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The Suez Situation

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Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "The Suez Situation" (1956). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 203.

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THE SUEZ SITUATION

Foreign policy in the Suez crisis seems to be based on waiting for the sands to settle. The sands will not settle of their own accord. We will either act to secure a just settlement of the Suez problem or we will stand by idly as the provocation in Suez leads to other provocations and ultimately to the catastrophe of open conflict which will lay the Middle East in ruins, tear apart what remains of Western unity, and open the channels for further Soviet penetration into Africa and Europe.

The people of this country need to know what is involved in this crisis in Suez and have not been told. We have seen the sudden and callous seizure of the Suez Canal Company by Egypt in a gesture both petulant and arrogant. We have seen the British and the French mobilize forces on Cyprus and in the Mediterranean to defend what to them are vital and immediate interests in the Canal. We have seen the Secretary of State, with the best of intentions, move into the gathering war clouds on four occasions in attempts to stop the storm.

So far no shots have been fired on Suez. So far ships continue to move through the Canal. Superficially, I suppose, that can be regarded as a major achievement. Is it the case in actuality? If it is, why do the editorials of virtually every newspaper in this country continue to display an uneasiness over the Suez situation?

I think it is because they reflect the concern of the American people. They reflect an awareness that a genuine solution of the crisis has not been achieved just because shots have not been fired. What has been obtained in the Suez situation is only a prevention of a clash as of this moment and we have paid a terrible price for it. It has been paid for in something very

close to appeasement of the arrogance which emanates from Cairo, an arrogance which if it goes unchallenged will make itself felt elsewhere in the Middle East. It has been paid for by a further blow at the stability and unity of the free nations of Western Europe, nations in whose survival in freedom the United States has invested more than 26 billion dollars in aid since the war, plus heavy wartime losses in men and material. In short, what has been obtained in the Suez crisis is a temporary respite at the price of putting off the day of reckoning. What has not been obtained is a just and lasting solution of that crisis. I hope that now it may not be too late.

Almost six months ago, in a speech in the Senate on April 16, I urged the Administration to act at once to forestall a crisis in the Middle East. I pointed out the need to bring together as many nations as possible pledged to preserve peace in the Middle East in these terms: "We should begin now, in cooperation with others, to plan the measures which may be necessary to prevent a major outbreak of violence in the Middle East or to stop one if it should occur. The Tripartite Declaration of 1950, in my opinion, is inadequate to the needs of the present situation. Dangerous and difficult measures may be required to keep the peace and the sacrifices entailed should be shared on the widest possible scale." I urged the Administration to call an immediate conference on the petroleum supply problems which might result from a crisis in the Middle East in these terms: "We should call at once a conference of the Western European nations which depend on Middle Eastern petroleum and the oil-producing nations of this hemisphere. If the peace is to be kept in that area, measures may have to be taken which will shut off, at least temporarily, Western Europe's major source of petroleum. The immediate problem is to find alternatives not only to the oil but to the income which the production and processing of oil represents to certain Western European countries."

Months went by and nothing was done while the tension continued to mount. Then when the crisis was upon us, action along these lines was at last taken, belated and halting action. Had the Administration acted firmly and clearly six months ago, it is likely that we would not now be hunting for last-ditch remedies. The present crisis might never have arisen.

We have no choice now but to acknowledge the damage which has resulted from delay and vacillation in dealing with the Middle Eastern situation. We have no choice but to face the fact that we are confronted with a new situation, one which contains greater risks, one which will cost more to cope with. We had better recognize, too, that if we do not act now, it will become even more risky and costly in the near future.

The principal fact in this new situation is that President Nasser is in possession of the Suez Canal Company, on dubious legal grounds perhaps, but nevertheless he is in possession. He will not be quickly dislodged except by military force which, if used by the Western powers, is likely to solidify the Arab world under his leadership and win for him, however reluctantly, the support of the peoples of Asia and Africa.

There is another fact in the situation, however, a fact which works for a just solution of this problem. For a long time Suez has been a route of unhindered international passage. In that sense, it is international. World opinion will not acquiesce in the misuse of the Canal by Nasser or anyone else to further nationalist political ambitions. World opinion can be made to bear fruit in this situation if it is effectively mobilized and led.

Secretary Dulles in the Suez negotiations has adopted the role of the "honest broker" between the West and Egypt on the one hand and on the other he has been able to keep together a western united front of sorts. The result is

that while he has not won friends on either side, his analysis before the Security Council of the United Nations, in drawing attention away from Egypt's act of nationalization and pinpoint^{ing}/the issue upon ways and means of guaranteeing free international access to the canal has been reasonable, understanding, and could, if followed through with good intent by both sides, produce successful results.

On the basis of these facts and possibilities, therefore, it seems to me any hope of a peaceful solution to the Suez crisis must be sought along the following lines:

1. Acceptance of the right of Egypt to nationalize the canal, with just compensation of the present Suez Canal Company owners, provided Egypt allows free and unhampered right of passage to ships of all nations in time of peace or war in accord with the Convention of 1888.

2. If an agreement is not reached in the U. N., the User's Association, so-called, which Mr. Dulles has formed, must be strengthened into an organization of sufficient cooperation and resources to see to it that it will be Egypt rather than the rest of the world that suffers from a failure to keep the Canal open to all nations.

The User's Association should be urged to consider negotiations on the adoption of the following measures in case of the failure of the U. N.

1. Establishment of a Suez sealift to move Mid-Eastern petroleum around the Cape of Good Hope, based on a cooperative use of the tanker capacity of member-nations; release out of mothballs of 35 United States tankers; and a crash building program on 70,000 to 100,000 ton tankers.

2. The intensification of petroleum production in this country and the Western Hemisphere generally.

3. A crash program on the application of nuclear energy to power production.

4. The establishment of a \$1 billion interest-free revolving fund contributed by member-nations, in accordance with their capacity, to alleviate nations hard hit by measures taken by the Users' Association to preserve the international right of transit through the Suez Canal.

The need for these measures, which are costly and difficult, has been occasioned by the impasse which now faces the Western nations in the conduct of their foreign policies. I hope we have seen an end to the stalling and the failure which has marked our efforts to date. If we have not, the next price to be paid may well be a bloodbath in the Middle East made to order for the cheap extension of totalitarian communist influence in that region.