CHAPTER V

INDIA AND THE SUEZ AND WEST ASIAN CRISIS

India and the Suez Crisis:

Before examining the role of India in the Suez Crisis, it is necessary to trace briefly the evolution of the Non-alignment of the United Arab Republic. For, the Suez Crisis, as shall be seen in this chapter, was important from the point of view of the emergence of Non-alignment as a force in international politics.

Roots of Arab Nonalignment:

The Nonalignment of the United Arab Republic is not essentially a product of the deep anti-westernism of the Arabs (which was the popular form of Arab Nationalism), as is generally believed. Even Arab Nationalism was not based on mere hatred of the West. It was an expression of profound indignation at what Fayez A. Sayegh has called "the callous indifference to past and continuing western injustices in the Arab world" and a demand for justice. The history of Western policies in the Arab world is a chronology of mounting injustices, which

1. Dynamics of Neutralism In The Arab World, op.cit., p.173.
culminated in the 'supreme injustice' of the creation of Israel, depriving over a million Arab Palestinians of basic and fundamental Human Rights.

The Arabs had equal aversion for Communism and the Soviet Union also joined the Western Powers in supporting the Zionist cause. As Prof. Boutras Boutras-Ghali has put it, thus created "a crisis of confidence between the Arabs and the rest of the world which had deliberately espoused the Zionist cause." The predicament in which the Arabs found themselves then the East-West struggle began in the mid 1940's has been well described by Fayez A. Sayegh: "with no love for communism, no faith in Western democracy, and no respect for the caricature of 'democracy' bequeathed by Europe to the Arab world, Arabs lacked all the elementary pre-requisites of interest in


that ideological 'Great Debate' which the Cold war purported to be. If they lent deaf ears to Soviet professions of 'peaceful intent', Arabs also greeted with scorn the righteous claim that they represented 'Freedom' and 'justice' which was put forward by the very powers whose forces had divided and ruled the Arab world and suppressed Arab liberation struggles, and whose policies had so recently perpetrated supreme injustice in Palestine. The title 'Free world' preempted for itself by the western bloc, rang hollow in Arab ears."

The Arabs were, therefore, justified in opposing all western moves to bring the Arab states into western alliances against Communism. The resignation of Salih Jabi's Cabinet in Iraq on January 27, 1948, following popular resentment against the Portsmouth treaty between Iraq and Britain signed on January 16, 1948, was one of the earliest manifestations of this aspect of Arab Nationalism in the post-Second World War period. In the United Arab Republic proper, there were technical discussions in 1949 between it and Britain for working out an air defence scheme which failed because the Government of the day lacked sufficient support to commit themselves to such an agreement.

6. Id., p. 146-147.
The UAR and the Korean Crisis:

Looked at from this angle, the United Arab Republic's response to the June 27, 1950, resolution of the Security Council authorising the use of force against North Korea, is perfectly understandable. Explaining his country's stand on June 30, 1960, Fawzi, in an oft quoted statement said: "I am now in a position to state, on behalf of my Government, that Egypt would have abstained from voting on the resolution adopted by the Security Council on 27 June... had the representative of Egypt been able to participate in the voting.

"This attitude is dictated by the following two reasons: first, the conflict under consideration is in fact but a new phase in the series of divergences between the western and eastern blocs, divergences which threaten world peace and security; secondly, there have been several cases of aggression against peoples and violations of the sovereignty and unity of the territories of States Members of the UN. Such aggressions have been submitted to the UN, which did not take any action to put an end to them as it has done now in the case of Korea."

This, says Prof. Ghali, was the "first official manifestation of Egyptian neutralism towards the Cold War". And

Fayez A. S. Syegh has written that this was an excellent illustration of the Arab "indifference to the difficulties experienced by the western Powers." Neither of these views appears to explain accurately the United Arab Republic's policy in the Korean Crisis, for these views lay stress on only one aspect of the explanation offered by Fawze, to the neglect of the other, which appears to have been the more important consideration. As Georgiann G. Stevens has observed correctly: "Two strands of logic underlay the Arab position in the Korean case. One was their argument that the same yardstick applied to Korea should also be applied to Palestine, where in their view, Israel has trespassed on Arab territory. But more important from the long range viewpoint, was their almost instinctive move toward a neutral and mediating role in company with India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Burma and Afghanistan."

It has already been indicated that while accepting the United Nations action against North Korea India itself expressed the desire to end the conflict by peaceful negotiations, and made attempts in this regard. And the United Arab Republic had voted in favour of the June 25, 1950, resolution of the

9. Supra, n.1.
Security Council which called for the withdrawal of North Korean forces from South Korea. Speaking on this occasion in the 473rd meeting of the Security Council on June 26, 1950, Fauzi said: "I welcome all action aiming at the cessation of the conflict in Korea. Indeed it is exhilarating to note the energetic attitude which the Security Council appears to be taking and which is in contrast to several earlier cases...."

And in the 288th meeting of the General Assembly on September 28, 1960, Salah El-Din Bey, explained the United Arab Republic's abstention from voting on the June 27 resolution of the Security Council, in the following words: "I know that we alone have taken this stand. Nevertheless, we do not feel isolated. On the contrary, we feel indeed that we have voiced the sentiments of small and medium states and that the great Powers themselves, when they have over attitude properly weighed up, can not but approve it and welcome its objectives.....

"First is our concern for peace and our fear that it would be disturbed by the long standing conflict between the two blocs, a conflict which has of late become so fierce that anxiety and fear prevail everywhere.....


"Secondly, there is the often observed practice of differentiating in treatment between states and peoples..."

"It has been alleged that Egypt did not condemn aggression as others have done. No, indeed... Egypt would undoubtedly be among those who abhor and condemn it the most, since it still continues to suffer from the violation of its rights. Egypt justly calls upon the United Nations to use one and the same measure in all cases of aggression and resolutely to repel aggression with the same alacrity wherever it may occur."

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"The two reasons which led Egypt to abstain from voting on the Security Council resolution of 27 June last, are traceable, in fact, to one single reason: the love of peace and concern for its protection."

For the rest one finds Fauzi co-operating with B.N.Rau, in every proposal put forward by India in the United Nations to bring a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Thus the United Arab Republic's stand on the Korean Crisis had been less

negative than has generally been realised. But the United Arab
Republic had not yet become a nonaligned state in the real
sense. This was achieved by Nasser.

**UAR's Nonalignment : Evolution:**

Arab Nonalignment as evolved by Nasser was first of all,
a demand for the liquidation of British and other foreign bases
and armies from the Arab countries. It was thus inherent in
Arab Nationalism and was one of the main aims of Nasser's revo-
lution of 1952. But it differed from the popular form of Arab
Nationalism in the sense that it was a rational policy based
on the realities of the distribution of power in the world,
where as the basis of Arab Nationalism was purely emotional.
This was where, one has to say, Nasser differed from the Muslim
Brotherhood, for example. It is one of the great achievements
of Nasser that he had given a rational content to Arab Natio-
alism by evolving Arab Nonalignment and identifying it with
Arab Nationalism.

This difference between Nasser's Nonalignment and Arab
Nationalism was well reflected in the denunciation of the Anglo-
UAR treaty of 1954 on the evacuation of the Suez base, by the
Muslim Brotherhood and the Communists. It is the failure to

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pp. 61-63.

of Modern Islamic Movements*, (Khayat's College Book Coopera-
tive, Beirut, Lebanon, 1966), pp. 130-147 for an account
of the conflict between Nasser and the Brotherhood.
see the difference that appears to be responsible for Prof. Ghali's observation that the treaty "was incompatible with Egyptian neutrality" and that "the circulation of leaflets denouncing the Suez agreement by Leftist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood was another confirmation of the strength of neutralism in Egypt."

As indicated earlier Nasser agreed to allow the British to come back within a period of seven years, in case of an attack on the Arab League States or on Turkey (Article 4), because firstly, the United Arab Republic was not strong enough to defend itself in case of an attack, secondly there was not much of a chance of an attack from the Soviet Union which had not yet shown much interest in the Arab lands. He had grasped the meaning of the cold war very soon after coming into power, though he could not formulate suitable policies immediately. As Leonard Binder has put it, he had begun to criticise the United States towards the end of 1953 for its "failure to grant Egypt any development loans in the fourteen months since the revolution." Nasser could see that the cold war was being waged on the economic front. Again, as the same writer has

16. Op.cit., p. 344. He also does not seem to distinguish between neutralism and neutrality as his account of the origins of Nonalignment suggests (p. 341).

observed: "On April 19, 1964, he made a thinly veiled threat that he might seek arms from the Eastern bloc if the West did not comply with his request. On the second anniversary of the revolution he made one of his most revealing statements about Egyptian foreign policy and his grasp of the cold war situation, he said that this was no longer the age of power politics, but an age in which the great powers were vying for the friendship of the lesser powers. Egypt, he announced, would withhold its friendship from those who did not co-operate with her."

Thus there does not appear to have been any 'ambivalence' in Nasser's stand on the evacuation treaty. He had to grant the concession to Britain because there was no other way in which he could secure a quick withdrawal of the British forces from the Suez base. And he must have felt that there was no harm in giving this concession, when there was no danger of an actual Soviet attack in the near future. In this sense he was far more realistic than either the British statesmen or their friend Nuri of Iraq. Further, this concession was offered to Britain in an Egyptian note of December 1964 demanding the revision of the 1936 treaty, which Britain had rejected at the

18. Id., p. 239.
19. Ibid.
time. Above all, Nasser was in need of economic and military aid which was expected to follow from the United States and Britain after the evacuation treaty.

The belief, therefore, that Nasser was pro-west at this stage was without any basis. His signature of the evacuation treaty or his desire to secure aid from Western sources, was no more or less a sign of pro-westernism, than Nehru's decision to keep India in Commonwealth and similar policies were. The treaty with Britain was for Nasser the 'final liberation from imperialism'. Though the British and American statesmen did not understand this at the time, there is now general agreement among western writers that they were wrong in their belief and calculations. In an able analysis one writer has pointed out that "This assumption was an unhappy illustration of one of the commonest failures of communication and understanding between Asian nationalists and the West." This is an under-observed statement. As the same writer has/a more penetrating observation was made by Albert Hourani. When he pointed out that such

an assumption was derived from the "complacency of force", characteristic of Western powers in Asia for imperialism, is "self-confident force imposing itself upon resentful weakness."

As a British scholar has written "while Neguib and his colleagues were not outwardly anti-western, it soon became clear that they were no more willing than Farouk's Ministers to be hurried into a defence fact centred upon some new arrangement for the canal base..... secret circulars distributed by the Free officers' Organisation soon after their seizure of power showed distinct neutralist leanings and the Minister of State for Propaganda (afterwards National Guidance) in the new Government, Fathi Ridwan, had been an advocate of a nonaggression pact with Russia. By the end of the year these tendencies were sufficiently in evidence for the western idea of the MEDO to look distinctly a nonstarter. In a dinner at the Officers' Club in Cairo given to the Syrian dictator Shishakli, on December 14th, Negiub fore-shadowed. The basic principles of the foreign-policy of his own successor, Nasser, when he said that 'in these difficult times, when the two great blocs are waging one of the greatest struggles that history has ever known, we wish to prove to the world that this part of the world belongs to its citizens

and no longer accepts tutelage of any one". This is as succint and clear an explanation of Nonalignment as one could find in the speeches of Nehru and Nasser.

Moreover, when India, Burma, Ceylon, Pakistan and Indonesia could remain outside power blocs, there was no reason when the Arab States could not do so. After all, all these nations had taken the UN rather seriously and they had been active members of the UN from the start. The experience they had gained in the UN made them feel secure without alliances as already indicated.

For the Arabs, except for a few like Muri of Iraq, the defence of the Arab States had to be their primary responsibility and only secondarily of the outsiders and the UN. They had after all concluded the Arab defence treaty in the Arab League, prior to the Revolution of 1952 to counter the British moves to form a Middle East Defence Organisation.

One of the requirements for the success of this policy was the Nonalignment of all Arab States. Another was close


* Pakistan became aligned in 1954.
links with other nonaligned states. Nasser got the opportunity of making Nonalignment an all Arab issue when Iraq decided to join the Baghdad Pact sponsored by Dulles. Nasser quickly asserted his leadership of Arab Nonalignment. The Israeli military attack on the United Arab Republic's military frontier post at Gaza on February 28, 1955, stressed the need for Arab unity against Israel. Iraq's entry into the Baghdad Pact of which Britain became a member on April 4, 1955, against Nasser's wish was not only a direct challenge to the concept of Arab nonalignment, but it also weakened the defence of Arab States against the Israeli threat of aggression. For in the British House of Commons, Eden assured Israel's friends on March 30, 1955, that when the Baghdad Pact "comes to be studied, it will be seen that from the point of view of Israel it is likely to be a desirable development because this is the first time an Arab State is looking in other directions than simply


30. See below, pp.282-90 for further discussion.

31. Supra, n.29, pp. 293-298.

32. Id., p. 292.
towards Israel." Notwithstanding the contradictory view expressed by Nuri in the Iraqi Parliament, in justification of the Turco-Iraqi pact that he always placed first the Zionist danger and the need to secure the support of the world in order to eliminate that danger," Eden's view seemed to represent the basic motive and purpose of the new defence pact.

For, one of the important reasons for which the United States and Britain refused to give military aid to Nasser was that it might boost the United Arab Republic's strength vis-à-vis Israel. They were trying to keep a balance between Israel and the Arabs which was favourable to the latter. This was the purpose with which Britain, the United States and France issued the Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1960, on the Middle East. It was this Western position, which was opposed by the Arab League Council in its resolution of June 21,1950, that ultimately forced Nasser to conclude the arms deal with the Soviet Union through Czechoslovakia in September 1966.

33. See Elizabeth Monroe, op.cit., p. 182 and Supra, n.29 p. 285.
34. See Charles D. Cremeans, op.cit., p.146.
35. Supra, n.28, pp. 308-309.
36. Id., pp. 310-311.
after the failure of all attempts to secure arms from the west under conditions compatible with the sovereignty of the United Arab Republic.

Just as the western leaders had earlier assumed that Nasser was pro-west, soon after the arms deal with the Soviet Union, they concluded that Nasser had turned pro-Communist and that the United Arab Republic was becoming a Soviet satellite. In fact, Nasser was neither pro-East nor pro-west at any time, as already indicated. If the reason for the earlier assumption was the 'complacency of force,' the reason for the latter was blind anti-communism of which Dulles was the chief exponent at the time. Dulles was blind to the fact that Nasser had not granted a single concession to the Communists in the United Arab Republic, even after the arms deal with the Soviet Union. In fact, as one scholar has pointed out "..."effective co-operation between the Arab and Soviet canvassing groups at the UN had to wait the mid 1950's because the Soviet Union had endorsed the Palestine partition proposed in 1947. Only after


the Soviet Union had given its unequivocal blessings in 1953 to the Arabs position in the dispute with Israel did a practical basis appear for mutual support at the UN ..... Arab-Soviet Co-operation it should be stressed did not suggest that Egypt or any other state was subordinating itself to the Soviet Union; much less was any of them going Communist. Those Arab countries that followed Egypt's lead in becoming Soviet clients, such as Syria, Iraq, and, most recently Algeria, were thoroughly nationalist, as attested to by their suppression of the local Communist parties, at times even in the face of Soviet protests:

Nasser's clash with Khrushchev in 1959, as already indicated, was gave ample proof of his determination to oppose all outside interference in Arab affairs. Even prior to this clash with Khrushchev, Nasser told a group of American Journalists on January 27, 1958: "If in future we face any pressure from the Soviet Union, we will definitely protest against it. If the Soviet Union attempts to bring pressure to bear upon us in order to force us to accept their policies, we will criticise the Soviet Union, but nothing of the sort has happened."

Nor was Nasser's recognition of Communist China in May 1956 an indication of the United Arab Republic becoming a Communist satellite. This decision was in conformity with

the Bandung principles of coexistence. Having accepted them, it would have been unfair, if not impolitic, on the part of Nasser, not to recognise Communist China. Nasser might have also been advised by both Tito and Nehru to take this step. However, Nasser had other sound reasons for recognising Communist China in May 1956. At that time the United States and Britain were trying to come to an understanding with the Soviet Union for an embargo on arms supply to the Middle East. 42

In the words of Al Gmhouria, the semi-official Arab daily "Gamal Abdel Nasser has recognised China and dealt a death blow to the projected western blockade of the Arab states.... People's China is the biggest producer of armament at present and can supply the Arabs all the war material they need. Thus Gamal Abdel Nasser put Eden's noose around Eden's own neck."

It was, therefore, as much an anti-Soviet move as it was anti-western and was in the true spirit of Nonalignment. As an American scholar 43 has put it "the fact, that the Soviet Union without previous agreement with Egypt, had discussed Arab affairs with Britain was not viewed with satisfaction by Cairo. Most threatening, in the Egyptian view, was the possibility of an arms embargo, which had been conditionally

42. Cited in David J. Dallin, op. cit., p. 404.
43. Ibid.
accepted by Khrushchev and Bulganin, and which would endanger Egypt's status as the emerging leader of Arab countries.

"These were considerations that lay behind the official recognition of Communist China by Nasser a few weeks after the visit of the two leaders to London. When Nasser's spokesmen announced (May 27) that Egypt 'could get all the arms ... needed from Communist China even if the UN imposed an embargo on weapons to the Middle East', this appeared as a rebuff to Moscow."

The opportunity to forge close links with other Afro-Asian states presented itself when Nasser was invited to the Bandung Conference. The most important achievement for Nasser at this Conference was the friendship established with Chou en-lai. Nasser is reported to have told an Indian journalist that "Here I learned and realised that the only wise policy for us would be positive neutrality and nonalignment." Further, "It was also a source of inspiration about new trading patterns, for in the course of conversations with Chou en-lai Nasser arranged to sell China some of Egypt's cotton surplus. He also confided Egypt's main perplexity — his difficulty in acquiring the modern arms that he needed chiefly in order to please, his

44. See Elizabeth Monroe, op. cit., p. 155.
army supporters, though also of course to fortify his frontier with Israel. Chou en-lai inquired why he did not buy arms from Eastern bloc countries."

These were the origins of Nasser's arms deal with the Soviet Union, the recognition of Communist China and perhaps also of the Suez Crisis of 1956, inasmuch as the former policies were responsible for the withdrawal of the Aswan Dam Aid offer by the United States and the United Kingdom, which led to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal company by Nasser and its aftermath. However, the true origins of the Suez Crisis lay in the Western refusal to accept Nasser's Nonalignment, which did not differ from India's Nonalignment in any significant sense. But an American scholar has claimed that: "If America seemed inhospitable to the idea of neutralism, this was largely because Abdel Nasser's 'positive' variety had little in common with that of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was based on no doctrine, no devotion to peaceful settlement of international disputes, but merely on speculating on the antagonisms of Great Powers." This argument does not stand scrutiny. In the first instance, it wrongly presumes that Nehru's foreign policy was acceptable to the United States, at any

46. Ibid., See also Charles D. Cremeans, op. cit., p. 146.

time. The United States, even to-day, lacks the vision to appreciate this policy fully. And the charge that Nasser's foreign policy was based on speculating on the antagonisms of Great Powers is meaningless as the cold war was not Nasser's creation but of the United States. Further, the United States does not hold a record in being devoted to peaceful settlement of disputes, to be indignant at Nasser. And the United States has called Nehru's policy 'immoral' because he refused to join their military alliances against Communism and had instead called for peaceful coexistence.

Similarly, if Nasser had taken 'massive supplies of arms from the Soviet bloc', it was to escape "mortgaging the economic future" of his country to the United States and not to mortgage it to the Soviet bloc. Again, Nasser's attempts, if any, at undermining established governments elsewhere in the Arab world and even beyond it were against those governments which were being maintained by the western Powers. And the United States has a record of its own in the field of overthrowing governments in many parts of the world. Nasser himself had been a target of the United States and its allies more than once.


48. Ibid.
So far as Nasser's so-called "abusive propaganda against the West" is concerned, it has to be admitted that it has more truth in it than the propaganda made by the Western Powers and Israel against Nasser.

Contrary to the above claim another writer has observed that at Bandung Nehru hoped to convert Nasser from his evidently pro-western position to doctrinaire neutralism in the East-West struggle." Neither Nehru nor Nasser was pro-East or pro-west at any time. Nehru was more pro-Britain than Nasser as already indicated. It is important to note this difference for a proper understanding of India's role in the Suez Crisis. In his anti-westernism, however, Nasser needed no lessons from Nehru. The Bandung Conference only served to bring Nehru and Nasser closer. Indeed this was achieved well before the Bandung Conference, through Nehru's careful diplomacy. Nehru had mounted a vigorous attack on the Baghdad Pact because of Pakistan's adherence to it. Nasser could not have been happy with Pakistan over this, and, this

51. See Georgiana G. Stevens, op.cit., p.146.
52. Ibid.
gave Nehru an opportunity to wean Nasser away from his concept of the unity of Muslim states. As already indicated, it was Nasser's realisation of the greater opportunities which the nonaligned circle offered that was responsible for his loss of interest in the Islamic circle of which he was an exponent earlier.

Then in February 1955, Nehru had spent two days in Cairo with Nasser, and the two leaders issued a joint communiqué on February 16, condemning military alliances. On April 6, a few days before Nasser's arrival in India on April 12, a treaty of friendship between the United Arab Republic and India was signed in Cairo.

Inspite of this, Nehru and Nasser were reported to have differed at Bandung on the discussion of the Palestine issue. Nehru was reported to have hoped initially to avoid the discussion of the issue in the conference. However, he consented to it, as he had earlier agreed to the exclusion of Israel from the invitees to the Conference, mainly on the insistence of Pakistan. Obviously Nehru did not like to

54. Id., pp. 165-166.
55. See Sisir Gupta, India and Regional Integration, op. cit., p. 67.
56. See G.M. Kahin, op. cit., p. 3.
antagonise Nasser on such a sensitive issue, not because he was thoroughly convinced of the Arab case, but because he was afraid that his refusal might give Pakistan an opportunity to exploit the situation and to defeat his attempt to forge close links with the Arab states. The support of India, however, unwilling as it might have been, appears to have been of great gain for Nasser, both internally and internationally.

There remained only one formal step to be taken for Nonalignment to become a world phenomenon. This was achieved when Nasser, Nehru and Tito met at Brioni in Yugoslavia, on July 18-19, 1956, who from then onwards came to be called the Big Three of the nonaligned world. Nonalignment was no more confined to Asia and Africa, but an European power also became interested in it. The major significance of the Brioni meeting was, as the joint statement issued by the three leaders said, was that "The similarity in their approach in international questions has led to close cooperation among them." This has since become a feature of Nonalignment as practised by these three states, as shall be seen in subsequent pages, especially in respect of India and the United Republic.

57. Supra, n.54, p. 243.
The Suez Crisis:

It has been observed earlier that the origins of the Suez crisis lie very deep. More than the origins, the nature of the crisis is of importance for this study. It was a manifestation of the struggle for power between two forces, Resurgent Arab Nationalism and waning British and French imperialism. A third force viz., Israel's attempt to exploit this struggle in its own interests added a second dimension to its intensity.

None did perhaps express the significance of the first aspect of the struggle better and more forcefully than Gaitkell, the leader of the Opposition in the British House of Commons during a debate on the nationalisation of the Suez Canal company by Nasser on July 26, 1956. Gaitkell drew a parallel between Nasser's policies and those of Hitler and Mussolini and then declared: "..." This episode must be recognised as part of the struggle for the mastery of the Middle East. That is something which I do not feel we can ignore.... because of the prestige issues which are involved. If Colonel Nasser's prestige is put up sufficiently and ours


put down sufficiently, the effect in that part of the world will be that our friends will desert us because they think we are lost, and go over to Egypt. I have no doubt myself that the reason why Col. Nasser did this in the way he did - aggressively, brusquely, suddenly - was precisely because he wanted to raise his prestige in the rest of the Middle East.

Nasser himself came very close to this when he told an Indian correspondent on September 16, 1966 that "The West was worried not so much about the Suez Canal as about Western prestige in the Arab world. The West believed that if it lost the battle in the Suez Canal it might be ousted from the Arab World."

The resurgence of Arab Nationalism and the waning of Colonialism were well reflected in the complete confidence with which Nasser acted throughout the crisis as against the blundering and bungling of the western, especially the British and French statesmen.

60. See Mideast Mirror, (Vol.8, No.38, September 23, 1966), p.3. Nehru was also reported to have said that the nationalisation decision was symptomatic of the decline of Western power in Middle East and Asia - See The Hindu, 2 August, 1956.

61. See Peter Mansfield, op.cit., p. 57.
Nasser had already dealt blow after blow to western prestige and power in the Arab world by his aggressive Non-alignment. Prior to the Suez Crisis, the Northern Tier Alliance posed a great challenge to his Nonalignment. Nasser successfully withstood it and could carry practically the whole of the Arab world with him except the Iraqi leaders. Soon however, Nasser could make amends for this loss by forging firm links with Nehru and Tito at Brioni during their conference on July 18-19, 1956. It was evident to them as well as to the western leaders that this was a great blow to western policies in Asia as well as in Europe. Thus the calculated insult hurled at Nasser, the latest to join the ranks of non-aligned statesmen through the brusque and sudden withdrawal on July 19, 1956, of the proposed United States' loan for the Aswan Dam followed by Britain and the World Bank was as much a challenge to the newly forged unity between the three non-aligned nations as it was to Nasser's survival and leadership of the Arabs.

As one commentator has observed "Dulles and Eden were under no illusions about the importance of the Aswan Dam to Nasser as a symbol of revolutionary purpose and achievement, nor about the risks he would be prepared to take to achieve

his aim .... If, in search for an adequate weapon with which to strike back. Nasser grabbed the Canal, Dulles would not be unduly concerned. No matter what difficulties arose, he was confident that American know-how and ingenuity would overcome them. Eden hoped that dissident elements inside Egypt and anti-Nasser Arabism in other countries would revolt and overthrow Nasser before he had time to resort to drastic counter measures. If not, and Britain's oil lifeline was threatened, Eden would be justified in sending troops back into the Canal Zone, and Nasser's fate would be the same."

Dulles' well-known contempt for Nonalignment and his statement that the withdrawal of the loan was to cut Nasser down to size, gave this act of his a touch of vengeance. 63

India And The Suez Base:

It is against this background that India's policy during this crisis will be examined below. Nehru and Krishna Menon were with Nasser on their return flight from Brionè to Cairo when they appear to have heard of the withdrawal of the Asian aid over the radios. And on their arrival at Cairo in


the early hours of July 20, 1956, they got confirmation of
the news at the airport itself. Nehru and Menon had a
number of meetings with President Nasser and his colleagues
during their two day stay in Cairo. No Communique was, how-
ever, issued by them. Nehru and Menon left Cairo on July 21,
1956. Nehru told Parliament on July 31, 1956 that "These
discussions did not relate to the Suez Canal or any aspect
of Anglo-Egyptian relations. The recent decision of the
Egyptian Government in regard to the Suez Canal first came
to my knowledge from the reports in the Press after my return
to Delhi."

If this was the truth and there is nothing concreter
to contradict it, it was clear evidence of the fact that
Nasser had not confided in Nehru and that there was impor-
tant differences between them on Anglo-UAR relations. These
differences were reflected in the somewhat equivocal stand
taken by India on the British evacuation of the Suez base.
The Suez base and the Suez Canal were vital for India's def-
ence and economic development. The Communique issued on June
9, 1953 by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers said "the

64. Lok Sabha Debates, Part II, Vol.VI, No.12, July 31,1956,
Col. 1661.

65. Terence Robertson (op.cit., p.69), claims that Nehru
was probably aware of it. But Nehru denied it again on
August 8, 1956 in Parliament - See below, n.81.

Prime Ministers recognised the international importance of the Suez Canal and of the effective maintenance of the military installations in the Canal Zone. They agreed that it is in the common interest that the outstanding issues in the Middle East should be settled on the basis of ensuring the peace and security of the Middle East countries consistently with the sovereignty of each, and promoting their social and economic development."

On his way home from this conference Nehru had talked with General Neguib who was then the President of the United Arab Republic and others, including Nasser, during his stopover at Cairo. Reporting to Parliament Nehru had nothing more to say than the observation that Indian's sympathy with national movements was well known. But it is known now that both Nehru and the Prime Minister of Pakistan had stressed on the effective maintenance of the Suez base. Prof. Northedge has written that "... Help was eventually to come to Britain from the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers who conferred with Nasser on their way home from a Commonwealth


69. A part of these discussions were conducted between the UAR leaders, Nehru and the P.M. of Pakistan - Ibid.

70. F.C. Northedge, op.cit., p. 217.
Premiers' Conference in London, which ended with the issue of a communique insisting that the base must be effectively maintained. Their influence was brought to bear on the Egyptian leader in the sense of the communique and a further initiative, this time by the Pakistani charge d'affairs in Cairo, Tayeb Hussain, led to the resumption of informal talks by British and Egyptian teams at which progress was made with the two basic issues of the conditions of re-entry into the base and the status of British technicians who were to maintain the base after the evacuation.

Thus the evacuation treaty which gave Britain the right to return within a period of seven years in case of an attack on Arab countries or on Turkey coupled with Nasser's agreement to observe the 1888 convention regarding the freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal was in accord with India's vital interests. Neither Britain nor the United States had raised the issue of free passage to Israeli ships at this stage. It is necessary to bear this fact in mind for it was on this issue that the Anglo-French laid stress later during the crisis, thus perhaps provoking Israel in a way to attack Egypt, as shall be seen later.

During 1955 and early 1956 India, and the United Arab Republic had occasions to differ, notably on Algeria. 71 And

71. See M.S.Rahman, India In World Affairs 1954-56, op.cit., pp. 573-576 for an account of the differences between India and other Afro-Asian nations on Algeria. Though
even Israel as already indicated. At Brioni Nehru and Nasser, it would appear did not agree on the creation of a nonaligned bloc. Nehru was unwilling to be used by others. He did not want to commit himself and thus restrict his freedom of action which was basic to his foreign policy. As Sisir Gupta observed "what heightened India's suspicion of the use of such a conference was the fact that these conferences, while avoiding blocs, did tend to involve the participating countries in problems generated by any one of them.

**Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company:**

This difference in outlook was perhaps the reason why Nasser did not confide in Nehru, as he did in Tito, at any time, on the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company.

(Continued from previous page)

2 Prof. Rajan does not make this clear, it would appear that India's conciliatory attitude towards France during 1955-56 stemmed from the fact that during this period the Government of India were conducting delicate negotiations with France about the evacuation of the French pockets in India. The treaty providing for de jure transfer of power was signed on May 28, 1956. Placing the copies of the treaty before the Parliament on the same day Nehru praised the French Government in very high terms - See The Hindu, 29 May, 1956.

72. *India And Regional Integration In Asia*, op.cit., p.69.

73. Tito said in his speech on November 11, 1966, at Pula that Nasser had told him about it in 1965. See Paul E. Zinner, ed., *National Communism And Popular Revolt In Eastern Europe* (Columbia University Press, 1966), p.537. However, when the decision was actually taken by Nasser, it appeared to have been kept a well guarded secret till the last moment. Bulganin too had pleaded ignorance of any such move being in the offering - See David J. Dallin, op.cit., p. 406.
Thus Nehru appeared to have been thoroughly unprepared for it when it came on July 26, 1956. It is not known whether the Indian Embassy in Cairo had any inkling of this and had reported the matter to the Government of India. However according to Sisir Gupta, "While there is no doubt that the decision to withdraw the Aswan Dam aid which followed the Brioni Conference was appearing to this group of nations as an attempt by the U.S. Secretary of State to deal a blow to the weakest link of the neutralist chain at this time, viz. Egypt, the violence of Egyptian reaction was unexpected and illustrated the inevitable involvement that it might imply in situations undesirable from the Indian point of view...." And according to Eden "When Egypt first seized the Suez Canal, the Indian Government showed some embarrassment, no doubt accentuated by the fact that Mr. Nehru had been the guest of Col. Nasser in Cairo only a few days before."

74. It is a little surprising here India could be unprepared, when the Anglo-French and U.S. leaders appeared to have feared some such reprisal by Nasser.

75. *India And Regional Integration In Asia*, op.cit., pp.69-70.

76. Eden, op.cit., p. 444.
It is thus not surprising that the Government of India took more than ten days to make their stand clear on the dispute. This Nehru did, in a lengthy statement in Parliament on August 8, 1956. India's immediate interests in the dispute were well summarised by Nehru in this speech: "The Government of India had to take a decision in the situation as it confronted them. India is not a disinterested party. She is a principal user of this water way, and her economic life and development is not unaffected by the disputes, not to speak of worse developments, in regard to it." He also pointed out that the Egyptian nationalisation was precipitated by the Aswan Dam decision of the U.S. Government in which the U.K. Government later joined. More than the decision, the way it was done, however Egypt's pride and self-respect and disregarded a people's sentiments." Nasser, himself, is reported to have said: "If you did not want to make the loan all that you needed to do was to say 'No!' plainly. Why add the excuses, and the insults about our economy! You just wanted to teach us a lesson before everybody in the world because we disagreed with a good deal of

78. Id., p. 531.
79. Id., p. 530 (Italics mine).
80. Cited in Herman Finer, op. cit., p. 666.
your policy — we had every right to do! We are sensitive, we like nice words!"

Nehru then pointed out that "The suddenness of the nationalisation decision and the manner in which it has been implemented may have contributed to the violent reaction. But the terms of the nationalisation itself under the laws of Egypt are within the province of that Government" Nehru again clarified that: "As I informed the House some days ago, the Suez Canal issue was not discussed between President Nasser and myself when we met recently. The consideration of it and the concerned decision must have been made later."

It is thus not clear what Nehru wanted or expected Nasser to do, or whether he wanted him to do anything at all, to face the challenge hurled at him by Dulles and Eden, especially, when it was realised that it was as much a challenge to the nonaligned nations as it was to Nasser. It is almost certain that if Nasser had not retaliated in kind to the western move, nonalignment would have received a body blow from which it might not have recovered. As Anthony Nutting has


83. No end of a lesson: The story of Suez (Constable, London 1967), p.47. This is the most authentic book on the subject coming as it does from a Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time of the Crisis. He resigned following the British attack on the UAR.
revealed, the nationalisation gave "Eden the challenge for which he had been waiting. Now at last he had found a pretext to launch an all-out campaign of political, economic and military pressures on Egypt and to destroy for ever Nasser's image as the leader of Arab nationalism." The decision to eliminate Nasser was taken by Eden as early as March 1, 1956. It was only when the British and French Governments had realised that Dulles' plan had boomeranged to their disadvantage and that Dulles was not prepared to use force against Nasser, that they began to conspire with Israel to commit the 'supreme folly' of aggression in the hope perhaps that Dulles might stay at least neutral if he could not join them willy nilly.

It is important to note that before coming out in support of the United Arab Republic, the Government of India waited to watch the situation in the Suez Canal which convinced them that it was being properly maintained by the former. So Nehru said: "The present decision of the Egyptian Government would appear to antedate the taking over by them of the Company." And that "The Egyptian Government have also reiterated that they will honour all their obligations arising from

84. Id., p. 17.
85. Id., pp. 87, 90-99 and 100-109 for the full story.
86. Peter Mansfield, op. cit., p. 57.
88. Ibid.
international agreements, and in their reaffirmation have referred both to the convention of 1888 and to the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of 1954."

Nehru also said\(^\text{89}\) that the Government of India "....have kept in close contact with Indonesia and Ceylon and with others who, broadly, have an approach and attitude similar to that of India on this question...." Among the others Yugoslavia must have been consulted. The Government of India appear to have consulted the Soviet Union, especially on the participation in the first London Conference proposed by Britain, U.S.A., and France, as the close similarity between the views of India and the Soviet Union\(^\text{90}\) would suggest. Nehru announced India's acceptance of the imitation to participate in the conference in his speech of August 18, 1956 in Parliament and said: "It has always been quite clear to the Government that they could not participate in any conference which bound its participants before hand as to the conclusions to be reached. The Government would equally decline participation in any arrangements for war preparations or sanctions or any step which challenged the sovereign rights of Egypt." He then took exception to the exclusion of Yugoslavia and

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89. Id., p. 532.

90. Supra, n. 59, pp. 162-167.

91. Id., pp.530-531. This announcement appears to have preceded, Nasser's own announcement. See Mideast Mirror, (Vol.8, No.22, August 11, 1956), p.2.
Burma from the list of invitees declaring that "The Government of India, therefore, do not subscribe to the appropriateness of the list of invitees."

"They have sought clarifications from the United Kingdom Government and feel assured that their participation in the conference does not in any way imply that they are restricted to or bound by the approach and principles set out in the joint communique. They recognise that Egypt could not and would not participated in a conference on the Suez Canal to which she is merely an invitee and in respect of which there have been no consultations with her."

It was more important for Nehru and India that the Suez Canal was properly maintained and was not closed irrespective of the authority controlling it. Hence Nehru said: "India is passionately interested in averting a conflict..... The settlement of this problem, on the basis of the sovereignty and of dignity of Egypt, and by agreement amongst all concerned, and the abandonment of postures of threats and violence and of unilateral action by either party, are of the utmost concern to India."

92. Id., p. 531.
93. Id., p. 529.
So he regretted that "The French and the United kingdom Governments reacted to the Egyptian announcement quickly, sharply and with vehemence," and that "press reports of military and naval movements ordered by the United kingdom and France and some military measures in Egypt ... have aggravated the situation. All this has influenced public opinion not only in Egypt but over the Arab world. In Asia as a whole, with its colonial memories, great resentment has been aroused." Therefore, Nehru was forced to state. "I have no desire to add to the passions aroused, but I would fail in my duty to this House and the country and even to all the parties involved in this crisis, and not least of all to Britain and France, if I do not say that threats to settle this dispute or to enforce their views in this matter by display or use of force, is the wrong way. It does not belong to this age and it is not dictated by reason. It fails to take account of the world as it is today and The Asia of today .... we deeply regret these reactions and the measures reported to be taken in consequence, and we express the hope that they will cease and the parties will enter into negotiations and seek peaceful settlements."

93. Id., p. 529.

94. Ibid.
That there was nothing original or striking in the stand taken by the Government of India at this stage may be seen from the fact that it was not very much different from the stand of the British Opposition as Gaitskell presented it to the House of Commons. He said: "It is difficult to find......in anything.....he (Nasser) has done, any legal justification for the use of force. What he may do in the future is another matter." He admitted we were right to react sharply to this move. If nothing at all were done, it would have very serious consequences, for all of us and especially for the western powers." But he also cautioned against hasty and ill-conceived actions by the British Government and said: "It is important that what we do should be done in the fullest possible co-operation with the other nations affected. We should try to settle this matter peacefully on the lines of the international commission as has been hinted. While force can not be excluded, we must be sure that the circumstances justify it and that it is, if used consistent with our belief in, and our pledges to the Charter of the UN and not in conflict with them."

Menon At The London Conference:

Whatever were the motives of the Government of India in agreeing to participate in the First London Conference on

95. Supra, n.59(5) col. 1617.
Suez held during 16-23 August, 1966, the diplomacy of India as practised by Krishna Menon, with the support of Nehru, was directed first at the protection, and if possible, furtherance, of India's economic interests in the Suez Canal and then at the protection of United Arab Republic's rights and interests in the Canal. Krishna Menon did not mince words when he told the London Conference that India's stand was dictated as much by considerations of national self-interest as by the desire to assist and contribute to a peaceful settlement of the question. Menon's speech at the Conference was full of paradoxes on the one hand, he stated that the canal is an integral part of Egypt. On the other hand he claimed that "...it is necessary to state that this water way ..... has an international character." Again, he said: ".....the factual position is that the rulers of Egypt, whoever has sovereign power in Egypt, are really the people who can guarantee freedom of navigation." So, he said: "So far as this problem in this issue is concerned it lies in finding ways and means by which the Egyptian Government is under the obligations of law and of the Charter of the UN to carry out this particular obligation."

96. Suez Canal: Nationalisation After July 19 to September 13, 1956 (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, September 1956), pp. 51-72.
A little later he said "The question arises whether the present Egyptian Government would honour those obligations they say they would honour those obligations...." In the same breath Menon pointed out, obviously, unmindful of the contradiction involved in it, that, "Therefore, since our interest in this Canal is not a political one, it is a user interest and that user interest can best be served by negotiation, by trying to make the interest a mutual one, by persuasion, by making Egypt a party to a solemn agreement which comes under the obligations of international law and of the charter of the UN."

Did Menon not believe in Nasser and the United Arab Republic Government? Was it true, after all, as Professor Finer, forcefully argues that "Menon hit at the root of the practical need for some kind of international reservation on the full sovereignty of Egypt: the reliability of the government of Egypt to fulfil its obligations. Nehru the cultivated aristocrat, who had twice met Nasser, at Bandung and Brioni, well understood the need for some, if minimal curbs on the uncouth dictator's powers? For, holding Suez, Nasser had a struggle hold on India also."

That there is truth in this observation may be seen from a careful examination of the 'Menon Plan' proposed at the London Conference. Menon proposed to bind the United Arab Republic to a revision of the 1888 convention to include provisions concerning equitable tolls and charges, the proper maintenance of the canal, to association of international interests with the new Corporation for the Suez Canal and to the creation of a consultative body of user interests to be formed on the basis of geographical representation and interests charged with advisory, consultative and liaison functions. The United Arab Republic was also to transmit to the United Nations annual reports of the Corporation operating the Canal. The plan was said to have been formed after wide consultations, including w/c Aly Sabry, the Political Adviser to Nasser, who was present in London during the Conference period. Nevertheless, it cannot be gainsaid that the Menon Plan was not entirely in accord with the sovereign rights of the United Arab Republic. Nasser was, therefore, right when he said in 1958 that

98. See Texts of Documents, op.cit., pp.249-250. Also Supra, n.96, pp. 73-74.
100. Thus Walter Hippiann wrote that "The end result of the two approaches (Menon's and West's) might have had little real difference" - See The Hindu, 21 September, 1966.
"with the exception of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, all stood for the internationalisation of the Suez Canal." He would have, therefore, rejected the plan.

It has, however, to be pointed out, to be fair to Menon, that he did not say or believe that his plan was a solution of the problem. He said that it was only a proposal for negotiations. The acceptance by the Soviet Union of this plan meant that it would have furthered the Soviet aim of gaining a foothold in the control of the Canal. And Menon might have, on the other hand, calculated that India would be the most likely acceptable choice for the chairmanship of the Canal Consultative body, which would secure it a key position in the management of the Canal.

There was another paradox in Menon's stance, to which Nehru himself was a party. Menon repeated Nehru's view that the nationalisation of the canal company "was an act within the competence of the Egyptian Government." And, following Nehru's example, he added: "I think, however, that my Government would like it to be stated that there are, in the manner

102. Supra, n. 96, p.
104. Supra, n. 96, p. 55.
in which the nationalisation was carried out, features which have led to the present aggravated situation. We would like to have seen that nationalisation carried out in the normal way of international expropriation, where there is adequate notice, and the way of taking over is less dramatic...."This was injudicious in the part of both the leaders. They could not have forgotten the motive behind the Anglo-American withdrawal of the Aswan Dam aid! Menon himself told the London Conference that: "We also say that, in international affairs, when we have to deal with countries, it is the approach of my Government that we have to take their internal structures and their administrations and their Government as they are; it is not possible for us to approach problems by first desiring a change of government or constitution or personnel in another country."

But what may be said to be the supreme paradox in Menon's stand was to unfold when Menon recommended the Menzies Mission to Nasser on the ground that "Any attempt at conciliation deserves Indian support. We certainly will not

105. Id., p.53. "How convenient" acidly commented Prof. Finer, "in various ways, for the Indian occupiers of Kashmir and recipients of aid from America". Supra, n.97.


do anything which would throw a hurdle in the way of negotiations.... It is difficult to say whether Menon thought that Nasser would start negotiations on the basis of these proposals. Nehru, however, told Parliament on September 13, 1966 that "The Menjies Mission which recently visited Cairo asked the Egyptian Government to accept international control of operation and administration and the establishment of an international corporation displacing the Egyptian National Corporation. Egypt has declined to accept them as being contrary to her sovereign rights and not related to the purposes of the convention of 1888 and the interest of users, which are freedom of navigation toll, maintenance of the canal, etc., which the Egyptian Government alone can guarantee."

In the same speech Nehru pointed out that the western proposal to set up a Suez Canal users Association was full of dangerous potentialities for it was unacceptable to the United Arab Republic. "It is clear," he said "that the action

109. Supra, n. 102, pp. 365-366.
111. Id., p. 532.
proposed is not the result of agreement, but is in the nature of an imposed action" and that "It is not calculated to secure to the users peaceful and secured use of the canal which is and should be what is required by the users and the international community."

With reference to the reply given by the Government of the United Arab Republic to the Menzies Mission, proposing negotiations, Nehru said: "The reply of the Egyptian Government has opened a way to negotiations. In the view of the Government of India, such negotiations could have led to a settlement which would have met all requirements of the users and the international community without prejudice to or derogation of the sovereignty of Egypt and has national rights in respect of the Canal which is admittedly an integral part of Egypt." He then pointed out that he had written to the Prime Minister of England and the President of the United States on these lines. Nehru issued a further appeal to them to negotiate with Nasser and added that "To seek to impose a settlement by force or by threats of force is to disregard the rights of nations even as the failure to observe international treaties and obligations would be."


Nehru also regretted that Britain, France, Italy and others had withdrawn their pilots from the Suez Canal: "This is an action not calculated to promote the use of the canal and is not in the interest of user nations. The Government of India are desirous that no statement of theirs should come in the way of efforts to lower tension and to open the way for negotiations. But, they cannot fail to point out that the steps announced to assume the operation of the canal without the consent and cooperation of the Egyptian Government are calculated to render peaceful approach extremely difficult and also carry with them the grave risk of conflict. I should like to say that I have read the report of Sir Anthony Eden's speech with surprise and regret as it appears to close the door to further negotiations. The action envisaged in it is full of dangerous potentialities and for reaching consequences."

Nehru ended his speech with the reminder: "As I have stated previously the proper functioning of the Suez Canal is of vital importance to India. We are convinced, however, that this can only be achieved through a peacefully negotiated settlement ensuring the rights not only of Egypt but of all the user countries."

114. Id., pp. 533-534.
115. Id., p. 534.
This was then the dominant theme of India's diplomacy. The west believed that this was in favour of Nasser. It was so only because the western stand had no basis, as many including, Gaitskell, pointed out quite clearly. It was not so because India was pro-UAR. Explaining his proposals tabled at the first London Conference on Suez, to a press conference, Menon said, on the day following, that he sought "to obtain enforcement and regulation of all political problems by treaty obligations." More significant was his observation that "My plan does not involve the abdication of the position the Western Powers have taken upon internationalisation. They can keep that position. But we must find a position between the western and defacto position of Egypt. The purpose of negotiations is to alter the position of both sides." And "we are trying to get a workable arrangement." Thus India was certainly not partisan in the dispute as Professor Rajan has said.

Nehru Criticises Nasser:

Then on September 23 Nehru stated at a public meeting in New Delhi that: "I would, however, say that the way Egypt

118. See The Hindu, 24 September, 1956. Much is made of this statement of Nehru by Indians claiming that our style was different from that of the UAR. As has been shown above this was a rather tall claim, and in the context in which it was made it was highly injudicious.
took hold of the Suez Canal was not ever way. We follow a different way, but who are I to criticise others? Our way is a little different. If they had followed a different way so many difficulties would not have arisen. But they had a right to follow their own method."

All this led to a suspicion among the Arabs about INDIA's position in the dispute. The Economic Weekly, in its issue of October 6, 1956, drew attention to these misgivings and sought to dispel them. It wrote, "some observations of Pandit Nehru ...... have caused misgivings. Not only within the country, but in the entire Arab world there is growing suspicion about New Delhi's Suez diplomacy. Pandit Nehru's statement, that New Delhi does not approve of the manner in which Egypt has assumed control over the canal, seems to have deepened these suspicious."

Coming as it did, after Nehru's statement in Parliament on September 13, 1956, it could not but give rise to suspicions even if it were assumed that the real motives behind the withdrawal of the Aswan Dam aid, were forgotten by Nehru. If it were assumed that by this the danger of conflict were removed, there was no ground for such assumption.

120. See Herman Finer, op.cit., p. 268 for this view.
121. Even the Eastern Economist expressed surprise at the "bellicose tone of the British P.M.'s first statement" after the failure of Menzies Mission. It also pointed out that Nasser's willingness to negotiate a new convention does in fact, contain promise, and it seems unwise.
In the light of these developments giving rise to suspicions regarding the stand of India, it is difficult to agree with the view that "The firmness and promptness with which Nehru pointed out the risk of war inherent in the proposal of establishing a users' Association was probably responsible for the Anglo-French decision to take the dispute to the UN ...." This is, to say the least, an attempt to blow too high the Indian balloon.

To see things in their proper perspective one has to take into consideration the fact that there were other states who were equally prompt and firm in condemning the Users' Associations an act of prevocation and violation of the 1888 convention. The Soviet Union was foremost in the field. Soviet Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin addressed more or less identical letters to Prime Ministers Eden and Mollot on September 13 and to the UN and the Soviet press was actively

(continued from previous page)

for any country, or for the world at large to decline such an offer. Why has they been done, and the threat of force presented so early." The Journal asked — See Eastern Economist, 14 September 1956, p. 382.


123. For the contents of Bulganin's letter — See Eden, op. cit., pp. 486-487.
engaged in denouncing the colonial nature of the western stand on the crisis. Moreover, there were differences between England and the U.S. over the use of force. At a Press Conference on September 11, 1956, Eisenhower ruled out the possibility of the use of force against Nasser. Two days later, Dulles told a press Conference: "We do not intend to shoot our way through" the Suez Canal and "would....send our vessels around the cape....." According to Elizabeth Monroe, Britain and France took the problem to the Security Council "as much to forestall appeal to the UN by others than out of faith in its supposedly slow mechanism." Above all, Nasser had declared: "we shall not allow the western-proposed canal Users' Association to function in the canal."

Menon At The UN:

While these developments were taking place Menon was going from capital to capital to seek concessions from all sides. He arrived in Cairo on September 17 on the invitation of Nasser and had a series of discussions with him during his four days' stay in Cairo. Prof. Finer claims that:........it

125. Supra, n. 102, p. 333.
126. Id., pp. 337-341.
127. Elizabeth Monroe, op. cit., p. 197.
128. Middle East Mirror, Supra, n. 109.
was reported that India had induced him (Nasser) to agree to some form of international control of the level of canal dues, the factor in the dispute of most important to India. On September 24, Menon arrived in London for talks with Selwyn Lloyd and other British ministers. He returned to Delhi a few days later. In the first week of October he arrived in Cairo again on his way to New York as the question has since been taken to the UN Security Council. Menon also halted at London on his way to New York from Cairo.

Once in New York, Menon began intense diplomatic parleys outside the Security Council as India was not a member of the Security Council. The result was a revised version of the 'Menon Plan' presented at the first London Conference in August 1956. Menon presented this revised plan to the Foreign Minister of Britain, France and the U.A.R. as well as to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The haste with which Menon did all this suggests that India did not want the Security Council to take any decision which did not include its views and which might go against its vital interests in the Suez Canal. This type of activity was not, however, now

130. See Texts of Documents, op. cit., pp. 257-259. This plan was later published by Al Goumhouria on October 21, 1956, and was officially announced in New Delhi on October 24, 1956 - See Mideast Mirror (Vol. 8, No. 43, August 28, 1956), p. 11. The text is at pp. 8-10.
for Menon. He did much the same thing two years earlier, during the Geneva talks on Indo-China. Menon's anxiety was, obviously to present his own plan before the Security Council could take a decision.

This plan of Menon is only of historical interest now. It differed only slightly from the first 'Menon Plan'. As the Eastern Economist wrote: "The revised Indian plan was worse than the original Menon plan where it contemplated no advisory function for the users' association; it was better where it laid down that tolls could not be increased within 12 months without the prior agreement of the users' association." Otherwise the two plans were virtually identical. Professor Rajan claims that "In some respects (e.g. in the recognition of the Users' Association) they were more favourable to the users than the western plan." They might have thus found expression in the Anglo-French draft resolution, the first part of which was approved by the Security Council on October 13, while the second part, the operative part, was vetoed by the Soviet Union. Eden, however, finds a different origin for the

133. India In World Affairs, op.cit., p. 182.
Anglo-French draft proposal. Similarly, the Indian plan might have had the approval of Egypt broadly, for it was worse than the original Menon plan where it contemplated nonadvisory function for the users' association.... "as the Eastern Economist" put it. No wonder, if "India was, therefore, doubly pleased at the Security Council resolution." Nehru Miscalculates:

But India's pleasure was to prove misplaced and short lived. It was on October 16, just three days after the adoption of the Security Council resolution that Eden decided finally to use force against the UAR, in the company of France and Israel, who had already prepared their plans for an attack on Egypt. The Government of India were entirely unaware of these developments, "We had hoped", Nehru later confessed in the Lok Sabha on November 16, 1966, "however, that after the Security Council's resolution, more peaceful methods would be adopted to solve this dispute." There was, in fact, no ground

136. For Nehru's views expressed at a press conference - See The Hindu, 26 October 1956.
137. Supra, n.131.
138. Supra, n.132.
139. Eden, op.cit., p.510. According to Anthony Nutting (op.cit.,p.87) the collusion started on October 13,1966.
for such hopes for various reasons. For as Anthony Nutting says, neither Eden nor Mollet, the French Premier, were in favour of a compromise with Nasser. They, therefore, did not welcome the concessions made by Nasser in deference to the views of Nehru and his Arab colleagues. Nutting has further said\textsuperscript{143} that they even tried to subvert the talks with Fawzi and Hammarskjöld when Fawzi accepted the Sim Principles proposed by the British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd.

Another indication of the British intentions was that Eden had, at this time, informed the Conservative Party Conference that force could not be excluded\textsuperscript{144} for a solution to the dispute. Similarly the mood in France was extremely hostile to Nasser.\textsuperscript{145} Further the Soviet Union was experiencing difficulties with the Eastern European countries, especially in Hungary, where the Communist Party had rehabilitated Imre Nagy on October 13. And on October 27, the Soviet Union

\textsuperscript{142} Op. cit., pp.50-51. Eden wrote that no one present in the Security Council believed that a peaceful solution was possible (op.cit., pp. 505-506).

\textsuperscript{143} Id., p. 76.

\textsuperscript{144} Eden, op.cit., p. 508.

\textsuperscript{145} Supra, Chapter III, no.31.

\textsuperscript{146} See Paul E. Zinner, op.cit., pp. 388-389.
announced that England, France and Israel had decided on October 23 to attack the United Arab Republic. The first Soviet armed intervention in Hungary occurred on October 24. According to Professor Finer, the Israeli attack on the United Arab Republic which was scheduled for a later date was brought forward to October 29, mainly to take advantage of the Soviet intervention in Hungary. For, "It would enable Israel to achieve a victory without interference either from the United States or from the United Nations. Moreover, the total impotence that the United Nations could be expected to display, in any attempt it might make to apply a civilised standard to the brutalities of the Soviet in Hungary, might result in some understanding and condonation of the action of Israel. If the United States could not apply the moral law and the Charter to Russia, could it fairly apply them to Israel? One law for both, or no law for either?"

Moshe Dayan himself has admitted that perhaps the Sinai Campaign would not have been launched, if the Soviet

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147. See David J. Dallin, op. cit., p. 412 and Finer, op. cit., p. 342.

148. Op. cit., p. 363. See also Survey, 1956-58, pp. 56-57. Indeed, the withdrawal of the Aswan Dam Aid by Dulles also appears to have been influenced by Soviet preoccupation with its Eastern European satellites - See Survey, 1956-58, p. 304.

threat of rockets had come earlier, instead of on November 5, 1956, owing to the situation in Hungary. It is not difficult to say that these were also the calculations of Britain and France. Eden appears to have been confident that the Soviet leaders understood the special interests of the west in the Arab world.  

**Nehru Condemns The Aggressors:**

The Government of India and the External Affairs Ministry, however, were so much confident that "the danger of war was over", that their Ambassadors to Cairo and London were both permitted to come to India for rest during the second half of October, 1956 and they had to rush to their places as soon as Israel launched its aggression, as Nehru told Parliament on November 20, 1956. It is a measure of India's unpreparedness that Nehru had to confess in Parliament on November 16, 1956 his ignorance of the developments after October 13, 1956. He said: "whether there was any previous consultation among the aggressor countries, I do not know."

The attack on the United Arab Republic was the one thing Nehru and Menon wanted to avoid, at all costs, since

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any hostilities would affect the functioning of the Suez Canal and jeopardise India's economy. The methods employed by Nehru and Menon, however, do not appear to have been either imaginative or affective. Indian diplomacy appears to have been too much preoccupied with attempts to revise tolls and freight charges and to have overlooked to a certain extent the deeper issues involved in the conflict, and the possibility of Israel exploiting the situation for its own purposes. This could have been foreseen perhaps with a little more of imagination. The aggression destroyed, though only for the time, Nehru's cherished views of Britain as a Commonwealth nation. The fact that India was a Commonwealth nation with regular contacts and consultations with Britain and other Commonwealth nations, the failure of Britain to consult India on such a crucial issue, and Eden's refusal to listen to India's pleas for compromise, appear to have contributed to Nehru's reaction to the British action. Besides, the Anglo-French attempt to recapture the Suez Canal and to overthrow Nasser, were dangerous moves from the point of view of weak Afro-Asian nations. No wonder, then, that Nehru was

154. Answering Acharya Kripalani's criticism that our diplomats abroad failed to sense this, Nehru said that nobody had sensed it and that how they could do it was more than he could understand, Supra, n°.151, col. 586.

155. Id., col. 587.
indignant at the aggressors. He had no hesitation in denouncing the aggression as 'dastardly action'. Possibly Nehru also wanted to make amends for his earlier criticism of the policies of the United Arab Republic Government.

Equally quick was Nehru's demand for the withdrawal of the forces of the three aggressors. India's diplomacy was then directed to achieve this objective in the shortest possible time. Fortunately for India, not only the United States and the Soviet Union, but the Commonwealth and a large part of Afro-Asia demanded an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of forces from the United Arab Republic. The United States took the lead in demanding a cease-fire and withdrawal of Israeli forces through a draft resolution introduced on October 29, which was vetoed by England and France. A similar Soviet resolution was also vetoed by England and France.

Then, Yugoslavia, prompted by India from outside, took the initiative by introducing a motion under the 'Uniting For Peace' resolution of 1950, calling for a special emergency session of the General Assembly, which was accepted by the

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156. See *The Hindu*, 2 November 1966. Nehru did this at a public meeting at Hyderabad on the occasion of the inauguration of the new state of Andhra Pradesh. I was one of the many privileged to listen to Nehru on the occasion.


158. Ibid.
Security Council on October 31, 1966. Thus the Anglo-French attempt to paralyse the United Nations was defeated. The Assembly passed the United States sponsored resolution on November 2 demanding an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of forces behind the armistice lines of 1949.

India also supported Canada's proposal for the creation of a United Nations Emergency Force, a peace keeping force. Nehru, however, refused to sever the Commonwealth link with Britain, even temporarily, as suggested by Rajagopalachari, to force Britain to vacate aggression, though he appears to have threatened to do so, if the other Commonwealth nations, especially Canada and Australia, had supported England. Such a step would have been, perhaps, detrimental to India's economy, which was already affected by the closure of the Suez Canal as a result of British and French attack. Nehru, however, conceded that India's association with the Commonwealth could not be taken for granted. Fortunately for him and India,

160. Id., pp. 28-29 and 35.
161. Supra, n.151, cols. 596-597.
162. See The Hindu, November 5, 1956.
163. Robertson, op.cit., p.179.
164. Supra, n.160. See also The Hindu, November 10, 1956.
the Anglo-French forces were withdrawn from the United Arab Republic in the last week of December, 1956, giving place to the UNEF consisting of forces from India, Canada and some other countries. This withdrawal was achieved by a combined pressure from the United States, the Commonwealth and an outraged public opinion at home, especially in England. 165

Thus, as Professor Rajan 166 has rightly concluded: "Even though the sympathies of the Government and people of India over the dispute were with Egypt, they were equally animated by friendly feelings towards the west—more especially Britain. They were certainly not partisan in their role ... not only because that would not be conducive to a mutually acceptable settlement (which was the final objective of their efforts), but also because of India’s own vital interests in keeping the Suez Canal free and open."

The Government of India appear to have put as much pressure on the United Arab Republic for concessions, as upon the Governments of U.K. and U.S. According to Professor Rajan, 167


166. Supra n. 119.

167. Ibid., The Economic Weekly (Vol.VIII, Nos.61 & 52, December 22, 1956) wrote: "Both the Indian P.M. and President Tito are known to have exercised a restraining influence on President Nasser...." According to Nutting (op.cit., p.74) some Arab States also brought pressure on Nasser.
again, "objective western observers conceded that to India was due much of the credit for moderation and restraint in the actions and opinions of the Egyptian Government throughout the acute phase of the Suez crisis." No wonder that Indo-British relations were not overstrained either during the crisis or after it. In fact they quickly returned to normalcy soon after the crisis, no doubt due to the success of U.S. efforts in forcing the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces from Suez.

It would thus appear that there was some truth in Asoka Mehta's criticism of India's stand on the Suez crisis. Speaking in the debate on the international situation in Parliament on November 19, 1956, he drew a parallel between India's stand on Algeria and the Suez Crisis. Pointing out the lack of firmness in India's stand Mehta said: "The result is both the French and the British Governments were emboldened and, perhaps, they thought they could get away with this kind of treatment or with this kind of adventure in Egypt. I am not saying that if we had taken a firm stand earlier these things would not have happened, but I feel that our record would have been much stronger, our moral voice would have had

much greater authority if we had functioned in an unequivocal manner all through."

Apart from moral considerations, a more unequivocal stand would have perhaps saved the situation. Such criticism could be made against the United States too, and, has, indeed, been made by an Indian scholar. According to Professor Finer, there is enough evidence to believe that many in the state Department knew of the proposed attack on the United Arab Republic. The United States, if it had been more careful, could have prevented the Israeli attack. Commenting on Eisenhower's two cables to Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Premier, on the eve of the attack, Moshe Dayan, has said that "The terms of both messages were general and could be 'swallowed'."

In the words of Graham Spray, "The response and policy of the Government of Canada......was instinctive but not unconsidered and unprepared.....The possibility of military action by the UK., however, had not been wholly ignored from the moment when further British forces began to move after 2 August


to Malta and Cyprus." All they did was to issue warnings. Nothing appears to have been done to prevent it.

While the United States and Canada could be indifferent to the fate of Nasser and would have welcomed his downfall, India and Nehru could not be so indifferent. Indeed, India had a moral obligation to protect the interests of the United Arab Republic as the leading champion of Nonalignment of which Nasser had become a crusader. Thus India's inability to keep abreast of the developments, especially in the crucial stages of a crisis of such vital importance to its own security and economy, as well as to international peace, which appears to have been responsible for its failure to act with more foresight and forethought, was most unfortunate. India, however, made amends for this failure after aggression.

India And Israel:

This study would be incomplete without an examination of India's attitude towards Israel's claim for freedom of passage through the Suez Canal for more reasons than one. On the one hand, a western writer has claimed that "The origins


This study was intended to cover the events upto the Suez Crisis of 1956 originally and was completed in its major form before the June 1967 West Asian crisis. It has since been revised to include a brief—very brief mention of this crisis also.
of the Suez crisis lie in Israel, where the decision to fight a preventive war was deliberately timed to take advantage of what Israeli leaders thought to be widespread disenchantment with Colonel Nasser and his policies...." This, however, appears to be an oversimplification. On the other hand, India's stand has been depicted as almost immoral by writers like Professors Herman Finer and Michael Brecher.

What gave importance to the Israeli claim for free passage was the western attempt, in their anxiety to prove Nasser's 'Hitlerism', and to give undue importance to it, completely forgetting that the blockade of Israel was not Nasser's policy and also overlooking the fact that the case of Israel was an exception that had been tolerated by the Canal Company, by the UN, and by the world opinion generally for five years." Even Gaitskell fell victim to this error. He said ".....if there is anything he has done which would

174. Michael Brecher, The New States of Asia, op. cit., Ch. 5. Here Professor Brecher is critical of India's refusal to extend diplomatic relations to Israel. Professor Brecher's partiality for Israel is well illustrated by the fact that in this book he devotes one full chapter to Israel. No other state of Asia, not even communist China receives such treatment. Prof. Brecher came out with a categorical assertion during the Arab-Israel war of June 1967 on the 'immorality' of the Indian stand. See letters to the Editor, The Hindu, 21 June 1967. See P. Kodanda Rao's sitting reply to Prof. Brecher in The Hindu, June 27, 1967. Also see below n. 199.


176. Supra, n. 94.
justify force at the moment, it is one thing on which we have never used force — the stopping of Israel's ships."

But as Anthony Nutting has revealed in January 1964, Eden had held almost emphatically that, as an Arab country still in a state of war with Israel, Egypt had an arguable claim, under Article 10 of the Constantinople Convention governing the Suez Canal to deny passage to Israeli ships as a measure necessary to 'assure the defence of Egypt'. Selwyn or Lloyd had ....written a minute to the Prime Minister denying that Egypt had any such rights and, on learning this, Eden had waxed very angry and hastened to correct his Minister of State." And in an interview granted to press men on October 9, 1959, Nasser said, inter alia: "As for the state of war, I was amazed when the British Foreign Minister, Selwyn Lloyd, asked me via the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöeld, to send him a letter promising not to apply to British ships what we are applying to Israeli ships. This took place in 1956 after the failure of the aggression against Egypt when the occupation forces were obliged to withdraw; Mr. Lloyd's point of view on the situation included a frank recognition that there was a state of war existing between us and Israel...."

Another question is had the canal been free for navigation always under the western Powers? The answer is an emphatic negative, as Krishna Menon revealed at the first London Conference. And, according to Freda Utley there is another "interesting fact ..... that when Rommel was only fifty miles from the Canal in 1943, President Roosevelt sought assurances that Britain was prepared to blow up the Canal if necessary — despite the provision of the Convention that the Canal was to remain open in time of war as well as in peace."

As against all this, India's stand as stated by Menon at the London Conference was that this dispute should be settled at the world Court. Professor Finer is indignant at this stand. Nehru, he writes "was as calm as a marble god about Israel's troubles." But he does not know, or would not wish or care to know that Nehru did not say a single word against Israel till it committed aggression on the United Arab Republic. And the fact that India had either recognised Israel or that Nehru had always reservations on the Arab attitude towards Israel till this aggression, do not matter much for either Prof. Finer or Prof. Brecher. And "Menon", says the former,

179. Supra, n.96, pp. 56-57.
181. Supra, n. 1783.
183. Id., p. 159.
"knew surely, that the Security Council had rejected the claim of Egypt's, and he also knew the hazards not only of getting a decision from the court, but even if it was ever obtained, of getting it carried out."

It was not India's fault, however, if the Security Council and its members had failed to enforce its decision. Indeed this was Nasser's charge against the UN. As he told Hassanain Heikal on June 30, 1959, "It is strange that Israel should demand today that a recommendation should be obeyed, while the whole world witnesses Israel trampling a long and successive number of resolutions adopted by the UN in the interest of Palestine people. It has even gone past the mere violations of these resolutions to planning crimes of murder against the representatives of the United Nations." That Nasser was quite right was once again proved by Israel in its inhuman killing of Indian troops of the UNEF in June 1967.

Similarly, India is not to be blamed or hauled up for the ineffectiveness of the world Court. If the South West African case could be taken to the World Court, why not the Israeli claim against the U.A.R.? Is there any other way out for the peaceful solution of such intractable disputes?

Professor Finer speaks as if Nehru and Menon had committed a great sin in suggesting that the matter be referred to the world Court. His chauvinistic bias is evident from his observation that: "The world ..... had tried hard to develop and to some extent has succeeded in developing, international officials whose loyalty is to a service, a function, and not a nation or nations. How could a juvenile from the primitive Nile village of Beni Mer, not anxious to study hard at school and nurtured all his life in nationalistic vendettas in army barracks and in the streets rise to such a civilised conception?" This is a reference to Nasser and his criticism of the World Bank as a political institution. Perhaps, Nasser was more than justified, when the Bank's loan offer for the Aswan High Dam, which was conditional upon the U.S.A.'s and U.K.'s offers, fell through, when the latter withdrew their offers. Prof. Finer seems to feel that the World Bank was more unbiased than the World Court. On does he mean that while the former could be influenced by the Big Powers, the latter could not be?

**Israeli Charges Against Nasser:**

Nasser has also been charged by Israel and its supporters everywhere, that he wants to destroy Israel, at the
earliest opportunity. Eden, for example, wrote: "I thought then, and I think now, that the Israelis had justification for their action. It is at least a grim possibility that they would not be a free nation today had they not taken it." This is patently meaningless. If this were the truth, it is difficult to understand the reasons for Eden's efforts to hide his collusion with Israel, resulting in the crude Anglo-French Ultimatum to Israel and the UAR, which has been justly condemned by all decent people all over the world. Eden perhaps did not realise that his diplomacy did not bring England the gratitude of Israel. On the other hand, it provoked the contempt of Moshe Dayan: "I must confess to the feeling that, save for the Almighty, only the British are capable of complicating matters to such a degree." Had Eden been alive, he could have perhaps derived satisfaction from the fact that Dayan had placed Britain in good company, that of the Almighty!


However, Nutting has a different story to tell; that Britain had supplied more arms to the United Arab Republic than Russia had done.

To disprove this charge against Nasser it is necessary to give certain expert opinions of western writers. According to Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns, "Hostile propaganda has him perpetually threatening the destruction of Israel, but in none of his speeches have I found that he has gone beyond the statements made to the New York Times correspondent published as an interview on October 6, 1956: "War is not an easy decision for anyone, especially for me. No Arab is saying now that we must destroy Israel. The Arabs are asking only that the refugees (from Palestine) receive their natural right to life, their lost property, which was promised to them by the UN resolutions seven years ago .... No, we are not aggressive. The threat is from the other side."

"Of course, in the flood of propaganda which powers constantly out of the Cairo press and radio there have been many threats of direct vengeance on Israel, some of them made by persons in authority. The Israelis argue that in an


authoritarian state, such as Egypt, the mass media of communication are rigidly controlled, and what is said must therefore reflect the policy of the responsible authorities. This ignores the nature of propaganda, which is not necessarily a statement of intentions of those who control the propaganda sources, but is a mode of inducing a desired frame of mind in those who listen to it. Thus it can properly be deduced that the Egyptian propaganda masters want the Arab population believe that Egypt implacably hostile to Israel and proposes, at some indefinite time in the future, to go to war with the object of overwhelming the Israeli state. But it is not proof that they are actually planning to do so."

Burns writes further that Nasser could not pursue the plan of forging a United Arab Nation and "simultaneously wage an all-out war against Israel." But "If the Union of Arab states under a strong central Government could be achieved ..... the balance of power, economic and eventually military, would turn against Israel, and the settlement of the Palestine Question on terms satisfactory to the Arabs could be achieved by economic and military pressure. This possibility was by no means ignored by the Israelis."

192. Ibid.
According to Georgiana Stevens "In 1953 and 1954, the period of the new regime's first struggles, Egypt's actions in regard to Palestine reflected the general remoteness of that issue from Egyptian life. An effort was made to keep the Palestine issue quiescent so as to prevent any further military encounters on the uneasy Israel - Gaza border. At this stage Egypt had neither the capacity nor the interest to stage an attack on Israel and preferred to be as free of the whole problem as was politically possible," And Erskine B. Childers has observed that till the Gaza raid by Israeli forces in February 1956 "The Egyptian revolutionary regime had ..... evinced signs of at the least - wishing to reduce the Arab-Israeli tension." That this was true is evident from the fact that "There were minor agreements between the two countries - such as the shipping agreement of July 23, 1953 concluded under the auspices of the United Nations."

And to quote Burns again "Gamal Abdel Nasser told me when I first met him on November 16, 1954, that it was his


desire that there should be no trouble on the north-eastern border of Egypt, no disturbance of the six years of quiescence of the armistice regime, no military adventures. But after the shock of February 28, 1956, as he told me and many others, he could no longer maintain such an attitude. Shortly before the raid, he said, he had visited Gaza and had told the troops that there was no danger of war; that the Gaza Armistice Demarcation Line was not going to be a battle front. After that many of them had been shot in their beds. Never again could he risk telling the troops they had no attack to fear; never again could he let them believe that they could release their vigilance......"

What then was the reason for the success of the Israeli propaganda against Nasser? In Burns' words: "The US Jewish Community, through its economic power especially as related to many media of mass information under the leadership of the well-organised Zionist pressure groups, exerts an influence

(Continued from previous page)

It was after this raid and Israeli's refusal to accept UNTSO proposals to reduce frontier tension that Nasser accepted the organisation of the fedayin for raids into Israel - See Esskins B. Childres, op.cit., pp. 98-99; Peter Mansfield, op.cit., p. 56. Burns, op.cit., pp. 84-86.

on United States policy which goes far beyond what might be calculated from a counting of the so-called 'jewish vote'.

"Over many years, it is only Israel's side of the Palestine story which has been presented to Americans ... The picture of Israel as a small nation gallantly struggling to rebuild existence in its ancient home ..... is accepted by the majority of non-Jewish Americans and Canadians, especially those Christians who believe fervently in Biblical inspiration ....."

This is an understatement and does not explain the western attitude in full. The Jewish propaganda comes in handy for the United States to fulfil its desire to keep the Arab Arab world under its domination. Israel is only a pretext or a tool. Perhaps Israel also realises this well. Its very creation was a product of this desire. The western Powers and the United States were warned well in advanced by the King - Crane Commission instituted by the latter, of the consequences and the untanability of the Zionist claims of a home−land in Palestine. The United States just shelved the report.

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197. See Harvey Dey, "A Peep Into History : Oil Tickles Desert Guns To Boom In West Asia," The Hindu (Weekly Magazine), 18 June, 1967. Harvey Day explodes another myths of western or Jewish origin viz., that Jews alone are gifted or talented people, that there is no Biblical support for the Jewish claim for a home and for Palestine.
Thus, there is no substance in the western claim that their support to the Zionist claim was a result of humanitarianism. This would simply mean that the western Powers did not believe that the one million and odd Arab Palestinians who were mercilessly driven out from Palestine to give place to Jewish immigrants from Europe, constitute a part of humanity, so that their rights and feelings could be trampled upon under the self-styled humanitarianism of the Colonial Powers. The manner in which the Palestine Mandate was framed, bears testimony to this fact. There is thus, not the slightest exaggeration in what Professor Mohamad Habib said of Israel, in a talk over the All India Radio on June 14, 1967: "The State of Israel is

198. See Cecil V. Crabb Jr., Supra, n.196. Of course, many Arabs accept this theory. They seem to be appealing to the good sense of the western Powers without any effect so far-See Clovis Maksoud, 'Israel. The Basis of Arab case', The Hind 18 August 1967 for an excellent statement of Arab case against Israel and the west.

199. It is alleged that the Mandate was based on drafts prepared by Zionists. See G.A. Nasser, The Philosophy of The Revolution (op.cit., pp.61-63) for quotations from Weizmann's memoirs. See also Mohammad El-Hadi Afifi The Arabs And The United Nations (Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., London, 1964), p. 54, n.2.

200. See G.S. Bhargava, ed., India And West Asia : A Survey of Public Opinion (Popular Book Services, New Delhi-3, 1967) p. 46. If Indians point out the colonial and racial origins of Israel, it does not seem sound to argue, as Prof. Brecher does (See above chapter n.63) that India's attitude to Israel is shaped by anti colonial and racial feelings. Also see above n. 176.
not the product of Jewish culture but one of the most cruel types of European Jewish Colonialism that the world has seen."

Israel wants Military Superiority:

Having created Israel through pressure tactics of the worst kind ever used by a Great Power in the United Nations, the United States undertook to maintain a militarily superior Israel in the Arab world. For it was realised that Israel could not exist without such support as was evident during the first war between the Arabs and Israel, in which the latter was rescued by the western Powers, led by the United States, once again through the machinery of the United Nations. This was the policy enunciated by the United States and its allies in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 as already indicated.

Israel was naturally encouraged by this support and began to exert pressure on the western Powers to force the Arabs to recognise its existence and to grant it freedom of passage through the Suez Canal, which the Arabs were unwilling to do, even under the rule of decadent monarchs and corrupt governments which depended upon the western Powers for their very existence. The efforts of Israel, however, resulted in

the Security Council Resolution of 1951, recommending the freedom of passage to Israel in the Suez Canal.

But when Britain signed with Nasser the treaty for the evacuation of the Suez base, Israel began to develop cold feet. In a typical statement on October 19, 1964, the Israeli Foreign Ministry bemoaned: "it is more than ever necessary that Egypt should be called upon to respect its international obligations and to renounce its policy of hostility and violence towards Israel. For this reason, it is difficult for Israel to join in the chorus of congratulations which the signing of the agreement has aroused. The transfer of the Canal Zone, with all its installations .... without any request having been made to Egypt that it should modify its attitude towards Israel or calm the latter's well-founded apprehension. In fact Egypt has recently demonstrated, yet once more and in the clearest fashion, its complete indifference to the most elementary international obligations by taking possession of an Israeli merchant vessel...."

There is here not the slightest mention of the fact that if the United Arab Republic has an international obligation to allow freedom of passage to Israeli ships, Israel has a much

203. See Documents for 1964, p. 255.
more important and greater international obligation towards the Palestinian Refugees, not to speak of many other obligations of this kind.

However, the Israeli displeasure at the Suez agreement was a reflection its desire to see that the relations between the western Powers, especially the United States, and the Arabs, especially Nasser, did not improve. The Anglo-U.S. approach was on the other hand, aimed at improving their relations with Nasser, so as to bring the Arabs into an alliance system aimed against the Soviet Union. As John C. Campbell has written: "When the Suez agreement was finally reached, in October 1954, the United States and British Governments were engaged in a thorough study of all the possibilities. This study covered all the theory questions and sketched out tentative settlements in considerable detail, including frontier adjustments, repatriation and resettlement of refugees, and a special status for Jerusalem. It seemed at least possible that these matters could be discussed by the two western powers.

204. See in this connection, Hedley V. Coote, *Israel : A Blessing And a Curse* (Stevens & Sons Ltd., London, 1960), for a more or less objective study of the Refugee problem and Israel's obligations towards them. This book also reveals the exclusive nature of Israeli state—an anachronism in the modern world.

separately with Egypt and with Israel, without any direct confrontation between the two parties.

"No one can be sure what might have come of these endeavours had not Israeli raid on Gaza in February 1955, which resulted in 69 casualties...frightened Nasser into turning all his attention to the need for strengthening Egypt...."

The Israeli raid on Gaza was thus a calculated move and an attempt on the part of Israel to subvert the improvement of relations between Arabs and the Western Powers because it did not want to make any concessions to the Palestinian Refugees. As Campbell has observed: "Israel paid remarkably little heed to the necessity of coming to some terms with the fact of living in the heart of the Arab world...... It merely offered compensation, in principle for their property while barring their return, meanwhile opening the doors wide to Jewish immigration."

Another effort made by Israel to achieve its objective was its attempt to blow up the American Information service buildings in Cairo. As Georgiana G. Stevens, has put it this

206. Id., p. 82.

207. Supra, n. 193, p. 205.
"seemed to indicate Israel's determination to prevent, if possible, any improvement of relations between Egypt and the United States."

Israel wanted to justify the Gaza raid as an act of reprisal against Arab infiltration and raids. However, the Mixed Armistice Commission condemned the raid as aggression and the western Powers were compelled to censure Israel in the United Nations. According to Burns, Dayan calculates that the Arabs seeing themselves helpless to counter the drastic Israeli military relations, would be forced to realise that they must make peace with Israel."

"...the wrongness of the policy was not that it sought to make the Arabs stop sending marauders into Israel, but that it was a slightly indirect method of using military power to force the Arab states (primarily Egypt) to accept the Israeli terms of peace. That is to say, it was an attempt to settle an international dispute by military force, in complete disregard of Israel's engagements as a member of the United Nations."


As if in defiance of the UN censure Israel carried out another bloody raid on Khan Yunis on the night of August 210 31 - September 1. The United States on the other hand, refused to give arms aid to Nasser, which he so desperately needed. France on the other hand seems to have assured Israel of substantial military aid, as Nasser revealed after announcing his arms deal with Czechoslovakia on September 27 211 1965. And Erskine B. Childers has observed that "early in November 1965 .... Nasser told a Life magazine reporter that the Czech decision had been taken, not so much in terms of Israel's strength as it was then, as in terms of her strength when her existing secret arms arrangements with France were completed. He detailed the types and quantities of French weapons to be delivered to Israel. The next day, Israeli spokesman denied the existence of any arms deal with France at all. But in 1956, when French arms deliveries to Israel were revealed, it was notable that they matched very closely, in type and quantity, the details which Nasser had professed to know in 1956." 213

Burns writes that "I have been told that Prime Minister Nasser decided to accept this offer (Czech arms)


211. For the announcement see Supra, n.207, pp.370-373.

212. Supra, n. 194.

after the Khan Yunis raid." Thus, the United States appears to have failed to make Israel give up its policy. Nasser's arms deal sent the Israeli policy makers into a rage and panic, for it shattered all their plans of keeping the Arabs and especially, the United Arab Republic, militarily weak for ever. The effect on Israel and the western Powers has been well explained by Elizabeth Monroe: "The whole elaborate structure of Anglo-American defence policy was altered by this coup. It nullified the western arrangement for an arms balance between the Arabs and Israel, it converted western aid from a weapon in western hands into a bargaining counter for Egyptian or Arab use in the profitable process of taking aid from both sides of the iron curtain and, above all, it confirmed all but a few Arabs in the view that Nasser was a new Saladin. Others had talked; here was the man who acted and who had given Middle Eastern states dignity and equality at last."

In a desperate move to rescue the western prestige, the United States and England decided to extend aid for the Aswan High Dam. And in a speech in Guild Hall on November 9, 1956, Eden proposed a readjustment of Israeli frontiers. All this


215. supra, n. 127.

was most frustrating for Israel. It began putting pressure on the United States administration to withdraw the Aswan aid promised to Nasser. This was one of the important factors in the withdrawal of the Aswan aid by Dulles. Even Eisenhower appears to have been convinced by Israeli propaganda. But the United States and Britain refused to accept Israel's demand for large scale military aid. Two important reasons underlay this decision. Firstly, as Campbell has observed "it may have been soundly based on knowledge that even the heavy Soviet deliveries to Egypt would not, in the present state of Egyptian military competence, upset the balance against Israel. Yet it did contribute greatly to the growing feeling in Israel that it was standing alone against an enemy who was daily growing stronger as he acquired new weapons against which Israel had no defence."

Campbell has also observed that "it would be a mistake to say that the Arab leaders including Abdel Nasser, had set any time schedule for the destruction of Israel." And Henry Byroade, the United States Ambassador to Cairo at the time, is reported to have said that the Czech arms did not make the

218. See Herman Finer, op.cit., pp. 45-46.
220. Id., p. 91.
United Arab Republic strong enough to attack Israel, for even then the latter was twice as strong as the former.\footnote{221}{See K.R. Singh, 'Positive Neutrality', K.P. Karunakaran, ed., op.cit., p. 144.}

The other reason for the western refusal to give more arms to Israel, was that they had decided to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union for an embargo on arms supply to Middle East. As already indicated it was this agreement between England and the Soviet Union that provoked Nasser to recognise Communist China, defeating the aims of the western Powers and of the Soviet Union. It was this success of Nasser at defeating the western policy of maintaining a military balance in favour of Israel, that appears to have led Israel to decide to destroy the strength of the United Arab Republic as quickly as possible through a swift military action and if possible to force Arabs to accept its military superiority. At the same time England and the United States had also decided to overthrow Nasser, through the withdrawal of the Aswan Dam aid. The rest of the story has already been told.

It was clear from the beginning of the Suez Crisis that England and France would attack the United Arab Republic. And it was plain commonsense that Israel would exploit such a situation. And there was ample proof of Israeli preparation.
for an attack against its chief enemy. According to Prof. Finer himself "Israel's growing activism spurred the Arabs towards military unions" culminating in a "joint Egyptian - Syrian - Jordanian command .... with the Egyptian Commander in chief to be its head if there were major fighting with Israel." This was formed on October 24, 1966, long after Israel and its allies had finalised plans of aggression as already indicated.

Thus the argument advanced by Israel and its supporters that it was the information of the joint command that gave the signal for Israel to act in self-defence is contrary to facts. Nasser was not foolish enough to attack Israel at a time when the western Powers were anxious for a casus belli. Nasser had successfully avoided falling into the trap even under such highly provocative acts as the withdrawal of pilots, or the refusal to pay canal dues to the new Canal Authority etc. But the military steps taken by Nasser were legitimate in view of the troop movements and concentrations being undertaken by England, France and Israel since the nationalisation of the Suez Canal company. As Nasser is reported to have said on September 16, "As a responsible person I have to be ready. I cannot treat aggressive western declarations as mere bluff."


223. Anthony Nutting, op.cit., p.50. Also Supra, n.168, p.130.

Under the circumstances, it would have been folly on the part of Nehru to protest against these military steps taken by Nasser, as Professor Finer would like India to have done. He has complained that "Nehru did not protest the Arab joint military command or the explicit threat to annihilate Israel. For Indian ships do not pass through Israel, they passed through the Suez Canal."

**Israeli Aggression of 1956:**

As soon as the three countries committed aggression against the United Arab Republic it was evident to the Government of India that it was all preplanned, though they did not know of it earlier. Thus Nehru told Parliament on November 16, 1956: "It is obvious that their plans fitted in, and the Anglo-French attack helped Israel's aggression..." Nehru was thus forced to see the reality of Israeli intentions. It took an effort on his part to describe the brutality of the aggression on the UAR. In the same speech on November 16, 1956, he said: "The story of the past three and a half months ever since the nationalisation of the Suez canal company is full of tragic drama, and events have happened which I would have thought could not possibly occur in this modern age. I find

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it a little difficult to deal with this record of unabashed aggression and deception. The explanations which have been given from time to time contradict one another and exhibit an approach which is dangerous to the freedom of Asian and African countries and to world peace itself."

As against this, Nasser's action in nationalising the canal company, which Nehru thought was provocative, paled into insignificance. Nehru was forced to confess. During all the controversies since the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, Egypt has conducted herself with a large measure of propriety and forbearance. Without the least justification Egypt was attacked not only by Israel but also by the United Kingdom and France ..... Egypt the victim of Israeli aggression was attacked immediately after by the armed forces of the U.K. and France ..... Indeed some attempt has been made to minimise and justify this utterly imprompted and brutal attack on Egypt ....."

Nehru was convinced that the Arabs' charge that Israel was a beach-head of imperialism was a just one. Though Gandhiji and he himself were opposed to the partition of Palestine on the very sound moral, legal and political ground

228. Id., pp. 536-537.
that it disregarded the rights of one million Palestinian Arabs, independent India, under the latter's leadership recognised Israel as a state. But India was not happy with Israeli and western attitude to the Refugees rights. Therefore India withheld extending diplomatic relations with Israel. But India did not show any hostility to it.

However, soon India and Israel found themselves in the opposite camps in the developing conflict between national independence and western imperialism, while India had found more and more friends in the Arab countries. Finally, when Nasser emerged as the leader of Arab Nationalism, whom India at once recognised as a friend and ally against the western attempts at domination and dictation, Israel not only made frantic efforts to undermine his position but also committed the crime of aggression in the company of two of the erstwhile Colonial Powers. Nehru pointed out all this in his speech to Parliament on November 20, 1956. And on August 14, 1956, he declared that "Ever since it came into existence it has been a source of constant irritation to the Arab countries. The invasion of Egypt by Israel two years ago is fresh in our memory. Apart from this, there is the big problem of the old Palestine refugees."

229. See Bimla Prasad, Origins, Of Indian Foreign Policy, op. cit., pp.117-123 for the Congress stand taken by Gandhiji and Nehru.


In the same speech Nehru also declared that "The major fact in West Asia is the growth of Arab Nationalism in a very powerful, resurgent way. Egypt took the lead in this matter and, under the wise leadership of President Nasser, has played a very important part. Nasser, in fact, became the most prominent symbol of Arab nationalism. This fact, which was patent, was neither liked nor appreciated by many powers, and an attempt was made to split the Arab countries, in fact, Arab nationalism." He also pointed out that "It was stated that some kind of an Arab empire was being built up, which was dangerous. I do not know about the future, but I see no empire, much less an Arab empire." He then stated in categorical terms: "We are convinced that any effective solution of the problems of West Asia must be based on the recognition of the dominant urge and force of Arab nationalism. Any settlement must have the goodwill and cooperation of the Arab nations...."

This is also what Nasser and the Arabs demand of Israel, that it should take its due place in West Asia which is predominantly Arab. Thus it is Israel and its supporters that have to accept the greatest reality in West Asia: the will of the Arabs to live as self-respecting individuals and

nations. Then only the Arab could be expected to accept the reality of Israel.

_India and the West Asian Crisis:_

These are the deeper issues involved in the Arab stand against Israel and India's support to them. These are also the basic tenets of Nonalignment. It was, again, these motives that led the Government of India to stand resolutely by the Arabs when Israel committed another brutal aggression against them in June 1967.

The origins of the 'West Asian Crisis', or the June 1967 war between the Arabs and Israel, lie in the circumstances in which Israel withdrew its forces from the Gaza strip in March 1967. Israel did this, under the pledges given to it by the United States, unilaterally, in an aide memoire of February 11, 1967, that Israel would have free passage through the Gulf of Aqaba and protection by the UNEF from Gaza attacks. It was perhaps with this intention that the UNEF was moved from the Suez Canal area to the Gaza strip, which Nehru pointed out in a speech in Parliament on March 25, 1967. This was a major

233. This does not mean that India is not moved by national interests in its support to Arabs. For an account of these see the excellent article by G.H. Jansen, _The Statesman_, April 19, 1967.


236. Nehru, op. cit., p. 539.
gain for Israel, a fruit of aggression and was against the Charter. This was a failure of the United States and was contrary to statements made by Eisenhower and other US spokesman that the withdrawal should be unconditional. Another failure of the United States was that it could not make Israel accept the UNEF in its territory or to settle the refugee problem in accordance with the UN resolutions or on some other satisfactory basis.

How or why the Government of India, or for that matter Nasser, accepted this sort of unsatisfactory solution, is not clear, especially when Israel had declared openly that it would consider any interference with its shipping through the straits of Tiran as a casus belli for fresh aggression. However, the conditions on which India agreed to send troops to the UNEF, were stated by Nehru in categorical terms in Parliament on November 19, 1966. He said: "I want to make it perfectly clear on what conditions we sent these forces to join the United Nations Force. First of all, we made it clear that it was only if the Government of Egypt agreed that we would send


238. Id., p.205. See also Michael Brecher, The New States of Asia, op.cit., p.135. It is surprising that Prof. Brecher should support this claim in utter disregard for international law and justice.

239. Supra, n.167, cols. 371-372.
them; secondly, they were not to be considered in any sense a continuing force continuing the activities of the Anglo-French forces, but an entirely separate thing, thirdly, that the Anglo-French forces should be withdrawn, fourthly, that the United Nations Force should function to protect the old armistice line between Israel and Egypt, and finally that it would be a temporary affair. We are not prepared to agree to our forces or any force remaining there indefinitely. It was on these conditions, which were accepted that these forces were sent there."

Thus when Nasser asked the United Nations to withdraw the UNEF he had acted within his rights. And India was right in accepting Nasser's demand and Secretary-General Uthant was perfectly justified in his acceptance of the demand. The storm of protest raised by many people in India and by the Government of the United States and England against Nasser, Uthant and India was baseless, and extremely short sighted and ill considered. It only served to help Israel launch a pre-planned and surprise attack on the UAR, Syria and Jordan, on June 5, 1967.

If the United States and Britain led by Johnson and Wilson, respectively, had not been carried away by their traditional hostility to Nasser, they would have been able to appre-

240. For Uthant's defence of his acceptance of and Nasser's right to demand the withdrawal of the UNEF. See The Hindu, Contd......
ciate the nature of Nasser's move which was to make the UN realise that peace was threatened in the area on account of the refugee problem which had been neglected by it. The UNEF had largely become ineffective and there was increasing hostility between Israel and Arabs. Israel had not during the past ten years shown any inclination either to accept the UNEF on its territory, or to respect it, not to speak of its supreme indifference to the need of a solution to the refugee problem. Only a few in the west seemed to be worried about the increasing tension in the area. The UNEF had only become an instrument through which Israel was enjoying the fruits of its aggression in 1966. Surely it was not the purpose for which the UNEF was created and it certainly was not the reason for which either India or the United Arab Republic accepted it! It is patently absurd to say that the United Arab Republic had no right to ask for the withdrawal of such a force. And it is

(Continued from previous page)

4 and 21 June, 1967.


243. See in this connection Yashpal Tandon, 'UNEF, the Secretary-General, and International Diplomacy in the Third Arab-Israeli War', International Organisation (Vol. 27, No. 2, 1968), pp. 529-556.
much more so to think that the United States and England were more devoted to peace than the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

By demanding the withdrawal of the UNEF Nasser had only restored the conditions prior to the 1966 aggression by Israel and had opened a way for a permanent solution of the dispute. Instead of ceasing this opportunity to find a solution to the problem, the United States and England tried to discredit the United Nations and its Secretary-General, and went on to champion the cause of Israel, against the Arabs in utter disregard to facts. They also chose to warn Nasser, while Israel was preparing plans to attack the Arabs. Once again, they proved that they were incapable of doing justice to the Arabs against Israel.

The Israeli aggression was a repetition of the 1966 aggression in its motives, planning and execution. The failure of the United Arab Republic to anticipate it and to be unprepared for it even after the experience of 1966, is surprising, indeed! This is besides the point here. What is relevant is that the Arabs had, once again, revealed remarkable

 political sagacity in refusing to accept the admirable gesture of Nasser to step down from power. Nothing would have been more welcome to Israel and the United States and perhaps to the Soviet Union also.

By refusing to accept the Israeli demand for surrender, the Arabs have once again demonstrated their determination not to yield to aggression. This is their greatest asset. Gandhiji would have understood it and admired it for it was the essence of his satyagraha. With rare insight, Charles D. Crennams has drawn attention to this feature of the Arab character: "Refusal of Israel shows aspects of Arab character which are in striking contrast to the western approach to international problems. It is probably a mistake to attribute the Arabs unwillingness to acknowledged Israel to a lack of realism. Actually, their attitude is consistent with their understanding of political reality and of the most effective ways of dealing with it. As Gandhi used passive resistance in the struggle against British rule in India, the Arabs employ their own weapons and techniques...."

Unfortunately, no living Gandhian in India had shown any sympathy to the Arabs' struggle against Israel. The

criticism leveled against the Government of India's support to the Arab cause, does not even take into account the fact that the United Nations has passed a resolution accepting the fact of Israel's aggression and demanded the withdrawal of its forces from Arab territories. The policy of the Government of India during the west Asian Crisis was in the best interests of the country.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it may be mentioned that the two crises present two important turning points in the history of Non-alignment. The Anglo-French-Israeli attack on the United Arab Republic constituted a great challenge to Nonalignment just when it was blossoming into a world wide policy. Nasser's statesmanship supported by Nehru's rescued it from a premature death and the two leaders came to admire each other. The support given by the Super Powers to the United Arab Republic proved the soundness of the basis of nonalignment. For, this was the first occasion when a nonaligned power was directly attacked by more powerful nations in an attempt to change the

balance of power in their favour. The Super Powers intervened and restored the status quo. The crisis thus gave a new life and confidence to nonalignment and it began to grow from strength to strength.

The West Asian crisis has, on the other hand, demonstrated that the balance of power in the world has changed in such a way that the Super Powers are not so sharply opposed to each other as they were in 1956, thus making it possible for them to apply joint pressure on the nonaligned nations. It thus creates a problem for the nonaligned states, and perhaps also indicates a crisis in Nonalignment from which it has to be rescued, if it has to serve the nonaligned states as an effective foreign policy. This aspect will, however, be discussed in the concluding chapter.