

while minimizing the positive appearance of Soviet efforts at peace.

In addition, Guhin noted once the USSR assaulted Hungary, the United States had the opportunity to condemn their aggression also. Had America upheld the allies' decision to fight, it would have appeared hypocritical to reprobate the Soviet action - in essence a "do as I say, not as I do" stance. The United States could reproach all combatants justifiably because it consistently stood against force.⁶³

In his article, "Eden" Robert Rhodes James wrote "Eisenhower was consistent that the canal was not worth a war. Eden was consistent that it was...."⁶⁴ Stated at this basic level, all the reactions to the crisis are clear. Western Europe and the United States stood at opposite ends of the spectrum. There was bound to be disagreement and strife among the allies. When it arrived Eisenhower reverted to what might be referred to as his command mode. He did as any good military officer is trained to do - he did what was necessary in the situation. And, in that instance, an end to the fighting was required.

The President was not motivated by spite or revenge. He was concerned with America's credibility and world opinion. It seems apparent, however, that the strongest influence guiding his reaction was related to the justiciability - in Eisenhower's mind - of the acts committed by the British, French, and Israelis.

Had the US considered an attack necessary, it is probable the

administration would have discovered a way around the Tripartite Declaration, and any other obstacles, in order to assist the aggressors. The United States had created justifications for acts deemed immoral by American citizens and foreign governments before this and has since done so. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Eisenhower did not believe the Suez Canal warranted forceful assertion. There were means short of war that might result in a satisfactory resolution. No advantage could be gained in the Middle East or over the Soviet Union by resorting to force. In short, violence was resisted to avoid endangering the West's position in the global arena.

Despite US opposition to the aggression, President Eisenhower believed that the relationship with England, France, and Israel would heal quickly. He wished to repair any damage caused by the crisis as soon as he was able and worked toward that end. Following the implementation of the cease-fire, communications between the United States and British and French officials took on an amicable, if somewhat apprehensive, tone. Although discussion with Israel's Prime Minister Ben-Gurion was less pleasant, it was not hostile. In all cases, however, apprehensions were directed toward the Russian menace. America as well as the conspirators were concerned with Soviet intentions in the Middle East.⁶⁵ The allies had reverted to their mutual obsession with Cold War considerations. Details of the final settlement still had to be

arranged, but for all intents and purposes the allies were reunited.⁶⁶

After the crisis had passed Nasser complied with all the resolutions called for by the United States and the UN, from arbitration and development funds to minimal toll increases.⁶⁷ Having achieved his goal, control of the Suez Canal, he had no desire to further irritate the world. His intent from the start had been to remove foreign influence from Egypt, never to disrupt passage through the Suez. Limiting access to the canal would only create resentment among the canal users and provide an excuse to oppose nationalization. With no such rationale the British and French had miscalculated and acted without appropriate cause. Nasser's advantage was that the rest of the world considered him innocent. As the crisis concluded, Nasser was careful to maintain that advantage.

At last we come full circle in this chapter to address the question of President Eisenhower's "furious" response to the Anglo-French aggression. It is certain that the President took harsh measures to pressure England, France, and Israel to end hostilities. It is also clear that he was not motivated by spite or revenge. Rather, Eisenhower's angry reaction can best be explained as one of outrage. Outrage at the Anglo-French disregard for modern standards of civilization.

Eisenhower felt disbelief that his NATO allies were weakening the position of the West and enhancing the Soviet image. He was alarmed

by the fact that British and French action endangered the power of the United Nations. Lastly, the President could not agree to what amounted to a breach of contract - ignoring the Tripartite Declaration.

Simply stated, Eisenhower believed the British and French were wrong in their desires, reasoning, and action. It was not a personal vendetta for him, except with respect to the fact that he was morally against their aggression. Eisenhower believed that he, as President of the United States, had an obligation to stop the Western Allies. Their aggressive policy disregarded American and international moral consideration, leaving Eisenhower - the leader of the free world - no choice but to put a halt to their attack.

ENDNOTES

1. At least three other historians discuss the President's fury when hostilities broke out in the Middle East. See Herbert S. Parmet, Eisenhower and the American Crusades, (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972): 485, Philip J. Briggs, "Congress and the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine, 1957." in Dwight D. Eisenhower: Soldier, President, Statesman, edited by Joann P. Krieg (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987): 255, and Robert A. Divine, Eisenhower and the Cold War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981): 85.
2. Michael A. Guhin, John Foster Dulles, A Statesman and His Times, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972): 291-92.
3. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957 [FRUS], Vol. XVI, "Suez Crisis July 26-December 31, 1956" (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1990): 9-10.
4. Ibid.: 8.
5. Ibid.: 525-526. Special National Intelligence Estimates are prepared by various intelligence groups within the government - in this case the CIA, and intelligence branches of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and JCS.
6. Ibid.: 525-526.
7. Ibid.: 110.
8. Ibid.: 434.
9. Ibid.: 703.
10. Public Papers of the Presidents, "Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956," (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1958): 737.
11. "Secretary Dulles Says U.S. Will Not 'Shoot Its Way' Through Suez Canal," US News and World Report (41, September 21, 1956): 121.
12. Public Papers of the Presidents: 883.
13. Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years, Waging Peace, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1965): 39.
14. "Angry Challenge and Response," Time, (August 13, 1956): 16.

15. Public Papers of the Presidents: 627.
16. FRUS XVI: 430.
17. Ibid.: 909.
18. Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower The President, Vol. II, (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984): 339.
19. Public Papers of the Presidents: 883. The fourth principle called "for fair and increasing share of the profits to Egypt and profits to no one else." This issue was inexorably connected with the three already discussed.
20. White Paper on the Nationalization of the Suez Maritime Canal Company, (Cairo, Egypt: Government Press, 1956): 54.
21. According to three authors colonialism was a major factor. For their arguments see: Blanche Wiesen Cook, The Declassified Eisenhower A Divided Legacy, (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1981): 189, Michael Guhin: 287, and William Bragg Ewald: 212.
22. FRUS XVI: 906.
23. American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1950-1955, (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1957): 2237.
24. FRUS XVI: 834.
25. Ibid.: 836.
26. Similarly, Professor J. Philipp Rosenberg concluded "in order to be true to what he perceived as the nation's long-term interest, the pursuit of morality in international relations... Eisenhower was forced to do something he did not want to do...he felt compelled to deny the requests of his closest allies because he felt they were acting in an immoral manner." See J. Philipp Rosenberg, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Foreign Policy Making Process." in Dwight D. Eisenhower: Soldier, President, Statesman, edited by Joann P. Krieg, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987): 125.
27. FRUS XVI: 836.
28. Ibid.: 67.

29. Public Papers of the Presidents: 1065-66.
30. FRUS XVI: 909.
31. Ibid.: 906.
32. Ibid.: 910.
33. Ibid.: 993-994.
34. Ibid.: 1003.
35. Eisenhower, Waging Peace: 91.
36. Robert Divine reported the President was convinced the Russian pronouncements were no more than propaganda ploys. Divine: 86-7.
37. FRUS XVI: 995.
38. Public Papers of the Presidents: 1062.
39. FRUS XVI: 976.
40. Ibid.: 1003.
41. Eisenhower, Waging Peace: 88-89. Michael Guhin explained the Washington analysts' perspective of the Hungary/Suez dichotomy: "To Washington's way of thinking, it would be illogical at best for the West to divert attention from these tumultuous events in Eastern Europe, to complicate further the situation, and particularly, to undermine the West's position against the use of force to settle disputes at a time when Moscow was considering whether and when to move in with force." Guhin: 286-7.
42. American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1956, (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1959): 462.
43. FRUS XVI: 1028.
44. For their full arguments see Parmet: 485 and Cook: 189.
45. Cook: 189.
46. Guhin: 292-93.

47. Robert H. Ferrell (ed.), The Eisenhower Diaries, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981): 332.
48. FRUS XVI: 835. Robert Divine remarked that "the crisis atmosphere helped ensure the President's re-election by a commanding majority." Divine: 88.
49. Eisenhower, Waging Peace: 92. If Eisenhower was concerned he admitted it to no one.
50. Ibid.: 56.
51. This argument is taken up by Maurice Vaisse. See his article "France and the Suez Crisis," in Suez 1956 The Crisis and Its Consequences, edited by William Robert Louis and Roger Owen, (Oxford: Clarence Press, 1989): 142.
52. FRUS XVI: 906. Dulles' matter-of-fact deliverance of these words does leave one suspicious about the sincerity with which they were spoken. On one side the reader thinks, here is what he said plain and simple, on the other hand the reader wonders, is this sarcastic? Why did Dulles say it unless there existed some undercurrent of anger running either within the administration or himself? Perhaps the statement represented Dulles' efforts to convince others not to view the situation from an agitated perspective. Consider also, when action was taken it was harsh as far as the allies were concerned. It is easy not to act out of malice, when the alternate course might have the same malicious results.
- The above argument is only considered because of Dulles' profession. As consummate politician it is difficult sometimes to gage the meaning behind statements he made. But, one must remember Dulles made this statement in the presence of the President and had little reason to deceive the man he worked for. Dulles seems to have spoken his mind freely with Eisenhower, hence had he felt otherwise than he stated, he probably would have said so. Despite semantic questions one could raise concerning Dulles' remark, it is more reasonable to consider his comment as honestly spoken.
53. Ibid.: 1025.
54. Eisenhower's public opposition to the operation minimized international support for Britain's attack. He also invoked an oil embargo against the attacking nations. In addition, Blanche Cook reported that the President covertly worked to devalue British Sterling.

Fighting in the Suez had created a run on English money. As England's reserves dwindled, the President applied US pressure to block all IMF money transfers, thus leaving the British treasury with almost no funds. Britain could either accept the cease-fire or bankrupt itself. Eden had no choice in the matter. Cook: 190.

55. Ibid.: 1040. Author William Bragg Ewald praised Eisenhower for the proposed visit with the comment: "Already - in the heat of battle - Ike has laid the groundwork for reconciliation." William Bragg Ewald Jr., Eisenhower the President Crucial Days, 1951-1960, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981): 213.

56. Ibid.: 213.

57. FRUS XVI: 1045.

58. Ibid.: 1046.

59. Ibid.: 1067.

60. Ibid.: 1080.

61. Ibid.: 1096-7.

62. Ibid.: 64.

63. Guhin: 292-93.

64. Robert Rhodes James, "Eden," in The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956 Retrospective and Reappraisal, edited by Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990): 107.

65. FRUS XVI: UK, 1061; Israel, 1108; US, 1112; France, 1117.

66. From the British perspective US-UK relations were not in as good shape as Eisenhower thought. Harold MacMillan, who replaced Eden as Prime Minister in January 1957, ordered a study of British-US relations. The report concluded that the base on which the Anglo-American alliance had rested was severely weakened because of their disagreement over Suez (Lamb: 306.)

Regardless of whether or not the negative conclusions reached by the MacMillan sponsored study were correct, the Suez Crisis did not end a friendly associations between Western Europe and the United States. If British harbored latent anger at the US for resisting force, it was not

frequently apparent, nor did it seem to affect relations of the two countries.

67. Lamb: 306-7.

CHAPTER FIVE

Suez Concluded

The negotiation, conversation, and occupation of the canal zone continued through December. Eventually all forces retreated from their positions and the Suez Canal was cleared of scuttled ships. The business of sailing the Suez resumed, but now under the direction of Egypt. Egyptian troops received a harsh defeat, yet Nasser was never more powerful. Politically his image had been enhanced. He had beaten France and England by maintaining control over the canal. A New Republic editor predicted on September 17 that after all the talks were complete Nasser would still "save both face and the Canal."¹ After the conferences and the fighting were done, the comment proved correct on both counts. Arab nationalism was at a high mark and stayed there for over a decade.

Some thought the roots of this conflict could be found in the offer of the United States, IBRD, and Great Britain to finance the Aswan Dam and its subsequent abrupt withdrawal. Nasser staked his legitimacy in the Arab world on completing the project. But, he could not help trying

to pressure his American partners into sweetening the deal for Egypt by dallying with the Eastern block, dominated by America's nemesis, the Soviet Union.

When Nasser could not obtain weapons from the West, he purchased Czech arms. Against America's wishes, he also recognized China. And, to add to the insult, the Egyptian President planned a visit to Moscow. American diplomats indirectly warned Nasser that his actions would result in repercussions. Congressional support for the Aswan project evaporated further with each anti-American act committed by Egypt. Public opinion also turned against Nasser. When the Egyptian leader did not reverse his course, Dulles withdrew the offer to build the Aswan Dam. Six days later Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. Was this an angry reaction to the sudden withdraw or a calculated measure to increase Egypt's power?

It is probable that Nasser anticipated the withdrawal of Aswan aid. It is possible also he expected to nationalize the canal in response. Certainly, Egypt's leader took full advantage of the situation Dulles had created in cancelling the program in what appeared to be an abrupt manner. His indignant response reached sympathetic ears in many small countries. A Gallup poll asked citizens of several countries whether they approved or disapproved of the retaliatory actions taken by Israel, Britain, and France. The results showed overwhelming

disapproval of the assault.² Nasser's well acted denunciation of aid cancellation gained him support from around the world. The aggressors received no more than scorn.

It is almost certain that nationalization of the Suez Canal was not directly related to withdrawal of Aswan Dam aid. Peter Woodward, author of Nasser in the "Profiles in Power" series, noted that Nasser continued to nationalize industries and businesses in Egypt during the fifteen years following the Suez Crisis. Nasser believed it necessary to remove outside influences in Egypt to increase profit and Arab nationalism. Newspapers, banks, insurance companies, public transportation, hotels, and movie theaters all were state controlled by 1965. Before economic troubles forced Nasser to slow his nationalization trend over 600 businesses were seized.³

Nasser's move to control the Suez represented only his first step in nationalization. Egypt's seizure of the canal was not truly a retaliatory action. Dulles had simply provided a convenient excuse for something Nasser planned to do anyway. Although the Aswan Dam was important, America's cancellation of aid did not prompt nationalization. It provided a cover for what Egypt's leader intended no matter what.

In October, 1956 Nasser admitted that he had been planning to take control of the canal since 1954. Nasser did not mention that until June, 1956 it had been impossible to do so because of the British

occupation troops stationed on the banks of the Suez. Due to US pressure, Great Britain had agreed to evacuate their soldiers. Because of Dulles' diplomatic blunder, Egypt had an excuse to fill the vacuum created when the British left.

In one way, the Suez Canal Crisis was a continuation of the political scramble for power in the Middle East that had begun even before 1955. Prior to the crisis Nasser had tried to play the United States against the Soviet Union in order to gain the best of both Eastern and Western worlds. At the same time, he wanted to remain free from the overarching grasp of either super power. Conversely, both America and Russia had attempted to gain power in the Middle East by manipulating Nasser. As the crisis began the situation remained the same.

America continued to try to be Nasser's friend. Although the UK and France believed America would accept their assault as a fait accompli and lend support to the attack, Eisenhower remained true to the Tripartite Declaration. In effect, he supported Nasser's legitimacy over that of his allies. His reasons, as we have seen were varied and extensive, but the end result was to defend Egypt's position. This could not help but make the United States more appealing to Nasser. By opposing Britain, France, and Israel, Eisenhower basically ensured Nasser's nationalization retained its validity. If that did not result in

some appreciation from the Egyptian government, what would?

In the typical Russian way, the Soviet Union remained steadfast Nasser supporter also. Always upholding "nationalist" movements (outside of Eastern Europe), the USSR could hardly ignore Nasser. During the crisis Russia offered military assistance to Egypt in an effort to gain influence in the Middle East. Since Nasser's anti-west position meshed well with the Soviet stance, the Russians were bound try to bring Nasser into their sphere. To the annoyance of the Russians, however, Nasser refused to kowtow to his Communist benefactors.

In fact, Nasser would allow no influence to seep in from either nation. He sought a resolution to the Suez Canal Crisis that best served his brand of nationalism. He continued to work for the betterment of Egypt and avoided any obligations to the superpowers.

Nasser's contact with the Soviet Union increased after the crisis was resolved, but he never committed Egypt to the hammer and sickle. During the following years vitriolic doctrinal disagreements between Nasser and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, repeatedly occurred with no agreement being reached.⁴ In the decade and a half following the canal incident Nasser accepted much aid from the Soviet Union, but little advice.

Egyptian relations with the United States did not even attain the

Soviet level. Nasser maintained his anti-Israel/anti-Western stance making normal political association nearly impossible. Although the Egyptian President never closed the door to offers of economic assistance, he also was hard pressed to accept any that came with strings attached. US aid packages invariably did so.

The US's and the Soviet Union's interest in Nasser was explained by the fact that his power and popularity were clearly the greatest in the area. Yet, the Egyptian President's power was one with its basis in Arab nationalism. The US/USSR goal of increasing foreign influence in the Middle East and Nasser's desire to consolidate Arabian support around Egypt were contradictory. Nasser could not maintain his independence of action or position in the Arab community while a superpower's doctrine was evident. America and Russia were destined to have minimal influence in Egypt, no matter what tactics they applied.

The crisis in regards to Britain and France had a negative outcome. As a direct result of the Suez conflict, the predominant position of the United States in the West was fully revealed. Great Britain's reliance on the United States was not questioned again during the Eisenhower administration. Although France - under Charles de Gaulle's influence - would attempt to reassert its independence in the future, the only result was isolation from America, not leadership in Europe. The Suez Crisis had illustrated America's ability to force its will

upon the rest of the Western world.

In Israel the short war had a positive effect. Although Israel cooperated with Anglo-French forces, its goals differed from the British and French. Ben-Gurion had perceived the military action as a preventive measure. A means designed to show simultaneously Israel's strength, avoid high casualties, and warn the Arabs against attack, without starting a major war. The ease with which Israeli troops advanced against Egyptian soldiers served as a clear lesson to Israel's enemies. Attacking the Jewish state was a poor idea.⁵

Of the participants in the Suez Crisis only the United States and the Soviet Union did not suffer some type of defeat. Great Britain and France lost control of the canal. Israel, although it might have preferred to keep the Sinai territory won in battle, bargained it away in favor of the clear passage through the Tiran Straights. And, Egyptian forces were undeniably trounced by Israel's army. It would be another decade before Nasser dared attack Israel.

The superpowers, on the other hand, were free from loss. Their overall situations remained unchanged. Both the United States and the Soviet Union continued their ongoing efforts to gain advantages over the other. Suez might have been interpreted as a victory for the Communist cause, since Russian relations with Nasser were increased. If that were the case, the Soviet's had triumphed in only a single battle. Other areas

of the globe remained to be won. Besides, Nasser continued to steer an independent course from the Soviet Union, so their victory was not so sweet, after all.

The Cold War was far from finished. Neither superpower had expanded its vision of the world to include or accept as important the independence of third world countries. America and Russia both continued to regard each other as the players and consign everyone else the part of pawns.

Most tragic for the United States was that it did not learn during Suez a lesson that would have saved American lives and hearts a decade later. Although Eisenhower had supported the nationalistically inspired Nasser, protecting Egypt against efforts to destroy it, he failed to acknowledge the credibility of Egyptian nationalism. Eisenhower disregarded the nationalist element of Nasser's position and concentrated only on the legitimacy of his action. Perhaps had the United States analyzed the situation, it could have learned to view nationalist movements as products of internal expressions, and not external influences. Had that been seen, or even accepted as a valid possibility when analyzing other cases of nationalistic fervor, the United States might have been able to avoid the Vietnam War.

Clearly the chance would have been minimal. It is improbable America would have discounted the Communist doctrine of Ho Chi Mihn

and viewed him purely as a nationalist. Although Nasser had nationalized the canal and hundreds of businesses after that, he avoided Communist rhetoric. Ho, also referred to national unity, but Americans could not ignore his connection to Communism. Americans did not recognize that Ho Chi Mihn's power found its basis in the same place as Nasser's, in the people.

Undoubtedly, it is wishful thinking to say that the United States could have been led by less prejudicial leaders. In that period, Cold War considerations were ingrained in American society and psyche. The Soviet Union was the enemy, and Communism the disease it spread. Eisenhower believed that, as did Dulles. Yet, tempering his fear of Communism was an overriding desire for peace. Because of Eisenhower's particular philosophy, the President resisted the Cold War inclination to support the allies against a potential Russian advance. Instead Eisenhower steered a course mandated by principles. Through careful tactics the President managed to find a way to protect against undue Soviet intervention in the Middle East without allying with the aggressors.

Eisenhower's policy preserved the peace and denied Soviet advances. It was a combination that proved difficult to achieve in the administrations following Eisenhower's. In fact, it was a combination rarely, if at all, seen since.

ENDNOTES

1. New Republic September 17, 1956: 8.
2. Gallup Poll November 3, 1956: 1454. In certain cities like Melbourne, Toronto (for England and France), and Amsterdam (for Israel) there is more approval for the action taken against Egypt. I attribute this to sentimental attachments to the aggressor nations.
3. Peter Woodward, Nasser (New York: Longman, 1992): 91.
4. Ibid.: 154.
5. Shimon Peres, "The Road to Serves: Franco-Israeli Strategic Cooperation," in The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956 Retrospective and Reappraisal, edited by Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh. (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990): 145-6.