. He began, 'No delegate could have spoken with a heavier heart than I speak with tonight,' for the U.S. had to act against 'three nations with whom it has ties, deep friendship, admiration, and respect.' However, failure 'to stop the fighting as rapidly as possible' would condemn the U.N. to 'apparent impotence.' He concluded, 'If, whenever a nation feels that it has been subjected to injustice, it should have the right to resort to force,...then I fear we should be tearing the Charter into shreds.'⁷¹

Sixty-four countries voted for the U.S. resolution for

69 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 8, 302nd NSC meeting, 1 November 1956.

70 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Weeks, 1 November 1956.

71 Hoopes, p. 379; Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 447.

an immediate cease-fire, and only five (Britain, France, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand) voted against. Britain's only hope came from Canadian Foreign Minister Pearson. Seizing upon Eden's statement of 1 November in the Commons that 'if the U.N. were...willing to take over the physical task of maintaining peace in the area, no one would be better pleased than we,' Pearson arranged with Foster Dulles to propose an United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).⁷²

The French, realising U.S. and U.N. pressure would soon halt REVISE, sought an immediate landing. On 31 October, Anglo-French planners had drafted Operation OMELETTE for the occupation of Port Said by paratroopers as early as 3 November. REVISE's commanders argued about the plan for two days until French pressure prevailed, and Pineau, supported by Generals Ely and Challe, obtained the British Cabinet's agreement. At the same time, the Cabinet agreed to notify the U.N. that Britain and France would transfer 'police responsibility' to the UNEF when it arrived in Egypt. Butler cited domestic political reasons, while Lloyd warned of American oil sanctions which might force Britain 'to occupy Kuwait and Qatar, the only suppliers of oil who were not members of the U.N.' He concluded, 'We could not hope to avoid serious difficulties with the Arab states for more than a very short time longer, certainly not for as long as it would take us to complete an opposed occupation of Egypt.'⁷³

⁷² PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1009, 2 November 1956; Pearson, pp. 243ff.

⁷³ PRO, AIR24/2426, 'Operation OMELETTE,' 31 October 1956; Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEEER, p. 40; PRO, AIR8/1940, COS(56)109th meeting, 2 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, C.M.77(56), 2 November 1956.

Pineau, distressed with the facade of co-operation with the U.N., proposed that, simultaneously with OMELETTE, Israeli troops advance to the Suez Canal's east bank. The British responded, with 'outraged indignation.' Pineau complained:

The Prime Minister is no Churchill. He has neither the tenacity nor the steel nerves. The test, instead of strengthening him, exhausts him. It is not yet a 'breakdown,' but we are not far from it.⁷⁴

The Cabinet, in a later meeting on 2 November, not only rejected overt cooperation with Israel but snubbed Pineau by suspending British arms exports to Israel; however, they agreed that formation of UNEF should not halt an Anglo-French landing. Britain would stop military action 'as soon as...it was agreed that, until the U.N. force was constituted, detachments of Anglo-French troops should be stationed on Egyptian territory between the two combatants.' The Chiefs of Staff cabled Keightley, '[It] has become of great political importance in relation to activities in the U.N. Assembly to carry out such a drop before midday November 4.'⁷⁵

OMELETTE collapsed almost immediately. British photo-reconnaissance on 2 November confirmed the withdrawal of Egyptian armour from Sinai to the Canal Zone and the reinforcement of Port Said's defences. Keightley sent no four cables to London, concluding:

Any chances of an easy entry into Port Said are removed.... The probing operation will be pointless and impossible to carry out and we shall have to stick to our full assault operation on 6th

⁷⁴ Neff, p. 397.

⁷⁵ PRO, CAB134/1216, C.M.78(56), 2 November 1956; PRO, AIR8/1940, COS to Keightley, Cable COSKEY 23, 2 November 1956.

November.⁷⁶

After extended debate among the Chiefs of Staff, Keightley's anxiety prevailed, and OMELETTE was replaced by Operation SIMPLEX, in which paratroopers would drop on Gamil airfield outside Port Said and then advance upon the town. If there was strong Egyptian opposition, the paratroopers would hold Gamil and wait for relief by the amphibious landing. The operation was put at 9 hours' notice from 0500 on 4 November.⁷⁷

Tired of waiting, Eisenhower complained to close friends about Anglo-French folly, writing:

If one has to have a fight, then that is that, but I don't see the point in getting into a fight to which there can be no satisfactory end and in which the whole world believes you are playing the part of the bully, and you do not even have the firm backing of your entire people.⁷⁸

Pineau, seeking American support, told the story of collusion to Ambassador Dillon and spoke of 'French intelligence that the Soviets plan military intervention through a Syrian base.' Neither ploy worked. Admiral Radford, Allen Dulles, and the State Department 'strongly discounted the credibility' of Soviet intervention, and Foster Dulles was angered by Pineau's revelations.⁷⁹

A cruel twist of fate finally doomed British hopes of American sympathy. Early on 3 November, Foster Dulles was

⁷⁶ PRO, AIR8/1940, Keightley to COS, Cable KEYSEC 5, 2 November 1956, and KEYCOS 17, 2 November 1956; PRO, WO288/98, HQ to 2(BR)Corps, Cable PERINTERP 1, 3 November 1956. See also PRO, WO288/1, Butler to Darling, 16 October 1956.

⁷⁷ Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEEER, p. 40.

⁷⁸ DDE, Ann Whitman Papers, DDE Diaries, Box 20, Eisenhower to Gruenther, 2 November 1956.

⁷⁹ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 651.74/11-156, Paris to State Department, Cables 2120 and 2123, 1 November 1956.

taken to hospital. Tests revealed that he was suffering from colon cancer. While Foster Dulles took the lead in condemning the British in the U.N., primarily to prevent the Soviets seizing the initiative, he refrained from private measures against London. In Foster Dulles' absence, pro-British officials like Wilson or Stassen were ineffective or had little influence, while Humphrey, who was unwilling to help Britain, was increasingly important because of his personal friendship with Eisenhower. More importantly, the Acting Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover, Jr., had no love for the British after battles over Saudi Arabian oil concessions, Iran, and Buraimi, and his opinion was shared by officials such as Assistant Secretary William Rountree, responsible for Middle Eastern affairs.

On 3 November, Chester Cooper, the CIA liaison with the Joint Intelligence Board of the British military, received a call from Robert Amory, the Deputy Director of Intelligence, who said:

Tell your friends to comply with the God-damn ceasefire or go ahead with the God-damn invasion. Either way, we'll back them up if they do it fast. What we can't stand is their God-damn hesitation, waltzing while Hungary is burning.

By 9 a.m., London time, Amory's words were superseded by Foster Dulles' illness. Eden later received an account of the American attitude from the State Department's Legal Adviser, Herman Phleger:

They knew well enough that we intended in the last resort to take direct action. They were pained that we did not take them into their confidence about the meeting that took place in secret with the French and Israelis in Paris, but they assumed that once we had decided on action it would be swift and decisive. They foresaw that there would be a good deal of vociferous comment in the U.N. and elsewhere, but they calculated that this would

not come to a head until our action had been effective.

In the event our military plan took far more time to carry through than they had allowed for and public opinion had got highly worked up not only in the U.N. but also elsewhere, including the U.S. with an Election in progress. Consequently it was no longer seemed practical for the U.S. to stand aside until we had finished the job and then use their influence in the tidying-up operation.⁸⁰

The Egypt Committee tried to delay the Americans by promising that Britain would cease military action when Egypt and Israel accepted the UNEF if the U.N. promised to maintain the force until the Suez Canal and Arab- Israeli disputes were settled. Dixon warned, however, that Lodge was 'quite clear' that Eisenhower was 'very cool' about these conditions.⁸¹

Moreover, Keightley now opposed even a limited paratroop drop. After the Egypt Committee dismissed a proposal to drop paratroops at Haifa, Israel, with an advance through Israeli-held Sinai upon the Canal, some Ministers argued that SIMPLEX should proceed, as there was little more than one Egyptian brigade at Port Said and no reason to think the Egyptians would fight any better than they had against the Israelis. Others emphasized the necessity of limiting civilian casualties. It was finally agreed that Minister of Defence Head and General Templer should consult Keightley in Cyprus while the drop on Gamil airfield was postponed.⁸²

In a rare Saturday sitting of the Commons, the

⁸⁰ Chester Cooper, The Lion's Last Roar (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 181ff.; AP, AP33/7, unsigned record, undated.

⁸¹ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)38th meeting, 3 November 1956; PRO, FO371/ 121747/VR1074/491, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1035, 3 November 1956.

⁸² PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)38th, 3 November 1956.

Opposition, buoyed by the U.N. call for a cease-fire, shouted Lloyd down. Eden accepted the UNEF in principle but refused to halt the invasion, prompting Gaitskell to charge, 'What [Britain] did was to go in and help the burglar and shoot the householder.' As the Prime Minister left the chamber, the entire Labour front bench rose and called for his resignation. Accusations of 'murderers' were launched, and MPs nearly came to blows.⁸³

Undaunted, Eden broadcast to the nation that evening. He portrayed Anglo-French operations as a 'police action' in support of U.N. objectives and recalled his career as 'a man of peace, a League of Nations man, a United Nations man.' The following morning, he noted that the newspapers were not unfavourable and more than 100 telegrams supported his speech. Photo-reconnaissance revealed that Egyptian defences around Port Said were not as extensive as Keightley feared. Head and Keightley agreed on an assault by Anglo-French paratroopers upon Port Said and the near-by town of Port Fuad on the morning of 5 November. The Egypt Committee accepted the plan, codenamed TELESCOPE, at 12:30 p.m. on 4 November.⁸⁴

The Government, however, was now pressed by its own constituents. Asked by a Gallup poll of 1-2 November, 'Do you think we were right or wrong to take military action against Egypt?', 37 percent replied yes, 44 percent replied no, and 19 percent had no opinion.⁸⁵ More than 30,000 anti-

⁸³ Hansard, 3 November 1956; Jay, p. 259.

⁸⁴ Rhodes James, p. 569; Clark, p. 208; PRO, AIR8/1940, Keightley to COS, Cable KEYCOS 24, 3 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)39th meeting, 4 November 1956.

⁸⁵ Rhodes James, p. 557. See also PRO, PREM11/1123, Poole to Eden, 2 November 1956.

Government protesters gathered in Trafalgar Square on 4 November, and Downing Street was 'closed to the public because of the riotous meeting.'⁸⁶ Eden's wife, Clarissa, recalled the presence of counter-demonstrators for the Government, but Chester Cooper, monitoring events for the CIA, later wrote, 'Lady Eden was right about the presence of people carrying pro-Eden signs and hecklers, but the police removed them from the square when they appeared to be in danger of being drawn and quartered by the angry crowd.'⁸⁷

Ironically, the Cabinet convened in emergency session as the rally was in full cry. Adverse developments at the U.N. had jeopardised the Anglo-French airdrops, approved only six hours earlier. Early on the morning of 4 November, the Assembly adopted an Afro-Asian resolution asking the Secretary-General to arrange a cease-fire within 12 hours. The Egypt Committee, at 12:30 p.m., agreed 'to go as far as possible' towards accepting the purpose of a Canadian resolution which asked Hammarskjöld to prepare the plans for UNEF within 48 hours.⁸⁸

Distressing news then came from an unexpected source: Israel. Ben-Gurion always suspected the British might renege on the arrangements with Israel, and Eden's insistence on Britain acting as a 'peacekeeper' of the Suez Canal, rather than as a co-belligerent with Israel, added to Israeli fears. Eden's statement to the Commons on 1 November that Britain and France would ensure Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai after Egypt's fedayeen bases were destroyed incensed

⁸⁶ AP, AP20/30/1, Downing Street diary, 4 November 1956.

⁸⁷ Cooper, p. 187.

⁸⁸ PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1035, 3 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)39th meeting, 4 November 1956.

Ben-Gurion, as did Lloyd's comments to Ambassador Elath that Britain could not be identified with collusion because of its relationships with Arab States.

Shortly after midnight in the Assembly debate of 3/4 November, Israeli delegate Eban said that 'Israel agreed to a cease-fire, provided a similar announcement was forthcoming from Egypt.' The Israeli Army had occupied almost all of the Sinai peninsula and would take its last objective, Sharm el-Sheikh, within hours. The Egyptian threat from the Gaza strip had been cleared, the Egyptian Army overwhelmed and most of its Soviet equipment destroyed, and the Gulf of Aqaba and Straits of Tiran opened to Israeli shipping. Optimally, the Israelis would have liked Britain and France to open the Suez Canal to Israeli ships, but they were frustrated by repeated delays in the Anglo-French landing.⁸⁹

The Egypt Committee met again at 3:30 p.m. to consider the Israeli news and other developments. Ambassador Wright again cabled that Britain's position in Iraq was untenable unless Britain overtly condemned Israeli aggression. When Lloyd added that oil sanctions against Britain, France, and Israel were being discussed in New York, Macmillan allegedly exclaimed, 'Oil sanctions! That finishes it.' The meeting divided between Ministers who wished to delay TELESCOPE and the main landing for at least 24 hours and those who felt that a further delay 'would make it politically more difficult to resume military operations.' Finally, the Committee agreed to refer the matter to an emergency

⁸⁹ PRO, FO371/121747/VR1074/477, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1047, 4 November 1956.

Cabinet.⁹⁰

Eden gave the Cabinet three options: proceeding with the occupation of Port Said, delaying the airdrops for 24 hours, or deferring action indefinitely. Twelve Ministers wanted to proceed. Four --- Butler, Kilmuir, Heathcoat-Amory, and possibly Macmillan --- voted for the delay, while Salisbury, probably swayed by the U.N. attitude, Buchan-Hepburn, and Monckton favoured an indefinite deferral. The three Service Ministers, asked for their views, also divided: the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Hailsham, wanted to continue operations but Secretary of State for Air Nigel Birch favoured a delay and Secretary of State for War John Hare preferred indefinite postponement.

All Ministers except Monckton agreed to support the majority decision, but Eden was disconcerted by the significant vote against immediate operations. Unwilling to proceed without a clearer mandate, Eden took Butler, Macmillan, and Salisbury aside and allegedly said that 'if they wouldn't go on, then he would have to resign.' Butler replied that 'no one else could form a Government,' a statement endorsed by Macmillan and Salisbury. Eden temporarily adjourned the Cabinet and despatched an emergency cable to Keightley, asking if a 24-hour delay in TELESCOPE could be arranged. Keightley replied that this was possible, but it would shatter troop morale, allow Egypt to build up its defences, and horrify the French.⁹¹

⁹⁰ PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)40th meeting, 4 November 1956; Carlton, p. 451.

⁹¹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.79(56), 4 November 1956; Rhodes James, pp. 566ff.; PRO, AIR8/1940, COS to Keightley, Cable COSKEY 32, 4 November 1956; AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 1957, and AP33/7, Eden record, undated.

Eden was waiting for the Israelis to retract their agreement to a cease-fire. Bombarded by British and French messages, the Israeli Foreign Ministry finally instructed Eban that Israel would cease fire if Egypt halted its fedayeen attacks, ended its economic boycott against Israel and the ban on Israeli transit through the Suez Canal, and terminated the 'state of war' that existed since 1948, i.e., signed a peace settlement. The Israelis realised Egypt would not accept these conditions, since they implied that the Israeli invasion was justified and allowed Israel to maintain its occupation of the Sinai. When Eden informed the Cabinet, 'Everyone laughed & banged the table with relief -- - except Birch and Monckton, who looked glum.'⁹²

Meanwhile, Gaitskell broadcast in response to Eden's speech of 3 November. Labelling British troops as aggressors, Gaitskell called for the Prime Minister's resignation and offered to support any Conservative successor who complied with the U.N. resolutions. The broadcast aroused controversy at home and in the Mediterranean, where servicemen listened on the BBC World Service, but it failed to mobilise a rebellion against Eden. Only eight Conservative MPs declined to support the Government, and few Tory voters turned against the Prime Minister.⁹³

Desperate for American support, Eden again wrote Eisenhower:

If we had allowed things to drift, everything would have gone from bad to worse. Nasser would

⁹² PRO, FO371/121748/VR1074/545, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1065, 5 November 1956; Rhodes James, p. 567; AP, AP23/13/24, Butler to Eden, 19 June 1969.

⁹³ Rhodes James, pp. 569ff.

have become a kind of Moslem Mussolini, and our friends in Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and even Iran would gradually have been brought down. His efforts would have spread westwards, and Libya and North Africa would have been brought under his control.

Eden concluded with the plea:

The future of all of us depends on the closest Anglo-American cooperation. It has of course been a grief to me to have had to make a temporary breach into it which I cannot disguise, but I know that you are a man of big enough heart and vision to take up things again on the basis of fact.⁹⁴

The appeal was futile. When the President asked on 3 November if he should contact Eden 'to keep the channel open,' Hoover, Rountree, and Phleger, the State Department's legal adviser, insisted that the President wait for UNEF's establishment. Eisenhower drafted a reply which indicated that he would accept Anglo-French entry into the Canal Zone, but he never sent the message.⁹⁵

Britain, France, and Israel were alone. Cabling after the Cabinet meeting of 4 November, Kirkpatrick informed Dixon that the landing would proceed. The cable was not deciphered quickly enough to reach Dixon before the Assembly debate, and the British delegate endured the discussion with no idea of Britain's position. At 12:15 a.m., the General Assembly voted 57-0, with Britain, France, Israel, and 16 other countries abstaining, to reaffirm its call for a cease-fire and authorise the UNEF's creation.⁹⁶

While the Assembly voted, 780 British paratroops landed

94 PRO, PREM11/1177, Foreign Office to Washington, Cable 5180, 5 November 1956.

95 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 3 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, International, Box 17, Eden, Eisenhower to Eden draft, 5 November 1956.

96 PRO, FO371/121747/VR1074/503, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1563, 5 November 1956, and FO371/121748/VR1074/512, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1064, 5 November 1956.

at Gamil airfield and 487 French paratroops occupied two bridges on the Canal at Raswa. Egyptian resistance was stiff, but Gamil was taken in two hours and the edge of Port Said was reached in early afternoon.⁹⁷ After a second drop of 500 men, the French captured Port Fuad. Negotiations for Port Said's surrender began at 5 p.m., but the talks collapsed when Nasser learned about the terms and refused them.⁹⁸ Eden believed, because of a mis-translation in communications, that Port Said had surrendered. He announced this to the Commons, only to be embarrassed when Nasser issued a denial.⁹⁹

The airdrops were a clear military success, but they were ultimately judged on political grounds. Dixon cabled, 'We are inevitably being placed in the same low category as the Russians in their bombing of Budapest.' Eisenhower noted impending oil shortages in Britain and France and told Hoover and Phleger, 'The purposes of peace and stability would be served by not being too quick in attempting to render extraordinary assistance.'¹⁰⁰ Cabinet Secretary Brook allegedly told Press Secretary Clark 'that no intelligent man could support the [British] policy.' Clark stated his intention to resign when the crisis eased, while Edward Boyle, junior Minister at the Treasury, joined Nutting in leaving the Government. On 5 November, senior Foreign Office members gathered for an 'explanation' of events in which,

97 PRO, WO288/152, HQ 2(BR)Corps War Diary, 5 November 1956. See also PRO, WO288/74, 16th Independent Paratroop Brigade report, 17 December 1956.

98 PRO, AIR8/1940, Keightley to COS, Cables KEYCOS 33, 37, and 38, 5 November 1956.

99 Hansard, 5 November 1956.

100 PRO, PREM11/1105, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1071, 5 November 1956.

according to Assistant Undersecretary Paul Gore-Booth, 'Kirkpatrick did his best to answer questions to which there was no answer.'¹⁰¹

Britain also contended with a new threat of Soviet action. Preoccupied with events in Hungary, the Soviets had limited involvement in Suez to support for Egypt in the U.N. Syrian President Quwwatli, visiting Moscow when Israel invaded Egypt, asked Soviet leader Khrushchev to send aircraft and 'volunteer' aircrews to Egypt but was refused. Soviet technicians were withdrawn from Egypt.¹⁰²

On 5 November, the Soviets launched a three-pronged 'diplomatic' offensive. First, Soviet Premier Bulganin sent notes to Britain, France, and Israel hinting at military action. The message to Eden pondered:

In what position would Britain have found herself if she herself had been attacked by more powerful states possessing every kind of modern destructive weapon? And there are countries now which need not have sent a navy or air force to the coasts of Britain but could have used other means, such as rocket technique.

Second, Bulganin asked Eisenhower 'to join their forces in the U.N. for the adoption of decisive measures to put an end to the aggression.' Thirdly, Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council demanding Britain, France, and Israel cease fire within 12 hours and withdraw from Egypt within 3 days.¹⁰³

No one, with the possible exception of Israeli leaders, believed that the Soviets would defend Egypt with nuclear

¹⁰¹ Clark, p. 210; Paul Gore-Booth, With Great Truth and Respect (London: Constable, 1974), p. 230.

¹⁰² PRO, AIR8/2097, 3rd Summary of Operations, 2 November 1956.

¹⁰³ Middle East Affairs, January 1957, p. 11; Love, p. 614.

weapons,¹⁰⁴ but it was feared that the Soviets would land equipment and 'volunteers' in Egypt via Syria. Bulganin's note arrived in London at 2 a.m. on 6 November, hindering Eden's sleep and causing 'a bad night' for the Prime Minister's Office.¹⁰⁵ After receiving Bulganin's note, Eisenhower consulted Hoover, Phleger, and his Chief of Staff, Sherman Adams. The U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Charles Bohlen, believed that the Soviets would not deliberately start World War II, but he thought some form of Soviet assistance to Egypt was likely and the Soviets might invade Iran. Hoover also expressed 'great concern' that the Soviets might send troops into Syria. The President requested a passage in Hoover's draft rejecting Bulganin's suggestion of Soviet-American military intervention: 'In other words, we should give the Soviets a clear warning [to stay out of Egypt].'¹⁰⁶

The Soviet threat even restored a modicum of Anglo-American cooperation between the intelligence services. Cooper, the CIA liaison with the Joint Intelligence Board, told the Agency that he would not discuss the Soviet threat with the Board on 6 November unless the American embargo on intelligence was lifted. Last-minute instructions from Washington satisfied Cooper's demand.¹⁰⁷

The Anglo-French landing proceeded at dawn on 6 November. The French, fearing an imminent cease-fire, also

104 See Liddell-Hart Papers, 'Notes for History,' 31 August 1957.

105 William Clark Papers, File 7, Clark diary, 12 November 1956; Author's interview with Sir William Hayter.

106 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 5 November 1956.

107 Cooper, p. 197.

planned a parachute assault on Qantara, 30 miles down the Canal, but British commanders, fearing Egyptian resistance, withdrew their consent shortly before the landings. After another false report of Port Said's surrender, which almost resulted in the capture of REVISE's commanders, the town capitulated in late afternoon. Anglo-French forces prepared to 'break out' of Port Said and Port Fuad, proceeding along the causeway to Suez at the southern end of the Canal. By the time Port Said fell, however, the British Cabinet had agreed to a cease-fire, to take effect at 5 p.m., London time.¹⁰⁸

When the Cabinet gathered at 9:45 a.m., Lloyd set out three considerations for Ministers. First, 'it was now urgently necessary that [Britain] should regain the initiative in bringing hostilities to an end while there was an opportunity to carry with us the more moderate sections of opinion in the General Assembly.' Second, 'it was equally important that we should shape our policy in such a way as to enlist the maximum sympathy and support from the U.S. Government.' Finally, Britain had to 'maintain [its] position against the Soviet Union' and 'not appear to be yielding in face of Soviet threats.' Ministers favouring a cease-fire added:

[We] must reckon with the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Syria or some other area in the Middle East, and possibly a direct Soviet attack on the Anglo-French forces in the Canal area. It was also probable that the other Arab States in the Middle East would come actively to the aid of Egypt and that the United Nations would be alienated to the point of imposing collective measures, including oil sanctions, against the French and ourselves.

108 PRO, WO288/152, HQ 2(BR)Corps War Diary, 6 November 1956.

Ministers against a cease-fire, notably Head, noted the 'risk that an effective international force would never be established in the Canal area and...we should appear to have fallen short of that effective occupation of the Canal area which we had publicly declared to be one of our objectives.' It was finally agreed, however, that 'in order to regain the initiative and to reestablish relations with those members of the United Nations who were fundamentally in sympathy with our aims, [Britain] should agree, subject to the concurrence of the French Government, to stop further military operations.'¹⁰⁹

The official reason for the cease-fire was that Britain and France brought peace through their operations, as Israel, after the capture of Sharm el-Sheikh on 5 November, informed the U.N. that it would stop fighting.¹¹⁰ In fact, the stated goal of restoring peace between Egypt and Israel was always a mask for the Anglo-French goals of seizing control of the Canal and removing Nasser from power. Britain spectacularly failed to do this, suffering a week of humiliation at the U.N. and division at home.

Three factors were significant in the decision to cease fire. The first was American pressure upon the weak pound. In the first week of November, \$85 million of the foreign reserves, almost 5 percent of the total, was lost. The estimated annual bill for Western Hemisphere oil, replacing that lost from the Suez Canal's blockage and the demolition of the pipeline in Syria, was more than \$800 million. At the

¹⁰⁹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.80(56), 6 November 1956. See also Horne, p. 441; Hugh Thomas, p. 146; Clark, p. 79.

¹¹⁰ Eden, p. 557; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 166; Lloyd, p. 210.

present rate of depletion, the reserves would be exhausted in early 1957. Eden summarised in 1957:

The fall of sterling..., apart from Indian and Chinese operations intended to weaken the pound, came mainly from New York. Harold [Macmillan] told me he had no doubt that this was encouraged by W'ton. I would also think this so. We were therefore faced with the alternatives, a run on sterling and the loss of our gold and dollar reserves till they fell way below the safety margin...or make the best we could of U.N. 'takeover' and salve what we could.¹¹¹

No available evidence confirms that the U.S. sponsored the run against the pound, although Foster Dulles and Eisenhower both considered economic measures to stop Anglo-French action. The Americans did not have to sabotage the pound to influence Britain, however; they merely had to refuse to support it. If Humphrey did not press American banks and investors to trade pounds for dollars, he certainly did not encourage them to hold sterling. The U.S. refused to implement the plan to divert oil supplies to Britain. When Macmillan belatedly tried to obtain finance from the International Monetary Fund, Humphrey refused to endorse the request.¹¹²

By 6 November, Macmillan was near panic. Humphrey told him 'that only a cease-fire by midnight would secure U.S. support' of British financial measures. The Chancellor told Lloyd before the Cabinet 'that, in view of the financial and economic pressures, we must stop' and then informed Ministers that, without a cease-fire:

[He] could not be responsible for Her Majesty's

¹¹¹ PRO, T236/4188, Record of Treasury meeting, 7 November 1956; AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 1957.

¹¹² PRO, FO371/120832/UES1171/123, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2218, 30 October 1956, and UES1171/130, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2257, 6 November 1956; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 164.

Exchequer....If sanctions were imposed on us, the country was finished.¹¹³

Eden, Macmillan, and Lloyd denied, with hindsight, that the Soviet threat influenced their decision, but Moscow's possible intervention in Syria was prominent in the Cabinet's discussion. The British Ambassador, William Hayter, reported that the Soviets might take 'some violent independent action' and that it was 'vitally necessary to get into step with the U.S. again immediately' to keep Moscow 'from committing dangerous acts of folly.' Eden allegedly read the telegram at 6:30 a.m. and said, 'Those [Soviet] threats, they're just twaddle,' but others were not so sure. The Iraqi Royal Family told Wright that three Soviet warships had entered the Mediterranean from Romania and 80 Soviet bombers had flown into Syria. Keightley was concerned about an air attack upon Cyprus, ordering 'all airfields...at the maximum state of preparedness' and 'the greatest possible dispersion of aircraft.' Allen Dulles reported to Eisenhower that the Soviets had told Egypt 'they [would] "do something",' and the President authorised 'high-reconnaissance in the area,' with U-2 'flights over Syria and Israel.'¹¹⁴

Ironically, the possibility of Soviet intervention was dismissed by Whitehall after the decision to cease fire.

¹¹³ Lloyd, p. 209; Hugh Thomas, pp. 146ff.

Macmillan's account in his memoirs appears to be a convenient revision of history. (Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 164)

¹¹⁴ PRO, FO371/121867/VY10338/15, Moscow to Foreign Office, Cable 1557, 5 November 1956; Hayter, p. 147; Clark, p. 211; PRO, AIR8/1940, AFHQ to CINCMED and others, Cable CINC 145, 6 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 6 November 1956. See also Wright, pp. 84ff.

Cooper told the Joint Intelligence Board at 10 a.m., as the Cabinet debated, that American intelligence indicated the Soviets would not act.¹¹⁵ The Chiefs of Staff informed Keightley at 4:42 p.m., '[We] do not consider Russian intervention likely.' The Foreign Office concluded that the Soviets would not unilaterally send forces to Syria, although they might do so under U.N. cover.¹¹⁶

Finally, the Cabinet faced continuing U.N. pressure. Dixon protested throughout 5 November that 'bombing' in support of the landings was upsetting the Assembly.¹¹⁷ When Eden called New York at 8:30 the next morning, Dixon said that he 'thought that he could hold on at the U.N. until the end of the week.' However, Lloyd and other Ministers, in discussion, cited U.N. opposition as a reason for cease-fire.¹¹⁸

Eden wrote in January 1957, 'We and the French have been compelled by a combination of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, acting inside and outside the U.N., to withdraw from Port Said before we could ensure the clearance of the Canal.' In the end, however, the American position was the dominant influence, for U.S. support would have removed all obstacles to continued Anglo-French action. Britain's

115 Cooper, p. 200. See also USNA, RG 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Volume VI, 1955-1956, Chapter X, 'The Suez Canal Crisis.'

116 PRO, AIR28/9890, COS to Keightley, Cable COSKEY 48, 6 November 1956; PRO, 121696/VR1022/21G, Foreign Office to Tel Aviv, Cable 1173, 6 November 1956.

117 PRO, FO371/121747/VR1074/516, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1070, 5 November 1956, VR1074/517, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1071, 5 November 1956, and VR1074/518, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1072, 5 November 1956.

118 PRO, FO371/121748/VR1074/525, Foreign Office to New York, Cable 1565, 5 November 1956; Lloyd, p. 209.

economy would have been sustained by loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and Western Hemisphere oil supplies. The Soviets would have been deterred by an American warning against intervention, and the U.S., with her U.N. allies, could have delayed, if not prevented, the passage of Assembly resolutions. The day after the cease-fire, Eden summarised:

It is clear we cannot now carry this through alone with France. We must now get U.S. support....Our aim would be to get them to tackle an Anglo-U.S. policy for a long-term settlement in the Middle East.¹¹⁹

After the Cabinet, Eden called Mollet. The French begged for two more days to seize the rest of the Canal, but Eden said Britain could not withstand American pressure on the pound. Mollet obtained an extension of the cease-fire to midnight, London time, when he notified Eden of French agreement to stop fighting, but the British refused further extensions.¹²⁰

The only option for REVISE's commanders, who learned of the cease-fire from a BBC bulletin, was to occupy as much of the Canal Zone as possible before the deadline. A hasty march by the main force ended at El Cap, 25 miles south of Port Said. Advance patrols at Fayid, 25 miles short of Suez, were recalled. The campaign cost 23 British and 10 French lives, while Anglo-French forces killed 400 Egyptian

¹¹⁹ PRO, PREM11/1826, Eden minute, 5 January 1957; PRO, PREM11/1105, Eden minute, 7 November 1956. See also John Colville, The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), p. 724; Stockwell Papers, 8/4/1, Templer to Stockwell, 14 November 1956.

¹²⁰ Love, p. 626; AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 1957. See also Jacques Baeyens, Un Coup d'Epee dans l'Eau du Canal, (Paris: Fayard, 1976), p. 109; Jacques Massu, Verite Sur Suez (Paris: Plon, 1978), p. 215.

soldiers. British estimates of Egyptian civilian deaths, initially set at 100 by General Stockwell, were revised, after much controversy, to between 650 and 1000.¹²¹

The British military, constantly assured by Ministers that operations would not be halted by political considerations, were furious. Stockwell was reprimanded by Minister of Defence Head for telling reporters that the Anglo-French force could have taken Suez in 48 hours if the cease-fire had not been issued. Templer wrote to Stockwell, 'Thank you [for the gift of] the Russian rifle. If I could use it, I'd give my first attention to certain politicians in New York and London, and I'd have run out of ammunition before I could spare a round, even for Nasser.'¹²²

Eisenhower called London to express his pleasure at the cease-fire and to promise Eden, 'Now that we know connections are so good, you can call me anytime you please.' Eden cabled Mollet:

The President of the U.S. telephoned me on his own account. There is no doubt at all that the friendship between us all is restored and even strengthened....I feel that, as a result of all our efforts, we have laid bare the reality of Soviet plans in the Middle East and are physically holding a position which can be decisive for the future.¹²³

Perhaps all was not lost. Occupation of the area from Port Said to El Cap could be used as a 'bargaining counter' in negotiations with Egypt. The cut in oil consumption could

121 PRO, WO288/152, HQ 2(BR)Corps War Diary, 6 November 1956; Stockwell Papers, 8/2/2, Stockwell report on MUSKETEEER; Damage and Casualties in Port Said, Cmd. 47, HMSO, December 1956.

122 Stockwell Papers, 8/4/1, Templer to Stockwell, 14 November 1956.

123 PRO, PREM11/1105, Foreign Office to Paris, Cable 2498, 6 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 8, November 1956 Diary (2), Eisenhower to Eden, 6 November 1956.

be limited to 10 percent over the next fortnight while supplies were arranged with the U.S. The Americans had restored the intelligence link with Britain and could offer the protection of the 'nuclear umbrella' against Moscow. Resolutions for the UNEF would have to be respected, but Anglo-French forces could be maintained in the Canal Zone until the UNEF arrived and then be integrated into the force. Meanwhile, Britain and France would maintain economic and financial pressure upon Nasser, and the OMEGA program with the U.S. might be renewed.

CHAPTER 16

7 NOVEMBER 1956-10 JANUARY 1957: AFTERMATH

On 7 November, the British Cabinet pondered how to turn a tenuous presence in the Canal Zone into victory over Nasser. Some Ministers preferred to form the UNEF without contingents from Security Council members, as this 'was probably an essential preliminary to reestablishing close relations with the U.S.' Other Ministers demanded a British presence in Egypt through representation in the UNEF, even if this brought further conflict with the Americans. After heated discussion, a compromise was reached. Britain would 'devote [its efforts to inducing [the Americans] to acknowledge the existence in the Middle East of the dangerous situation which they had consistently refused to recognise since the end of [World War II].' Political and economic measures against Nasser could then be pursued as part of an Anglo-American policy. Meanwhile, Eden would 'endeavour to convince [the U.S.] that a final decision by the U.N. on the composition and functions of the international force in the Suez Canal area should, if possible, be deferred until the Governments of the U.K. and the U.S. had reached a clearer understanding on their common objectives in the Middle East.'¹

Eden called Eisenhower to suggest a meeting with the French on the Middle Eastern situation and the Soviet threat. Eisenhower was receptive, since, 'after all, [this] is like a family spat,' but his advisers were horrified, believing any concession to Britain would jeopardise

¹ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.81(56), 7 November 1956.

American policy in the U.N. and the Arab world. After acting Secretary of State Hoover asked the President to confirm that Britain was committed to the UNEF, Eisenhower called Eden to warn, 'If we are going to discuss this plan [for the UNEF] and your people would find it necessary to disagree with us, then the resulting divided communique would be unfortunate.' When Eden assured that he and French Prime Minister Mollet understood this, Eisenhower replied:

Then I think my fears are groundless....If we are going to talk about the future [in the Middle East] and about the Bear [the Soviet Union]---okay.

The announcement of the summit would be made by Eden in the Commons and by a White House spokesman at 4 p.m., London time.²

Hoover was unsatisfied. Noting British claims to the State Department that the Soviets had offered 250,000 'volunteers' to Egypt, he asserted that Eisenhower's welcome of Eden and Mollet risked the 'danger of a complete turnabout by the Arabs,' with Egypt accepting the Soviet offer and the Arab world rejecting the UNEF. After a half-hour of discussion, Eisenhower called Eden to postpone the meeting. Firstly, the President noted:

You have given us something on the military side I didn't know [about the 250,000 Soviet volunteers]....We have got to get a coordinated military intelligence view.

Secondly, Eisenhower would meet Congressional leaders on 9-10 November to discuss the new Congress, in which the opposition Democratic Party had a majority in both houses. Finally, the U.N. was demanding that Egypt and Israel accept

² DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 8, November 1956 Diary (2), Eden to Eisenhower and Eisenhower to Eden, 7 November 1956.

the UNEF, and 'any meeting until that gets done would exacerbate the situation.'

Eden pleaded for the President to reconsider, but Eisenhower would not defy his officials:

I just don't see how we could do it now with so much on our plate --- we just can't handle this at the same time. I am really sorry because, as I told you this morning, I want to talk to you.

Desperate, the Prime Minister protested that nothing should prevent friends discussing matters, but Eisenhower replied, 'I am not talking about not meeting and talking with our friends, but I have had opposition about the timing.' He then cut off further conversation, as he had to leave for a Cabinet meeting.³

In fact, the President and Hoover visited Foster Dulles in hospital. Fearing Soviet intervention, Foster Dulles supported Hoover:

It was extremely important to get the British and French troops out of Egypt as soon as possible....If this is not done - at least within a week's time - the fire will go on burning.

Foster Dulles favoured 'an embargo on all funds going to Israel,' including remittances by American citizens, but he and Eisenhower disagreed sharply over American treatment of Britain and France. Eisenhower promoted Eden's case that 'the important thing to remember in this present situation is that "the Bear is still the central enemy",' but Foster Dulles insisted, 'The British and the French going into Egypt was a "crazy act".' He 'did not exclude the usefulness of a meeting between the President and Eden and Mollet,' but

³ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 7 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 8, November 1956 Diary (2), Eisenhower to Eden, 7 November 1956; AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 1957.

'the meeting [would] be contingent on the British and French having previously gotten their troops out of Egypt.' Foster Dulles' only concession was to agree to Eisenhower's recommendation of a special assistant in the White House to oversee the Middle East.⁴

Two important trends were set. First, the U.S. Government imposed a virtual 'blackout' on communications with Eden. Apart from an exchange of short letters on 11 November about a possible summit, the Americans did not contact Eden between 7 November and Eden's departure on the 23rd for a three-week vacation in Jamaica.⁵ Second, the President, deprived of his working relationship with Foster Dulles, was an unhappy spectator of the policy set by the State Department, led by Hoover, and the Treasury.

Despite Suez, Eisenhower thought the British had a role to play in the Middle East as well as in NATO. When the new British Ambassador to the U.S., Harold Caccia, presented his credentials on 9 November, he found that the President 'could not personally have been more friendly or indeed more forgiving.' Eisenhower said, 'Just because Britain and the U.S. had had a sharp difference over the attack on Egypt, there was no thought that we would not keep our friendship over the long term.' In contrast, Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey, told the British Embassy's Economic Minister, Lord Harcourt, 'For the U.S. to offer financial aid to the U.K. and France in the light of actions of the last 10 days would be totally unacceptable politically in the U.S. for some

4 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda, Chronological, Box 4, Meetings with the President, Macomber memorandum, 7 November 1956.

5 PRO, PREM11/1177, Eden to Eisenhower and Eisenhower to Eden, 7 November 1956.

considerable time,' although he added, 'This opinion would not hold if the Russians were to make any major move in the Middle East.'⁶

The NSC defined American policy on 8 November. The Middle East Emergency Committee (MEEC) was ready to ship Western Hemisphere oil to Europe, but Humphrey's attitude that 'for the time being...he would oppose programming oil shipments to Europe' prevailed. Hoover informed the British Embassy, 'The question of supply could best be left to the oil companies to thrash out between themselves.' When British Minister Coulson interjected, correctly, that the MEEC was set up for coordination between the U.S. Government and the oil companies, Hoover replied that this was not 'in any way necessary.'⁷

The British were isolated. The other Baghdad Pact members stopped short of expelling Britain or condemning Anglo-French aggression, but they called upon Britain and France 'to stop hostilities, withdraw their forces,...and fully observe and respect the sovereignty, integrity, and independence of Egypt.' The French, embittered by the cease-fire, were uninterested in negotiations over the UNEF or concessions to the Americans. The Israelis, after Prime Minister Ben-Gurion exultantly told the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, on 7 November that Israel would keep her

6 PRO, PREM11/1106, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2277, 9 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 9 November 1956; PRO, FO371/120832/UES1171/132, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2272, 8 November 1956.

7 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 8, 303rd NSC meeting, 8 November 1956; PRO, FO371/120832/UES1171/137, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2278, 9 November 1956.

military gains, were checked by an urgent message from Eisenhower:

It is obvious to us that the Soviets are taking advantage of this situation for disastrous purposes. If that should happen, Israel would be the first to be swallowed up.

Hoover threatened to suspend all American aid, public and private, to Israel and to support U.N. sanctions and Israel's expulsion from the organisation. The Americans also 'made it quite clear that they would not intervene on Israel's behalf in the event of an attack by Soviet "volunteers".' Pineau told the Israelis:

France is ready to share with you whatever she has --- but... we have no means of defence against missiles.

After extensive consultation with the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Eban, and a seven-hour Cabinet meeting, Ben-Gurion agreed to conditional withdrawal from the Sinai.⁸

On 7 November, the General Assembly considered two resolutions. An Argentine resolution, drafted by Canada, excluded Anglo-French troops from the UNEF but allowed them to remain at Port Said until the international force was in place. In contrast, an Afro-Asian resolution demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt within 24 hours. The Assembly easily passed the Argentine resolution, and the Afro-Asian resolution was approved after it was amended to allow withdrawal 'in accordance with earlier resolutions.' Lloyd repeated to the Cabinet, 'It was important that we should reestablish close relations with the U.S. Government and secure their support for our policy in the Suez Canal

⁸ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86 Series, Tehran to State Department, Cable 727, 8 November 1956, and State Department to Tel Aviv, Cable 483, 7 November 1956; Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, p. 250; Brecher, pp. 284ff.

area and the Middle East.⁹

General Keightley was increasingly agitated about possible Soviet intervention, despite the Chiefs of Staff's assessment that this was unlikely and photo-reconnaissance indicating no Soviet planes in Syria. On the afternoon of 6 November, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander informed London that 'Turkey [was] being overflowed by jet aircraft,' presumably Soviet, and the 'Turkish Air Force [was] being alerted.' The report, which proved to be exaggerated, may have been 'disinformation,' spread by the CIA to scare the British into a cease-fire or by the Turks to scare the U.S. into intervention against Egypt or Syria.¹⁰ Late that evening, however, Keightley informed London that a MiG-15 fighter, possibly one of eleven flown into Egypt in recent days, had strafed the British position at Gamil airfield, and the Egyptians had repaired ten runways.¹¹

Keightley also reported that two Canberra B-6s on photo-reconnaissance over Syria were fired upon by fighters. One Canberra escaped with superficial damage, but the wreckage of the other was later found in the Lebanon. Canberras normally flew at more than 48,000 feet, a height matched only by fighters like the MiG-15, and Keightley feared that a Soviet pilot was flying the 'enemy' plane. REVERSE's Headquarters later learned that the two Canberras had descended to 15,000 feet because of cloud cover, where they were intercepted by two Meteor fighters of the Syrian

9 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.82(56), 8 November 1956.

10 PRO, AIR20/10757, AFHQ to HMS Tyne, Cable CIC/155, 6 November 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/11-656, ALUSNA (Ankara) to State Department, Cable 062240Z, 6 November 1956.

11 PRO, AIR20/9890, Keightley to COS, Cable KEYCOS 52, 6 November 1956.

Air Force.¹² Finally, a large unidentified jet flew over Cyprus at 54,000 feet at 3 a.m. on 7 November, the height indicating that the aircraft was superior to a MiG-15 or an Il-28 bomber. The British may have detected an American U-2 flight from Turkey, but Keightley, verging on panic, warned London that up to 50 MiGs could be flown into Egypt from Syria in one night.¹³

The U.S. was also concerned about the Soviet threat. Hoover told Eisenhower on 9 November that he would see Foster Dulles about 'the Syrian thing....If they [the Soviet Union] built it up past a certain point, then it will be hard to handle.' To persuade Moscow of American vigilance, the State Department publicly spread the disinformation that a large number of Soviet aircraft were present in Syria. Foster Dulles told Hoover that he would revive OMEGA, as Allen Dulles thought 'Operation STRAGGLE [to overthrow the Syrian Government] might be carried forward but when the British and French troops are out.'¹⁴

The State Department, however, rendered Eisenhower powerless to restore Anglo-American cooperation before full British withdrawal. Lloyd tried to intimidate Ambassador Aldrich, citing Egyptian plans, with Soviet backing, to attack Israel in April 1957 and the imminent danger of a Syrian assault upon Tel Aviv. Unruffled, Aldrich said the

12 PRO, AIR20/9890, Keightley to COS, Cable KEYCOS 52, 6 November 1956; PRO, AIR24/2426, General Summary of Events, 6 November 1956; PRO, AIR8/2111, AFHQ to Air Ministry, 6 November 1956.

13 PRO, AIR20/9890, Keightley to COS, Cables KEYCOS 55, 7 November 1956, and KEYCOS 57, 8 November 1956.

14 DDE, Ann Whitman, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Hoover, 9 November 1956; PRO, AIR20/9890, Keightley to COS, KEYCOS, Cable KEYCOS 65, 10 November 1956; DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls, Box 5, Foster Dulles to Hoover, 9 November 1956.

Americans had no evidence of Syrian plans to attack.¹⁵ Dixon cabled from the U.N. that 'the U.S. delegation continues to ignore us.'¹⁶

With Foster Dulles and Hoover in close contact with Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Adams, the State Department covered the President's every move. Foster Dulles thought the idea, passed to him by Adams, of inviting Saudi Arabia's King Saud 'as an offset' to any Eden-Mollet trip to Washington, 'had merit,' but when Eisenhower suggested visits by Ben-Gurion and Nuri, Foster Dulles argued that it was 'a dangerous game inviting all these people over.'¹⁷ On 10 November, a press release announced the appointment of Walter Bedell Smith, former Director of the CIA and Undersecretary of State, as 'special assistant to the President on foreign policy matters.' In the afternoon, however, an official statement insisted no appointment had been made. White House officials blamed the cancellation upon State Department opposition, and Bedell Smith later told Lloyd:

The trouble about the President was that he delegated responsibility and things had come up to him through the person in charge, in other words, through Hoover, as acting Secretary of State. Hoover was no good and had no influence over Lodge. Lodge was irresponsible and the best we could hope for was a speedy recovery by Dulles, because he at least thought about things in terms of what was practical.¹⁸

15 PRO, PREM11/1106, Lloyd to Caccia, 9 November 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/11-1056, London to State Department, Cable 2639, 10 November 1956.

16 PRO, PREM11/1106, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1163, 9 November 1956.

17 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 6, Personnel Matters 1955-1957 (5), Foster Dulles memorandum, 9 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Foster Dulles to Eisenhower, 9 November 1956.

18 PRO, FO371/120320/AU1017/21, Washington to Foreign

By 12 November, the Egypt Committee wavered in its determination to maintain an Anglo-French force on the Canal. A meeting between Treasury and Bank of England officials concluded that Britain could not continue to lose reserves without devaluation of the pound. Only with a 'friendly and compliant attitude' from the U.S. could Britain take necessary economic steps, including a withdrawal of up to \$1 billion from the IMF, a waiver of the annual repayment of the 1946 loan from the U.S., and an Export-Import Bank loan for oil purchases. The meeting suggested that Lloyd, travelling to the U.N., conduct face-to-face negotiations with Administration officials. In a tactical retreat, the Committee agreed in principle to a phased withdrawal of troops.¹⁹

The State Department remained intransigent. Aldrich reported that the British were disturbed 'more than anything else' by the impression that Eden's visit to Washington might be indefinitely delayed because of 'a protracted negotiation between Nasser and [the] U.N.' The State Department was unmoved. Eisenhower thought 'it would be wrong if [Lloyd] were coming for a long conference but just as an old friend, it would be all right for him to call and pay his respects,' but Hoover vetoed the idea. Eisenhower's secretary recorded that the President thought 'the State Department had a completely exaggerated view of the meaning that could be attached to seeing old friends.'²⁰

Office, Cable 2285, and AU1017/22, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2286, 10 November 1956; PRO, PREM11/1176, Lloyd-Smith meeting, 18 November 1956.

19 PRO, T236/4189, Treasury-Bank of England meeting, 12 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)43rd meeting, 12 November 1956.

20 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 5, November

Lloyd, settling for a talk with Lodge, tried to frighten the Americans into a high-level meeting. He indicated that Britain intended to topple the Syrian government, possibly with Iraqi and Turkish cooperation, while Jordan would be partitioned between Iraq and Israel. Shaken, Lodge said that Hoover was coming to New York on 15 November and suggested that Lloyd also see Foster Dulles. He reported to the State Department:

[Lloyd's] attitude struck me as reckless and full of contradictions....He is in a dangerous state of mind which could touch off a war.'²¹

Lloyd's desperate approach had a slight chance of success. British commanders adopted a plan, MUSKETEER RENEWED, to resume hostilities if their forces were attacked by the Egyptians or the Soviets. Keightley's reports of possible Soviet intervention were passed to the Americans, and Turkey again warned the U.S. and Britain of 'alleged overflying by Russian military aircraft, the Russian build-up in Syria, and the exposed position of Iran.' Eisenhower eventually agreed to U-2 missions in the Middle East along the border of 'friendly countries' and to missions over the Soviet Union if they avoided the most sensitive areas.²²

1956 (2), London to State Department, Cable 2648, 12 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Hoover to Eisenhower, 13 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Ann Whitman Diary, Box 8, November 1956 Diary (1), Ann Whitman diary entry, 15 November 1956.

21 PRO, PREM11/1137, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1216, 14 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 16 November 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 684A.86/11-1456, New York to State Department, Cable DELGA 87, 14 November 1956.

22 PRO, AIR24/2426, 'Operation MUSKETEER RENEWED,' 11 November 1956; DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 14, Intelligence Matters (2), Goodpaster memorandum, 15 November 1956.

The CIA and the U.S. military were more amenable than the State Department to reconciliation with Britain and France.²³ At a White House meeting on 16 November, Admiral Radford and Allen Dulles said they had been invited to meet Lloyd when he came 'incognito' to Washington 'in the next day or two.' Hoover, noting the Soviet threat and Lloyd's comments to Lodge, accepted the private talks. Allen Dulles later met Pineau for two hours at the French Embassy.²⁴

The Soviet threat was diminishing each day, however. British photo-reconnaissance over Syria on 14 November finally confirmed that no build-up was occurring, and the flights were suspended from the 17th because their discovery might prompt Egypt to block the UNEF. U-2 flights of 15 November detected no Soviet presence in Syria,²⁵ and Allen Dulles refused Pineau's suggestion of action against the Syrian Government. Pineau tried to win Allen Dulles' confidence with a semi-accurate account of the collusion against Egypt, but the CIA Director concluded:

We found ourselves in agreement only on the following points: the importance of Franco-American understanding; that the Communist menace was our greatest danger; that Syria was a potential weak point from the viewpoint of Communist penetration, and that Egypt and the Arab world could well dispense with the services of Nasser. There was some degree of difference between us as to the degree of his rascality, and also as to the type of measures which were justifiable to effect a change.²⁶

23 See PRO, FO115/4545, Denny to Caccia, 16 November 1956.

24 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 16 November 1956.

25 PRO, AIR20/9630, JIC Intelligence Summary Number 16, 16 November 1956; PRO, AIR20/9890, Keightley to COS, Cable KEYCOS 81, 16 November 1956.

26 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 611.51/11-1756, Tyler memorandum, 17 November 1956; DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 7, CIA, Volume I (4), Allen Dulles to Goodpaster, 17 November 1956.

On 14 November, Albert Gazier told Eden of Pineau's 'master plan' for Iraqi takeover of Syria and partition of Jordan.²⁷ The next day, Gazier told Kirkpatrick that France wanted a new Egyptian Government 'based on progressive elements.' Kirkpatrick argued:

We did not believe that there was anyone in the progressive camp who could weld the heterogeneous Opposition and lead a successful coup against Nasser. Only the Wafd [the dominant party in Egyptian politics before 1952] could do this.²⁸

Undeterred, the French foreign intelligence service, the SDECE, plotted the assassination of Nasser, but the British could not even incite a coup. Keightley's headquarters had neither 'the resources and experience nor the time to give' to a psychological warfare campaign. On 15 November, the Chiefs of Staff agreed that the campaign should be given to the Foreign Office to be 'pursued more vigorously.' However, the Foreign Office was soon preoccupied with counter-propaganda to refute Egyptian claims of extensive civilian casualties and damage from the Anglo-French invasion.²⁹

Furthermore, the British had no more luck than Pineau in winning American support. While Eden repeated his concern about the lack of Anglo-American cooperation to the Egypt Committee on 15 November, he refused to withdraw British troops until a satisfactory agreement to clear the Suez

27 PRO, FO371/118872, Record of Eden-Gazier conversation, 14 November 1956.

28 PRO, FO371/118833/JE1015/72, Kirkpatrick minute, 15 November 1956.

29 PRO, AIR20/10369, AFHQ to Ministry of Defence, Cable KEYCOS 74, 13 November 1956, and COS to Keightley, Cable COSKEY 69, 15 November 1956; PRO, AIR20/10371/File. See also Walter Monckton Papers, Box 8, Monckton record, 22 November 1956; PRO, ADM205/150, 'A Short Account of MUSKETEER,' undated.

Canal had been implemented. The NSC reaffirmed the same day that no Western Hemisphere oil would be diverted to Britain.³⁰

Lloyd cabled Eden that he was 'rather depressed' by his discussions with Radford and Allen Dulles. He concluded:

The plain fact is that, as Bedell [Smith] said, the President is the only man who matters and there is no one around him to give him advice who is of the slightest use. That the future of the Middle East should be at the mercy of Hoover and Lodge is a tragedy.³¹

More significantly, Lloyd met Foster Dulles in Walter Reed Hospital on 17 November. The talk is legendary for Foster Dulles' alleged remark, accompanied by a wink, about the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt: 'Selwyn, why did you stop?' Five days earlier, Foster Dulles told Eisenhower:

The British, having gone in, should not have stopped until they had toppled Nasser. As it was, they now had the worst of both possible worlds. They had received all the onus of making the move and, at the same time, had not accomplished their major purpose.³²

Lloyd confirmed to the Foreign Office:

[Foster Dulles] had no complaint about our objectives in our recent operations. In fact they were the same as those of the U.S., but he still did not think that our methods of achieving them were the right ones. Even so he deplored that we had not managed to bring down Nasser.³³

British Ministers were incensed, but Foster Dulles' words were consistent with his position throughout Suez.

30 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 611.84A/11-1656, London to State Department, Cable 2770, 16 November 1956; PRO, CAB134/1216, EC(56)44th meeting, 15 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, National Security Council, Box 8, 304th NSC meeting, 15 November 1956.

31 PRO, PREM11/1106, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1282, 18 November 1956.

32 Cited in The Economist, 'Britain Should Not Have Stopped,' 16-22 June 1990, p. 155.

33 PRO, PREM11/1106, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2308, 17 November 1956.

Like Eisenhower, he believed that Britain and France would not attack Egypt unless they were sure of a quick occupation of the Canal Zone and overthrow of Nasser. The occupation did not occur, and if the U.S. resolution had not been presented to the General Assembly on 1 November, the Americans would have been forced to vote for an even stronger Soviet resolution. Foster Dulles did not act outside the U.N. to halt the Anglo-French operations, and only after his departure for hospital on 3 November did American policy force British consideration of a cease-fire. Even so, the Secretary always had qualms about the outcome of Suez. The head of Walter Reed Hospital recalled that, just before Foster Dulles died in 1959, he said, 'Perhaps I made a mistake at Suez,' and Dean Rusk, later Secretary of State, claimed that Foster Dulles told him, 'I would not have made some of the decisions which I made about Suez had I not been sick at the time.'³⁴

Lloyd concluded, after seeing Foster Dulles:

Foster Dulles was most friendly and intelligent but seemed to want to evade personal responsibility during the coming phase. Hoover was quite negative; I am afraid the same applies to Lodge....Allen Dulles could not have been more cordial, but said that he did not influence policy....It is clear that the most antagonist elements are the second rank in the State Department (e.g., people like Rountree).³⁵

With formal contacts doomed to failure, Britain's hope lay in informal exchanges. As early as 8 November, the Lord Privy Seal, Butler, told Aldrich 'with great earnestness how deeply he deplored the existence of what he termed mutual

³⁴ AP, AP33/2, Heaton to Wheeler-Bennett, 4 September 1973, and Rusk to Wheeler-Bennett, 26 July 1974.

³⁵ AP, AP20/25, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2307, 17 November 1956.

misunderstandings of policy which had arisen.' He confided to the Ambassador, 'You are the only man who is in a position to explain to your government in detail the various attitudes of the members of our government.' Within three days, Macmillan and the Lord President, Salisbury, also approached Aldrich.³⁶

The Cabinet member with the most interest in American cooperation was Macmillan. Not only was he responsible for the pound, but he had shifted from being the most vocal proponent of military action against Egypt to the strongest advocate for a cease-fire. At any point, he could be branded a foolish warmonger by the left wing of the Conservative Party or a faint-hearted warrior by the right. At a meeting of the Organisation of European Economic Cooperation on 15 November, U.S. observers bluntly refused Macmillan's request for help with oil supplies. Lloyd asked from New York that Britain not set conditions upon withdrawal until Secretary-General Hammarskjold returned from a visit to Cairo. Eden, however, insisted that the Cabinet link withdrawal to the Canal's clearance.³⁷

Fortunately for Macmillan, Eden provided an opening to present to the Americans. Since August, Eden's doctors had recommended a holiday to ease the Prime Minister's pain from his 1953 operation.³⁸ On 16 November, Macmillan told Aldrich that he could visit Washington as 'Eden's deputy,' since 'Eden was very tired and should have a rest' before attending a summit. Two days later, the Prime Minister's

36 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-1256, London to State Department, Cable 2648, 12 November 1956.

37 Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 169; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.84(56), 16 November 1956.

38 AP, AP20/1, Eden diary, 21 August 1956.

doctor, Horace Evans, told Macmillan that Eden must have a vacation, although he did not indicate that the Prime Minister would resign. Macmillan, fearing the Americans would not negotiate if they thought Eden would return to office, was ready to disclose and even distort Evans' information.³⁹

After meeting Evans, Macmillan visited Aldrich's residence. He told the Ambassador that Britain's foreign reserves would be exhausted within weeks and the country would shut down from lack of oil. The Cabinet had two options: withdrawal from the Canal Zone or renewal of hostilities to occupy the entire Canal. Macmillan realised that Eisenhower was reluctant to meet British Ministers, but the Cabinet was 'completely to be reshuffled and...Eden [was] going out because of sickness.' The following afternoon, Macmillan reiterated that Eden had suffered 'a physical breakdown and [would] have to go on vacation immediately, first for one week and then for another, and this [would] lead to his retirement.' Butler, Macmillan, and Salisbury would lead the new Government. The first action after Eden's departure would be a step towards withdrawal from Egypt 'if [the U.S. could] give us a fig leaf to cover our nakedness.'⁴⁰

The effect on the Americans was immediate. Aldrich

39 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-1956, London to State Department, Cable 2791, 19 November 1956; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 174. See also Winthrop Aldrich Papers, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., Aldrich appointments diary, 18 November 1956. I am grateful to Dr. David Carlton for this reference.

40 USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-1956, London to State Department, Cables 2791 and 2814, 19 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Aldrich to Eisenhower, 19 November 1956.

called Eisenhower to tell him of Eden's departure and Macmillan's wish to visit Washington. Hoover was hesitant, saying, 'I think this is one time to sit tight, awaiting his further information.' Humphrey, however, indicated he would support a Conservative Government without Eden, if only to keep the Labour Party from power:

I hate to have a man [Macmillan] stick in there and go to a vote of confidence and get licked. If they throw him out, then we have these Socialists to lick.⁴¹

On 20 November, Eisenhower, Hoover, and Humphrey considered the response to Macmillan. Aldrich had cabled that Macmillan or Butler, considered by most Britons to be Eden's 'heir-apparent,' would become Prime Minister. Humphrey thought Butler the 'stronger of the two men being mentioned,' but Eisenhower said he 'always thought most highly of Macmillan, who is a straight, fine man, and, so far as he is concerned, the outstanding one of the British he served with during the war.'

The question of collaboration with Butler and Macmillan remained. Apparently, Butler had not spoken to Aldrich, so the relationship between Butler and Macmillan was unknown. With Humphrey and Hoover present, Eisenhower called Aldrich:

EISENHOWER: You are dealing with at least one person - maybe two or three - on a very personal basis. Is it possible for you, without embarrassment, to get together the two that you mentioned in one of your messages?

ALDRICH: Yes. One of them [probably Macmillan] I have just been playing bridge with. Perhaps I can stop him.

EISENHOWER: I'd rather you talk to both together. You know who I mean? One has same name as my

41 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Hoover and Eisenhower to Humphrey, 19 November 1956.

predecessor at Columbia University Presidency [Butler]; the other was with me in the war [Macmillan].

ALDRICH: I know the one with you in the war. Oh yes, now I've got it.

EISENHOWER: Could you get them informally and say of course we are interested and sympathetic and, as soon as things happen that we anticipate, we can furnish 'a lot of fig leaves'?

ALDRICH: I can certainly say that....

EISENHOWER: Herb [Hoover] probably will send you a cable later tonight. You see, we don't want to be in a position of interference between those two, but we want to have you personally tell them. They are both good friends....

ALDRICH: That is wonderful. I will do this --- tomorrow?

EISENHOWER: Yes, first thing in the morning.

ALDRICH: I shall certainly do it and will then communicate. Can do it without the slightest embarrassment.

EISENHOWER: Communicate through regular channels - -- through Herb.⁴²

Macmillan quickly exploited Eden's absence from Cabinet. After Ministers were told on 20 November that Eden was cancelling his public engagements, Macmillan said rationing would have to produce a 25 percent reduction in oil consumption, even if Britain 'should receive from the U.S., without any considerable delay, the greater part of the supplies assigned to us under the emergency arrangements which had been agreed with the U.S.' The Chancellor warned:

Cabinet might shortly face the grave choice of deciding whether to mobilise all our financial resources in order to maintain the sterling/dollar rate at its present level or to let the rate find its own level with the possible consequence that sterling might cease to be an international currency.

42 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Diary, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 21 November 1956, and November 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Aldrich, 20 November 1956.

Macmillan did not reveal his contact with Aldrich but hinted that the solution to Britain's problems was discreet negotiation:

Although any formal approach to the U.S. would be premature at the present time, we should endeavour to establish informal contact with them through the Treasury Delegation in Washington, in order gradually to enlist their support for the loans which we should have to raise....If we were assured of the goodwill of the U.S. in this respect, it might be possible for us to declare, simultaneously with the announcement of the loss of gold and dollars during November, our determination to maintain the existing sterling/dollar rate and to restore the economy by means of appropriate internal and external policies.⁴³

The next morning, Butler and Macmillan assured Aldrich that the Cabinet would approve British withdrawal.⁴⁴

Eden was oblivious to Macmillan's intrigues. Commenting on a CIA report about Nasser's internal position, he complained to Lloyd, 'It is only on that level [the intelligence services] that Americans cooperate nowadays.' He drafted a final plea to Eisenhower, asking for U.S. support of an 'effective' UNEF and British clearance of the Suez Canal, but decided not to send the message. He left for Jamaica on 23 November, still unaware of the discussions with the Americans.⁴⁵

The restoration of Anglo-American relations still had to overcome two obstacles. First, Butler and Macmillan had to persuade the Cabinet to accept American conditions for aid. Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd, Commonwealth Secretary Home, and Minister of Defence Head opposed concessions, and

⁴³ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.85(56), 20 November 1956.

⁴⁴ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-2156, London to State Department, Cable 2841, 21 November 1956.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO800/742, Foreign Office to New York, unnumbered, 20 November 1956.

a large number of Conservative backbenchers, supported them. To defuse the opposition, Butler and Macmillan had to extract compensation, political as well as economic, in exchange for withdrawal.

On 21 November, Macmillan and Butler suggested to Aldrich that, after British withdrawal, the U.S. should join the Baghdad Pact. Eisenhower told Humphrey:

Apparently "fig leaves" did not mean merely financial help. It may have been something else that we have not even guessed.

Humphrey, despite his worries about the Labour Party, refused any 'political' commitment to the British before complete withdrawal. Eisenhower agreed, and Hoover instructed Aldrich to stall Butler and Macmillan:

We do not believe meeting with Butler and Macmillan [in Washington] would be feasible until possible week of December 3....We remain firm in our conviction that withdrawal of troops is of prime urgency and must be moving toward accomplishment before other important questions can be considered.⁴⁶

Butler and Macmillan's only option was to persuade the Cabinet to adopt gradual measures toward withdrawal while negotiations continued with the U.S. They told the Cabinet on 22 November:

If the U.S. Government were prepared to guide the forthcoming debate in the General Assembly [on an Afro-Asian resolution for immediate withdrawal of foreign troops] on moderate lines and thereafter to state clearly that the problem of the Suez Canal would be firmly dealt with and that the Russians would not be allowed to exploit the situation in the Middle East to their advantage, we might hope to reestablish close political relations with the U.S. and to secure a satisfactory and lasting settlement in the Middle

⁴⁶ USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-2156, London to State Department, Cable 2841, and State Department to London, Cable 3665, 21 November 1956; DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Humphrey, 21 November 1956.

East as a whole.

A token withdrawal of British forces should be undertaken while full withdrawal was linked to the Canal's clearance and the resumption of negotiations over the Canal.⁴⁷

The second obstacle to Anglo-American reconciliation was the division in the U.S. Administration. Eisenhower, needing an excuse to overcome the resistance of the State Department, found it when the U.S. rebuffed the British over the Afro-Asian resolution. The British delegation had sought amendments fulfilling the Cabinet's conditions of 22 November. By the evening of the 23rd, Lloyd was optimistic: the Belgians had sponsored the desired amendments, and Lodge said he had no objections. When the vote was taken the next day, however, the U.S. abstained on the Belgian measures, ensuring their defeat when other delegations followed the American lead. The Afro-Asian resolution subsequently passed easily.⁴⁸

The U.S. abstention occurred when the State Department decided that complete withdrawal superseded all other considerations. Deputy Undersecretary Murphy told Caccia and French Ambassador Herve Alphand 'that the U.S. was now the prisoner of its own policy.' Lloyd proposed discussions on the Middle East's future but failed to influence Hoover, who had cabled Aldrich that international control of the Suez Canal was no longer a practical objective.⁴⁹

47 PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.87(56), 22 November 1956.

48 PRO, PREM11/1106, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 1401, 24 November 1956.

49 PRO, PREM11/1106, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2342, 24 November 1956, Cable 2330, 21 November 1956, and Cable 2334, 23 November 1956; DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 82, Suez Canal Crisis (2), State Department to London, Cable 3666, 21 November 1956, and Cable 3702, 23 November

At last Eisenhower circumvented the State Department. He had been warned by Allen Dulles, 'Britain's long-standing dominant position in Iraq has now become precarious as a result of the military action against Egypt.'⁵⁰ Winston Churchill wrote the President on 23 November:

Whatever the arguments adduced here and in the United States for or against Anthony's action in Egypt, to let events in the Middle East come a gulf between us would be an act of folly, on which our whole civilisation may founder.

Eisenhower replied, 'Nothing would please this country more nor, in fact, could help us more, than to see British prestige and strength renewed and rejuvenated in the Middle East.'⁵¹

The President avoided the risk of publicity attached to a special adviser's appointment. Instead, the White House, 'through discreet channels,' suggested to Caccia 'discussing our major outstanding problems other than through the State Department.' The 'suggestion would have to be handled with the greatest care' since the attempt to appoint Bedell Smith 'had been torpedoed by the State Department.'⁵²

Eisenhower confronted Hoover on 25 November. They agreed with Foster Dulles' suggestion that Britain definitively state its plans and immediate steps for withdrawal before the U.S. offered aid, but they differed over the content of the statement. Hoover believed, 'It might be necessary to tell Britain that it looks as though

1956.

50 DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 7, CIA, Volume I (4), Allen Dulles to Hoover, 22 November 1956.

51 DDE, Ann Whitman, International, Box 18, Winston Churchill, Churchill to Eisenhower, 23 November 1956, and Eisenhower to Churchill, 27 November 1956.

52 PRO, PREM11/1137, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2343, 24 November 1956.

they are through in the area and ask if they want us to pick up their commitments.' Eisenhower objected that Anglo-American partnership was still necessary and concluded, 'We should give the British every chance to work their way back into a position of influence and respect in the Middle East.'⁵³

Once Eisenhower committed himself, Humphrey followed. He called Butler on 26 November to express Eisenhower's worry that the U.S. 'were today opposed to [the] U.K., whom they regarded as being disobedient to the U.N. commandments and in defiance of them.' Provided Britain withdrew from Egypt, the U.S., while supplying loans and oil, could press the Egyptians to make concessions over the powers of an international authority cooperating in the Canal's operation. Humphrey even held out the prospect of a visit to London, though this was 'difficult while the British attitude was uncertain.' He agreed with Butler that 'questions which could not be mentioned [over the phone] on the succession' to Eden would be addressed in the near-future.⁵⁴

Gradually, Butler and Macmillan led the Government into accommodation with the U.S. They were assisted by Salisbury, who invited Aldrich to his home 'for tea and talks.' Lloyd, unaware of the covert discussions, endorsed Butler and Macmillan's calls for withdrawal because of his distress at British difficulties in the U.N. He reported from New York on 26 November that 4,000 UNEF troops would be in place by 5

⁵³ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 19, November 1956, Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 26 November 1956.

⁵⁴ PRO, PREM11/1106, Humphrey to Butler, 26 November 1956.

December, negotiations on the Canal's status would start when the date of withdrawal had been fixed, and clearance of the Canal would begin when Anglo-French troops were withdrawn. The Cabinet agreed to recall Lloyd immediately so a decision could be reached, as Butler, 'considerably encouraged by his talk' with Humphrey, favoured a definite date for withdrawal.⁵⁵

Lloyd returned to London on 28 November. After his offer to resign over his role in Suez was declined, he informed the Cabinet:

If we withdrew the Anglo-French troops as rapidly as was practicable, we should regain the sympathy of the U.S. Government; we should be better placed to ask for their support in any economic measure which we might need to take, and we should have removed, as far as lay in our power, all impediments to the further clearance of the Canal.⁵⁶

Macmillan called for an immediate announcement of withdrawal, but the battle was not yet won. Dissenting Ministers argued that withdrawal was unacceptable to many Conservative backbenchers and obtained agreement that withdrawal would only occur with assurances of 1) a competent UNEF, 2) some action toward clearance of the Suez Canal, 3) suspension of the expulsion of British nationals from Egypt, and 4) immediate and tangible support from the U.S. Noting reports of internal political and economic deterioration in Egypt and a swing of public opinion towards

⁵⁵ Joseph Alsop Papers, Van Patten to Alsop, 24 November 1956; PRO, FO115/4550, New York to Foreign Office, Cable 524, 27 November 1956; PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.88(56), 26 November 1956; DDE, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject, Alphabetical, Box 82, Suez Canal Crisis (2), London to State Department, Cable 2948, 27 November 1956.

⁵⁶ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.90(56), 28 November 1956; Thorpe, p. 254. See also USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/11-3056, London to State Department, Cable 3036, 30 November 1956.

the Government in Britain and the Commonwealth, some Ministers concluded that Britain should 'dig in.' Butler postponed a final decision on the pretext that Lloyd should consult the French.⁵⁷

The next morning Macmillan told the Cabinet of a loss of a \$450 million, more than 20 percent, of the reserves since September, including a \$270 million fall in November. Fears of a backbench revolt continued, but Lloyd obtained Hammarskjold's promise that 'all available equipment' would be used to clear the Suez Canal and Egypt would be asked for a public statement guaranteeing free transit to British and French ships. Although some Ministers thought this inadequate, the Cabinet agreed on 30 November that Lloyd would inform the Commons about withdrawal on 3 December.⁵⁸

Butler and Cabinet Secretary Brook prevented Eden's intervention in the discussions. Told by Butler, 'Do not attempt to break your isolation. There is no major issue, i.e., Anglo-American policy at the moment,' Eden only cabled London for information on 29 November. When he received a summary, Eden, questioning the arrangements for withdrawal, clearance of the Canal, and the UNEF, informed Ministers, 'I am better and shall be available for any consultation.' His generous offer was not accepted. Butler merely wrote, 'We shall continue our efforts in New York to obtain the best possible terms on clearance, future settlement, size of force, etc.'⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ PRO, CAB128/30, C.M.91(56), 29 November 1956. See also PRO, T236/4190, Rowan to Makins and Makins to Macmillan, 30 November 1956.

⁵⁹ Rhodes James, pp. 587ff.; AP, AP20/25, Brook to Eden, 30 November 1956, and Butler to Eden, undated.

Eden was unhappy, since he 'never thought the Six Principles [for a Canal settlement] amounted to so much.' He wrote his Private Secretary, Frederick Bishop:

I am sure that the only thing is to stand firm on the ground that we have chosen and I believe that [the U.N.] will come around. I quite understand that the financial position can meanwhile become quite difficult, but after all, we have resources, which I would rather not put in a telegram.

Butler, aware that Eden might block withdrawal if he knew the details of its negotiation, replied on 2 December, after consulting Salisbury, Macmillan, and Chief Whip Edward Heath:

We believe that the policy on which we have decided is consistent with the course which you set for us. We hope you will feel that we have taken the right direction.

He added the next day:

We of course considered very anxiously whether it was our duty to suggest to you that you should return. We concluded that you ought not to interrupt your rest.

Salisbury and Dr. Evans agreed. The Prime Minister finally relented, 'I fully agree and will now pipe down.'⁶⁰

Butler and Macmillan also instructed Eden not to make public statements from Jamaica and told an American television network that he was unavailable for comment. Bishop and Robert Allan, Eden's Parliamentary Private Secretary, cabled Eden before his return to London:

You yourself are not giving interviews to the Press. You have been kept informed of the broad lines of policy, but might find difficulty over minor tricky questions. We all feel sure that a short statement on departure [from Heathrow for 10

60 AP, AP20/25, Jamaica to Colonial Office, Cables PERS 102 and 103, 1 December 1956, Colonial Office to Jamaica, Cable PERS 70, 2 December 1956, Cable PERS 72, 3 December 1956, and Cable PERS 75, 4 December 1956, and Jamaica to Colonial Office, Cable PERS 117, 4 December 1956.

Downing Street]...is the best course.⁶¹

When Eden, in his proposed statement, referred to 'the Moscow-Cairo Axis' and Nasser's dictatorial ambitions and criticised the U.N., Butler, supported by Lloyd and Salisbury, responded that Eden's denunciation of the U.S., the Soviet Union, China, and the U.N....

...would create a bad impression....In particular there is a growing wish to end the breach with the U.S. It is important that your first pronouncement should be in tune with the changed atmosphere.

Criticism of Nasser should be deleted since it 'supported the contention that our real motive was to get rid of Nasser.' After further exchanges, Eden accepted Whitehall's draft.⁶²

Once they knew of the intention to withdraw, the Americans eagerly fulfilled British requirements. An American statement pledged full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Baghdad Pact's members. 'A very relaxed and cheerful' Butler told Aldrich on 1 December that, as the American 'activation of [the emergency] oil committee and warning message regarding aggression against Turkey and other members of the Baghdad Pact had made [a] most favourable impression' in Britain, he 'thought he had turned the corner with the Suez rebels [in Commons].'⁶³

On 3 December, Lloyd told the Commons that British troops would withdraw by mid-December if an effective UNEF

⁶¹ Rhodes James, pp. 589ff.

⁶² AP, AP20/25, Jamaica to Colonial Office, Cables PERS 141 and 145, 11 December 1956, Colonial Office to Jamaica, Cable PERS 105, 12 December 1956, Jamaica to Colonial Office, Cable PERS 147, 13 December 1956, and Colonial Office to Jamaica, Cable PERS 107, 13 December 1956; Rhodes James, p. 590.

⁶³ PRO, FO115/4545, Dixon to Lloyd, 30 November 1956; USNA, RG 59, CDF, 974.7301/12-156, London to State Department, Cable 2915, 1 December 1956.

was in place. The British would not insist on participation in the Canal's clearance and would not set preconditions on negotiations for a Canal settlement. Privately, the U.S. assured Macmillan that a loan from the Export-Import Bank was forthcoming, that Britain could borrow from the International Monetary Fund, and that the annual repayment of the interest due on the 1946 U.S. loan would be waived. Within 72 hours of Lloyd's announcement, American oil supplies were sent to Europe. By 22 December, Britain received almost \$2 billion in U.S.-backed loans and aid.⁶⁴

The British had survived the immediate crisis, but a new problem emerged: Eden, refreshed by his vacation, did not intend to resign as Prime Minister. The Americans had negotiated on the assumption that Eden would not return to power, Humphrey telling Foster Dulles that 'nothing but a change of Government' would save the pound, and Butler and Macmillan were already vying for the succession.⁶⁵

Even though Macmillan was as responsible as Butler, if not more so, for the cease-fire and subsequent efforts for withdrawal, he placed the onus of 'retreat' upon his rival. As Acting Prime Minister, Butler took responsibility for withdrawal, while Macmillan's role was never revealed. Former Conservative Minister Brendan Bracken wrote to the newspaper baron, Lord Beaverbrook:

Macmillan is telling journalists that he intends to retire from politics and go to the morgue [the House of Lords]. He declares that he will never serve under Butler. His real intentions are to push his boss out of Number 10 and he has a fair following in the Tory Party. The so-called Canal die-hards think better of him than they do of Eden

⁶⁴ Hansard, 3 December 1956; PRO, FO115/4551, Washington to Foreign Office, Cable 2436, 7 December 1956.

⁶⁵ Horne, p. 452.

or Butler.⁶⁶

At the meeting of the 1922 Committee of Conservative backbench MPs on 22 November, Butler gave a straightforward presentation of the situation and asked Macmillan for a few words on oil supplies. The Chancellor turned the opportunity into a rousing 35-minute speech. A Conservative Whip, Philip Goodhart, recalled, 'Rab was not on his best form, whereas Harold was at his most ebullient and managed to win the day, not only on the merit of what he said...but also physically in that his expansive gestures nearly caused poor Rab to fall backwards from the adjacent seat.'⁶⁷ Douglas Dodds-Parker, the Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, claimed:

A document had been drawn up saying that, as Butler had dragged his feet over Suez, the signatories would not support him for the leadership; that this had been signed by some half of the Tory Party [MPs]; that he would therefore be unable to form an administration; and so there was no alternative to him but Macmillan. This document was sent on high through a Privy Councillor [Lord Scarborough].

Scarborough spent the evening of 3 January with Eden, but it cannot be determined if the Prime Minister's potential successors were discussed.⁶⁸

At a NATO meeting in Paris on 12 December, Macmillan, distorting his role in Suez, solicited the support of Foster Dulles, who reported to Eisenhower:

[Macmillan] recognised that there had been a certain loss of confidence on the part of the

⁶⁶ Charles Lysaght, Brendan Bracken (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p. 302.

⁶⁷ Horne, p. 455. See also Anthony Howard, Rab (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), p. 241.

⁶⁸ Douglas Dodds-Parker, Political Eunuch (Springwood, Berkshire: Springwood, 1986), p. 117; Author's interview with Douglas Dodds-Parker; AP, AP20/30/1, Prime Minister's appointments diary, 3 January 1957.

President, myself, and others because of the Suez operation and the deception practiced upon us in that connection....He, personally, was very unhappy with the way in which the matter was handled and the timing but...Eden had taken this entirely to himself and he, Macmillan, had had no real choice except to back Eden. Macmillan did not disguise the fact that he had always favored strong action but the point was that he did not like the manner and timing, particularly vis-a-vis the U.S.

Macmillan also reassured Foster Dulles that, even if Eden remained as Prime Minister, he would not be in charge of British policy:

After Eden returned, there would be a question as to whether he would resign at once on account of ill health. If not, he would probably hold on for six months⁶⁹, but he would be a constitutional Prime Minister.

Future U.S. policy in the Middle East also had to be decided. Eisenhower still foresaw renewed cooperation with Britain, but the State Department assumed 'that [Britain's] position in the area has been seriously prejudiced by its action against Egypt and that the U.S. must assume leadership in maintaining and restoring the Western position in the area.' In the short term, the U.S. would use King Saud to 'moderate both extreme nationalist and pro-Soviet views among the Arabs.' If Jordan refused British subsidies, 'the U.S. should offer to assist Jordan financially and perhaps militarily in the context of closer federation with Iraq.' In the long run, the U.S. would fix Arab-Israeli boundaries through the U.N., provide a unilateral assurance of aid to the Baghdad Pact, 'utilise all appropriate opportunities to isolate Egypt and reduce Nasser's prestige and influence,' 'assist Iraq to expand its influence in

69 DDE, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memoranda, Box 1, L-M (2), Macmillan-Foster Dulles meeting, 12 December 1956.

Syria and Jordan,' and 'further strengthen Saudi Arabia and reduce its ties with Egypt.'⁷⁰

On 8 December, Foster Dulles outlined three alternatives to Eisenhower: accession to the Baghdad Pact, which was favoured by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, creation of a new regional organisation under the U.N. Charter, or bilateral arrangements with Middle Eastern countries. Foster Dulles favoured the bilateral approach, 'since you wouldn't get in trouble with the troublemakers [Britain and France].' Eisenhower thought that, since 'Saudi Arabia and even Lebanon...might want to adhere to the Pact,' the U.S. 'would want to go in with them,' but when Foster Dulles revived the objection that the U.S. could not join the Pact without a guarantee of Israeli borders because of the pro-Israeli lobby in Congress, the President gave way.⁷¹

Two general tenets of American policy emerged. First, King Saud would replace Nasser as the leader of the Arab world.⁷² Second, the U.S. would unilaterally guarantee the security of Middle Eastern states from Communist aggression inside or outside their borders. At a meeting on 20 December with Eisenhower, Hoover, Wilson, and Radford, Foster Dulles said the Senate's approval of American accession to the Baghdad Pact 'would be extremely difficult to obtain.' Furthermore:

Nasser opposes [the Pact] and, more importantly, King Saud does also....Saud is the only figure in the area...[who could] serve as a counterpoise to

⁷⁰ U.S. DDE, US81 555A.

⁷¹ DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 20, December 1956 Phone Calls, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 8 December 1956.

⁷² See DDE, Ann Whitman Series, Dulles-Herter, Box 6, December 1956, Eisenhower to Foster Dulles, 12 December 1956.

Nasser.

Instead, a Congressional resolution should authorise Presidential action to counter Communism in the Middle East, just as the Truman Doctrine of 1947 'defended' Greece and Turkey against Communism and the 'Formosa Doctrine' of 1955 protected Taiwan.⁷³

On 5 January, Eisenhower addressed Congress to request a resolution to 'authorise the U.S. to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence.' Reasonable amounts of economic aid would be allocated, and the President could provide military assistance, including direct aid by American forces, 'against armed aggression from any nation controlled by international Communism.' The Resolution was approved by Congress and signed by Eisenhower in March.⁷⁴

It remained for Britain to accept the Americans' unilateral commitment, even though this implied British subservience to the U.S. Conveniently, Eden's fall from power was imminent. When he Prime Minister returned from Jamaica, a group led by Salisbury and Butler informed him that, 'while the Cabinet were willing to carry on under his leadership until Easter, if it was then clear that his health was not fully restored, they felt that a new head of Government would be necessary.' On 18 December, Eden gave an unimpressive account of Suez to the 1922 Committee.

73 DDE, Ann Whitman Series, DDE Diaries, Box 20, December 1956 Staff Memoranda, Goodpaster memorandum, 20 December 1956.

74 Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p. 180.

Questioned about collusion, Eden replied that 'some [half-truths] - and if they existed at all, they were not serious or many in number - were necessary, and always are in this sort of operation which demands extreme secrecy.'⁷⁵

Eden returned to the Commons two days later to silence. Under close questioning from Gaitskell about collusion, Eden resorted to deception:

I want to say this on the question of foreknowledge and to say it quite bluntly to the House, that there was not foreknowledge that Israel would attack Egypt --- there was not. But there was something else. There was --- we knew it perfectly well --- a risk of it, and, in the event of the risk of it, certain discussions and conversations took place as, I think, was absolutely right, and as, I think, anybody would do.⁷⁶

Eden might have remained as Prime Minister for a few months, but he had effectively lost power. Butler consulted Eden's Principal Private Secretary, Frederick Bishop, who warned that Eden's resignation 'might conceivably happen quite quickly.'⁷⁷ At the end of December, Eden began asking Ministers and prominent Conservative peers if he should continue, telling them that he was having trouble sleeping and regaining his former vigour.⁷⁸ From 1 January, Dr. Evans saw Eden daily, and on 7 January, Eden was examined by Evans and two other specialists. Told that his health would be endangered if he stayed in office, Eden discussed the details of his resignation with Brook and Salisbury.⁷⁹ On 9 January, Eden told the Cabinet:

⁷⁵ Carlton, Anthony Eden, pp. 463ff.

⁷⁶ Hansard, 20 December 1956.

⁷⁷ Author's interview with Frederick Bishop.

⁷⁸ See AP20/33/7, Buchan-Hepburn to Eden, 28 December 1956, and AP20/33/19, Coleraine to Eden, 5 January 1957.

⁷⁹ AP, AP20/30/1, Prime Minister's appointments diary, January 1957, AP33/8, Brook to Eden, 8 January 1957, and AP33/10A, draft Eden to Churchill, 8 January 1957.

Since Nasser seized the Canal in July, I have been obliged to increase the drugs considerably and also increase the stimulants necessary to counteract the drugs. This has finally had an adverse effect on my rather precarious inside.⁸⁰

Macmillan's succession was surprisingly easy, despite doubts by Lord Salisbury. Four Cabinet supporters of the Chancellor discussed their strategy as soon as they learned that Eden intended to resign. Michael Adeane, the Queen's Private Secretary, not only consulted Salisbury but also Lord Waverly, Lord Chandos, and Winston Churchill, all of whom independently recommended Macmillan. When Salisbury, with his lisp, polled Ministers, 'Which is it to be: Hawold or Wab?', no more than three voted for Butler.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Rhodes James, p. 597.

⁸¹ Colville, p. 722; Gilbert, p. 1227. See also Horne, p. 458; Howard, p. 247.

CONCLUSIONS: SUEZ AND BRITISH POLICY

The Suez War was not primarily the product of weakness in individuals but of weaknesses in the structure of British Government as it protected its 'traditional' Middle Eastern position. Anthony Eden, even before his gall bladder operation of 1953, was vain and short-tempered. Often in pain before and during the Suez Crisis, he would explode in rage against Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Yet British policy, not only long-term strategy but short-term operations, was not forged by Eden's 'irrationality.' In 1954, he enjoyed a series of diplomatic triumphs, including the Geneva settlement of Indochina, the formation of Western European Union, and the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Despite the difficulties he faced as Prime Minister, his rejection of long-term measures against Nasser in March 1956, in favour of plans to 'murder' the Egyptian leader, was soon retracted. His desire to strike immediately after Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company was overruled by the military's insistence upon weeks of preparations, and those military plans were postponed during the diplomatic manoeuvring of September and October.

Similarly, the hypothesis that Harold Macmillan, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, pushed fellow Ministers into war against Egypt, either as a 'necessary' measure to save British influence throughout the world or as part of a wider intrigue against Eden, is unsupported by evidence. Even if Macmillan was willing to distort his conversations with American officials in late September and to understate the cost to the British economy of a war, he was unable to halt the Foreign Office's pursuit of genuine negotiations with

Egypt.

Those who blame U.S. Secretary of State Foster Dulles for the Suez War claim that he misled the British into thinking that the Eisenhower Administration would not oppose the use of force. Foster Dulles did refer to 'making Nasser disgorge the Canal,' made to appease the British and to promote OMEGA as the long-term method to topple the Egyptian Government, but he, like Eisenhower and State Department officials, clearly warned Britain that the U.S. would only accept the use of force if there was no alternative to internationalisation of the Canal. In mid-October, the U.N. discussions provided such an alternative. Moreover, British Ministers, including Eden and Macmillan, recognised in late October that the U.S. would not support military action. Far from being misled by Foster Dulles, they gambled that he and Eisenhower would not intervene to halt Anglo-French operations.

The portrayal of Egyptian President Nasser as the cause of the war is also suspect. He and Eden, while differing over the Turkish-Iraqi Pact, were not unfavourably impressed with each other during the latter's visit to Cairo in February 1955. As late as March 1956, both the U.S. and Britain were willing to work with Nasser on projects such as the Aswan High Dam. OMEGA, the Anglo-American program to curb Nasser's influence, was not undertaken to overthrow an evil dictator but to defend the interests of the U.S. and Britain in the Middle East, notably the resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the maintenance of the British position in Jordan, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula. Only MI6 portrayed Nasser as a megalomaniac intent on the

destruction of Israel and the formation of a pan-Arab, pan-Islamic bloc under Egyptian control, and their assessment was not shared by the Foreign Office or most of their American colleagues.

Even if Nasser was the villain depicted by MI6 and, later, by Eden, his actions after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company gave no pretext for military action against Egypt. Even the British Cabinet recognised that, on 'narrow' legal grounds, the nationalisation did not violate international law. Nasser did not threaten foreign nationals or the employees of the Suez Canal Company nor did he impede the flow of traffic through the Canal. Throughout the crisis, he offered negotiation of a new settlement based on international cooperation with the Egyptian Canal Authority, and the U.N. discussions in early October brought Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the principles of such a settlement.

The interplay of personalities, such as Eden's susceptibility to public and press criticism, the tension between Eden and Foster Dulles, or the 'anti-Munich' spirit among most British Ministers, may have influenced the course of the Suez Crisis, but it was secondary to two considerations: the development of British policy in the Middle East and regional events beyond the control of London and Washington. Specifically, after the decision in 1953-54 to shift the centre of Middle Eastern position from Cairo to Baghdad, British policy was predicated upon the formation and defence of the Iraqi-Jordanian axis, which eventually led to Anglo-Egyptian conflict.

Britain, presented with the fait accompli of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact in January 1955, had to maintain its

Middle Eastern position by joining the agreement, despite Nasser's opposition. At the same time, Nasser, confronted with a more aggressive Israeli policy on his border, pursued Egyptian-Saudi-Syrian ties and a secure source of arms to avoid isolation in the Middle East. His acquisition of weapons from the Soviet bloc prompted the Foreign Office not only to endorse Iranian accession to the Baghdad Pact but to seek the inclusion of Jordan with the ill-fated Templer mission. By early 1956, almost all Middle Eastern events were seen through the prism of an Egyptian 'challenge' to the British strategy.

General Glubb's removal as head of Jordan's army by King Hussein, although it was not instigated by Nasser, was interpreted by Eden as Cairo's attempt to remove Britain from the Middle East. The Foreign Office, recognising that the Egyptian leader was not directly responsible for Glubb's dismissal, resisted immediate confrontation with Egypt, but it could only defend the Iraqi-Jordanian axis by removing the alternative of an Egyptian-led Middle Eastern system. Officials drafted the long-term covert program to curb Nasser's influence and obtained Cabinet approval.

The British reaction to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company merely subordinated covert planning to overt military preparations. It was irrelevant if the Egyptian action was legal or if trade through the Canal and Middle Eastern oil shipments was unimpeded. Acceptance of nationalisation indicated British submission to Egyptian initiatives, undermining the Iraqi-Jordanian axis and a British-led Middle Eastern system.

Yet British policy and the ensuing Anglo-Egyptian

conflict was not sufficient cause for the Suez War. As of 14 October, Eden had accepted Lloyd's opinion that further negotiations with the Egyptians on supervision of the Canal were desirable, and Anglo-French plans for invasion of Egypt were to be suspended, at least until spring 1957. In essence, the Foreign Office's opinion, shared by the U.S. Government, that a genuine settlement over the Canal should be pursued while the covert, non-military program of March 1956 was implemented against Nasser prevailed.

British collusion with France and Israel against Egypt occurred when the policy of the Iraqi-Jordanian axis was linked to other events outside British control. Just as the Iraqis surprised the Foreign Office with their signature of the Turkish-Iraqi Pact in early 1955 and the Arab-Israeli dispute forced Nasser to turn to the Soviets, so the developing Franco-Israeli 'alliance' became intertwined with the Anglo-French planning against Egypt. It is possible, though impossible to determine, that French and Israeli military planners conspired to force Britain into tripartite collusion against Egypt through the attack on the Jordanian village of Qalqilya in early October 1956. Even if the assault upon Qalqilya was merely the product of Israeli-Jordanian tension, the French used it to frighten Eden into accepting collaboration with Tel Aviv. If Britain refused, Israeli-Jordanian war would destroy the Iraqi-Jordanian axis and British plans for the Middle East.

However, neither personalities nor policies, even when they are linked to regional developments, can solve certain questions about British policymaking during Suez. How could Eden, with the endorsement of a few senior Ministers,

implement the plan with the French and the Israelis without informing most of the Foreign Office, the Treasury, and his own military commanders? How could he pursue military operations which, given the length of time between the Israeli attack upon Egypt and the landing of British and French troops, were politically indefensible?

The answers lie within the British system of policymaking. In effect, there were two British policies for the Middle East in 1956, one pursued by the Foreign Office and another by MI6, with no interdepartmental body to coordinate them. Even though the Foreign Office strategy was repeatedly endorsed by the Cabinet before July 1956, MI6 pursued plans and carried out operations without Cabinet approval. It is probable, though not certain, that Eden, through the Permanent Undersecretary's Department of the Foreign Office, approved the MI6 policy, at least in principle. It cannot be determined if Foreign Secretary Lloyd was informed.

The outcome was a British foreign policy which was not only ambiguous but sometimes contradicted itself. Eden, weaned on 'intelligence' about Nasser from MI6 sources such as LUCKY BREAK, repeatedly intervened to alter Foreign Office plans. Eden's propensity for unilateral action could be checked by civil servants and Ministers, for example, the Cabinet decision of 21 March 1956 for a long-term program against Nasser, but even then the Prime Minister nearly sabotaged the plans. He leaked information to the American press about British determination to topple Nasser, insisted on a show of military strength in the Arabian Peninsula, and blocked Anglo-Saudi discussions on the Buraimi oasis.

Meanwhile, MI6, either with Eden's approval or on its own volition, showed little regard for Foreign Office strategy in its proposals for the overthrow of King Saud of Saudi Arabia, an ally of the U.S., and co-operation with Israel to remove Nasser from power. Even when MI6 supported Foreign Office policy, the intelligence services failed to coordinate its operations with those of other departments. The Foreign Office was ignorant of the 'alternative' Egyptian Government cultivated by MI6 in 1956. When MI6 cooperated with the Iraqis to overthrow the Syrian Government, it failed to inform the CIA of its operations, eventually dooming not only its own plans, but those of the Americans.

There is little direct evidence of MI6's involvement in British planning against Egypt during Suez, but it is likely that the ill-fated Phase II of MUSKETEER REVISE, aerial and psychological warfare against Egypt, was based upon MI6 assurances that the plans would soon lead to Nasser's replacement by an 'alternative' Government. A more intriguing issue is the possible link between MI6's plans to conspire with Israel against Egypt and the eventual collusion of October 1956. It cannot be determined whether Harold Macmillan conferred with MI6 before tabling his proposals for collusion in August or whether MI6 was passing information to its French and Israeli counterparts about the state of opinion within the Eden Government.

The arrangements between 10 Downing Street and MI6 set a dangerous precedent for planning during the Suez Crisis. Eden circumvented the Foreign Office and the military to pursue collusion and then neglected to give them details of

the arrangements with France and Israel. British diplomat and military commanders fought a war with no idea of the plans behind it.

CONCLUSIONS: SUEZ AND ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

In contrast to those authors who have blamed the breakdown of the Anglo-American alliance on personalities, some political scientists have constructed an explanation based on systematic analysis.¹ Although these accounts of Suez, written before the release of unpublished government documents, are 'historically' suspect, they offer a more complete description of the relationship between London and Washington than that provided by other published works.

In general, however, systematic models of Anglo-American relations suffer from three fundamental shortcomings. First, they tend to be 'exclusive,' regarding the events of Suez solely as the product of Anglo-American relations. It is misleading to assume that a policymaking system is insulated from the effects of other countries' actions. The Franco-Israeli 'alliance,' Israeli-Jordanian tension, and the Iraqi-Jordanian axis were the primary catalysts for British involvement in collusion against Egypt. Saudi Arabian opposition to Anglo-French military action as well as the political situation in Syria was a significant influence upon American policy during Suez.

Similarly, any change in variables outside the control of the policymakers limits the efficacy of cooperation between them. For example, the information which an official in Washington receives from sources outside the 'alliance' can only correspond with the

¹ The most notable example is Richard Neustadt, Alliance Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

information available to his counterpart in London if there is a complete and constant exchange of information. This condition can never be met. Even if an official was willing to transmit all information he received and even if his system was willing to allow full transmission, no technology can instantaneously communicate the material. Furthermore, an official's interpretation of the information, based on subjective factors which may not be acknowledged by the official himself or which may elude definition, cannot be expressed completely on paper.

Secondly, while the models may be dynamic, recognising the effect of changes in personnel, perspectives, and the channels of communications upon Anglo-American relations, the underlying definition of 'alliance' is static. Merely asserting the basis of 'alliance' as 'formal pledges, long-standing institutional arrangements, history, language, acquaintance, shared external interests, and felt need,' gives a superficial foundation to the Anglo-American 'alliance' divorced from political and strategic considerations.

Outside of a institution such as NATO, in which the 'alliance' is formally and systematically defined, 'alliance' is subjectively determined by the objectives of each system, the perceptions of the policymaker, and the channels between the two systems. Thus, a change in these conditions may not only affect the operation of the 'alliance' but also its very existence.

Thirdly, the models may be flawed in assuming unitary systems producing and implementing policies. In practice, two or more inconsistent policies may be pursued and

implemented if there is no effective procedure to unify the views and plans of different agencies and actors. Such was the case with British policymaking in 1956.

'Alliance' is conditioned upon the objectives of each system and the interests of officials within those systems. If these are fulfilled through 'allied' action or policy, all is well; if not, the 'alliance' exists only in name. Although Britain and the U.S. never disagreed about the general aim of defending the Western position in the Middle East, cooperation to fulfill that objective was not automatic. Firstly, one government might decide that its interests were not sustained by the methods of its 'ally.' Although the British recognised the Soviet 'threat' to the Middle East and were willing to use the rhetoric of the Cold War to obtain American support, their priority was the defence of long-standing interests in the region. Conversely, the United States, apart from its economic and military position in Saudi Arabia and its ties, through domestic politics, to Israel, had little intrinsic interest in the Middle East. Its overriding objective was the development of the region within a global system containing Soviet expansion. If Britain action threatened the success of its Cold War policy, the United States might refuse to support its 'ally.'

Divergence in the 'alliance' in the Middle East predated the Suez Crisis. In 1953, the Eisenhower Administration perceived that Britain's conduct of the negotiations for a new Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was jeopardising the Western position in Cairo. Moreover, British inability to supply large amounts of military aid

to countries such as Iraq and Pakistan was hindering the formation of a 'Northern Tier' defence against the Soviet Union. The Administration reacted by suspending the 'alliance' and pursuing unilateral initiatives. Only in late 1954, after the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, supply of American weapons to Iraq and Pakistan, and signature of the Turkish-Pakistani defence agreement did the U.S. restore political co-operation with Britain in the Middle East. Both countries perceived that the Arab-Israeli dispute was hindering the achievement of their goals in the region, so they agreed to co-ordinate the ALPHA program for an Arab-Israeli settlement.

At working level, individual officials, embassies, or agencies, such as MI6 and the CIA, did not always follow the guidelines set by their Governments. While the State Department worked with the British on initiatives such as the Tripartite Declaration and Middle Eastern Command between 1950 and 1953, the CIA implemented its strategy of cultivating nationalist leaders, even those who objected to British influence in their countries. In 1955-56, MI6's policy of toppling any Middle Eastern regime that did not defer to British wishes jeopardised the Anglo-American 'alliance.'

Most significantly, the 'alliance,' without formal definition, could not be protected from the effects of other countries' actions. While the Turkish-Iraqi fait accompli of early 1955 forced the British to create the Baghdad Pact, the Americans, primarily for reasons of domestic politics, could not join the organisation. Similarly, when the possibility arose in mid-1955 that the

Israelis would expose or pre-empt Anglo-American plans for an Arab-Israeli settlement, Foster Dulles was forced into a public speech on the Arab-Israeli issue, despite British misgivings.

To some extent, the relationships between British and American policymakers could mitigate these hindrances to the operation of the Anglo-American 'alliance.' Anglo-American military discussions on the Middle East continued during 1953-54 despite the Eisenhower Administration's pursuit of 'independence.' The damage wrought by MI6's ambitious plans upon Anglo-American discussions of OMEGA was minimised by British diplomatic and military representatives in Washington. The troublesome issue of the Buraimi dispute between Saudi Arabia and the British-supported Trucial Sheikhdoms was never resolved but Anglo-American consultations prevented it from sabotaging the 'alliance.'

The differing interests of Britain and the U.S. in the Middle East produced divergent reactions to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, but these were reconciled through high-level discussions during August and September. While Foster Dulles' conference-making, with hindsight, could be perceived as a delaying tactic to forestall Anglo-French military action, the British agreed to the convening of the first London Conference and the formation of the Suez Canal Users Association. Foster Dulles was angered at Britain's peremptory approach to the U.N. in late September, but he was able to encourage Foreign Secretary Lloyd to pursue genuine negotiations with the Egyptians. Even if Britain was forced to accept

American insistence upon diplomatic manoeuvres because of a lack of military resources for an immediate assault upon Egypt, the 'alliance' continued as a significant influence for a peaceful settlement until mid-October. Meanwhile, Britain and the U.S. pursued covert plans to remove Nasser from power.

The breakdown of the Anglo-American 'alliance' in October 1956 was not due to the mistaken perception of British policymakers like Eden and Macmillan that the U.S. would not oppose the use of force, resulting from Eisenhower's reluctance to express his objections. In fact, Eden and his supporters proceeded with collusion, not only because of their determination to topple Nasser and defend the Iraqi-Jordanian axis but because of two factors external to the model of 'alliance': the pursuit by certain British agencies, notably MI6, of an 'independent' policy against Egypt and its effect upon Ministers, and the use, by France and Israel, of Israeli-Jordanian tension to draw Britain into tripartite action against Cairo.

Thus, the conditional 'alliance' between Britain and the U.S. in the Middle East, founded upon the common threat of Nasser rather than formal institutions and arrangements, disintegrated. Within months of the Suez debacle, however, the Macmillan Government restored co-operation with the Eisenhower Administration. The U.S. finally joined the Baghdad Pact, renamed the Central Treaty Organisation, and new plans for a coup in Syria were prepared. Yet the 'alliance' still rested upon the convergence of the American interest in containing

Communism and the British interest in retaining some influence in the Middle East, if only to support its position in the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf. Any reinforcement was provided, not by formal mechanisms, but by British subservience to American leadership, through the Eisenhower Doctrine, in the Levant.

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CORRIGENDA

- Page 3, Line 16 - Replace 'continue' with 'contribute'.
- Page 34, Line 24 - Replace 'concede the demand' with 'withdraw its demand'.
- Page 35, Line 15 - Insert 'and' between 'progress,²³' and 'the dispute'.
- Page 42, Line 3 - Insert 'were receptive to his ideas' between 'the Arabs' and 'and recommended'.
- Page 43, Line 3 - Replace entire line with 'in advance of an Arab-Israeli settlement would'.
- Page 51, Line 27 - Insert 'but' between 'manner' and 'did not dislike'.
- Page 58, Line 9 - Replace 'balance of arms israeli' with 'balance of arms. Israeli'.
- Page 63, Line 8 - Delete 'the State Department'.
- Page 63, Line 10 - Replace 'ALPHA had been eclipsed' with 'ALPHA, the Anglo-American attempt at an Arab-Israeli settlement, had been eclipsed'.
- Page 98, Line 18 - Replace 'tod' with 'told'.
- Page 109, Line 16 - Replace 'late' with 'later'.
- Page 136, Line 31 - Replace 'in' with 'In'.
- Page 139, Line 7 - Insert 'authority' between 'MI6' and 'to gather'.
- Page 147, Line 7 - Delete 'of Israel'.
- Page 175, Line 8 - Replace 'cloud' with 'crowd'.
- Page 176, Line 6 - Replace 'makins' with 'Makins'.
- Page 223, Line 23 - Replace 'proportions' with 'preparations'.
- Page 232, Line 29 - Replace 'by' with 'By'.
- Page 242, Line 12 - Insert 'have' between 'might' and 'continued'.
- Page 256 - Insert Footnote 2 'PRO, PREM11/1100, Cairo to State Department, Cable 1885, 4 September 1956; Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail, pp. 164ff.'
- Page 272, Line 16 - Replace 'Dismissed' with 'Dismissing'.
- Page 278, Line 8 - Delete 'Eden'.

Page 282, Line 2 - Insert 'in the near-future' after 'force'.

Page 290, Line 16 - Replace 'served' with 'worked'.

Page 298, Line 30 - Replace 'The Americans were excluded' with 'Excluded'.

Page 299, Line 16 - Delete 'upon'.

Page 309, Line 11 - Insert 'would' before 'bolster'.

Page 344, Line 13 - Replace 'inform' with 'keep'.

Page 361, Line 8 - Replace 'that' with 'did'.

Page 446, Line 1 - Replace 'diplomat' with 'diplomats'.

Page 455, Line 12 - Replace 'Liddell-Hart' with 'Liddell Hart'