

*HMNZS Royalist: A Vessel of Compliance.  
New Zealand and the Suez Canal Crisis  
Of 1956.*

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*To Graham Liggett*  
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## Abstract

This thesis illustrates a case study of New Zealand's political and naval involvement during the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, and examines the consequences of small state 'compliance' with the policies of a larger power during a period of international crisis. Selected small state theorists have recognised that 'compliant' behaviour has the potential to impede the development of independent foreign policy choices and thus weaken national interests. This thesis illustrates the vulnerability of small states when 'operating' outside international or regional framework in support of their larger allies, activity, which can in circumstances expose the smaller nation to international criticism and condemnation.

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of *HMNZS Royalist* on New Zealand's foreign policy during Suez (1956), and question whether the accidental stationing and subsequent deployment of the ship to the British Mediterranean fleet contributed to the nation's 'compliant' foreign policy during the crisis. *Royalist's* operational status during October and November will be assessed and the question asked: did New Zealand's 'compliant' policy during Suez and the vessel's presence with the British Mediterranean fleet led to unsanctioned involvement in hostilities against Egypt? Finally, this thesis shall contemplate whether the time is not overdue for a revised interpretation of events during the Suez crisis, based on the interests of justice and equity for those of the crew who claimed to have served in a warzone.

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## *Introduction*

### *Assumption, Theory and Methodology.*

The aim of this Chapter is to introduce the theoretical framework and methodology used in researching New Zealand's involvement in the Suez Canal crisis. The first part of this Chapter will examine the relevant literature surrounding small state theory, and the difficulties associated with conducting research in this field. These obstacles have usually centred on problems in the definition of small states and an acceptance that smaller powers act in a different manner from others. This examination intends to illustrate the views of scholars who have written on the 'impediments' in developing small state foreign policy, while also provide definitions for the notions of 'compliance' and 'passive' behaviour in foreign policy.

The second section will debate the notion of small state behaviour and assess the influences on Government in the formulation of foreign policy. John Henderson (1994) and David Vital (1967) have noted how the adoption of 'compliant' or 'passive' positions can influence small state foreign policy. These influences can come in the form of external pressures from larger 'mentor' states, especially in the context of alliances, or from the perceptions of the Executives of small states. Both theorists note the defensive concerns and economic vulnerability of small states and the emphasis given to counter these deficiencies by policy - makers. Such 'susceptibility' can also influence small state decision - makers and Executives. Alister McIntosh (1977) has noted how it was natural for New Zealand during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> - century, 'to adopt the view points of our protectors'.<sup>1</sup> It seems the real question for a small power is how can it take care of its

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<sup>1</sup> A. McIntosh, 'The Origins of the Department of External Affairs and formulation of Independent foreign policy' in A. McIntosh, et al., *New Zealand in World Affairs Volume I*, Price Milburn and Company, Wellington, 1977, p.11.

interests while preventing itself from becoming a mere pawn in the game of great powers?

Finally, the last section will illustrate the methodology used within this research and provide a brief explanation of the Chapters and case study. The methodology will focus on decisions made at the political and official level during the crisis, while testing for patterns, indicators and influences of foreign policy.

This research also intends to analyze the decision to station *HMNZS Royalist* with the British Mediterranean fleet during the Suez crisis, and question whether this deployment was a result of (or influence on) a 'compliant' or 'passive' foreign policy. It does seem on the weight of evidence that the deployment of the cruiser represented the desire of the Government to support the United Kingdom, perhaps even to the point of the use of force. A further examination and reconstruction of events will question what role, if any the vessel played in Anglo/French hostilities against Egypt.

### ***Small State Theory***

Scholars and students of international relations alike have richly debated the study of small states and the concept of small state theory. Primarily, concern has centered around what constitutes a small state and if such entities act in a significantly different manner to their larger counterparts in the international system.<sup>2</sup>

International relations literature provides a number of definitions in the identification of small states, though the establishment of a universal standard by which to measure state size, still remains the bane of political scientists. Most commentators agree that the variables of economy, land area, mass population and military

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<sup>2</sup> R. Thakur, 'The Elusive Essence of Size: Australia, New Zealand and Small States in International Relations' in R. Higgott, and J. Richardson. (ed.), *International Relations: Global and Australian Perspectives on an Evolving Discipline*, ANU, Canberra, 1991, p.242. Thakur also notes 'a single theory of small state behaviour would require uniform behavioural responses to identical structural demands. Some of the differences between Australia, Canada and New Zealand illustrate these difficulties only too vividly. The elusive quest for nomothetic generalisation ends in idiographic singularity'. See R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, pp.280-281.



apparatus provide acceptable criteria by which to assess state size.<sup>3</sup> The most obvious problem however originates from the differing limits and range placed on these criteria, as the adoption of any one single standard to determine state size can result in contradictions between nations. For example, New Zealand shares approximately the same land area as Japan and slightly more than the United Kingdom, yet is defined by most commentators as a 'small state'. It would however be absurd to deem Japan a small state based solely on the category of land and mass, as its economic power is so great.<sup>4</sup> This contradiction indicates the importance of using more than one variable or yardstick in the measure of state size.

While New Zealanders sometimes regard themselves as a 'small nation', more than half of the United Nations member states have a smaller land area and as a result, technically, the land area of Japan, New Zealand or Britain could not be regarded as 'small'.<sup>5</sup> Boundaries used in the assessment of state size can also vary, for instance in the case of economically advanced nations, Vital (1967) sets the population limit in defining a small state of 10 - 15 million (and 20 - 30 million in the case of under developed countries).<sup>6</sup> This is similar to that of Henderson (1991) who believes that small states can be characterised by having populations under 10 million.<sup>7</sup> However he does admit that this number can range, depending on the commentator from between 30 million and 250 000.<sup>8</sup> Henderson argues that 'with a land mass of 268 000 square kilometers, a total...population of 3 million, a GNP per head of population ranked twenty third by the

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<sup>3</sup> Including East (1978), Henderson (1991), Thakur (1991) and Vital (1967)

<sup>4</sup> J. Henderson notes that economic indices can also be misleading, as some of the world's richest nations e.g. Kuwait/Brunei are also the smallest. In contrast India and Pakistan who could be regarded as rather poor have extensive populations, land area and military apparatus (including nuclear weapons), see J. Henderson, 'New Zealand and the Foreign Policy of Small States' in R. Kennaway, and J. Henderson (ed.), *Beyond New Zealand II: Foreign Policy into the 1990s*, Longman Paul, Auckland, 1991, pp.4-6.

<sup>5</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> D. Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, pp.4-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

OECD, the military forces totalling some 13 000... New Zealand is indeed a small state'.<sup>9</sup>

Thakur (1991) suggests that small states pursue identical interests of their larger cousins by similar means but with appropriate modifications to reflect their relatively fewer resources.<sup>10</sup> He believes, however that any study is at best only indicative of certain behavioural patterns of states with no guarantee that such action will be repeated:

The best that we seem to be able to manage is small state possibilism: some small states behave in quasi - characteristic manner under certain conditions. Not all small states act in this way under these conditions; not most small states act in this way under these conditions; not even one state will always act in the same way under the same conditions.<sup>11</sup>

It is generally agreed that a state's size can provide a constraint on the development of foreign policy, as options beyond diplomacy are in instances limited by a lack of resources. Henderson (1991) also suggests a number of characteristics of small state behaviour based on East (1978). This criteria argues that small states have patterns of:

1. Low levels of participation in world affairs, as a result of limited material and human resources.
2. A limited scope of foreign policy, focusing on regional issues and matters of direct concern to the small state.
3. An economic focus in foreign policy execution, in order to gain maximum benefit from limited resources.
4. An emphasis on internationalism, involving participation in regional and international organisations as a means of compensating for the states 'limited resources'.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.4.; New Zealand's population at 31 December 1997 was 3 781500. Number of defence personnel 1997, 9462 with a defence expenditure of 1.4 %of GDP See L. Cook, *New Zealand Official 1998 Yearbook*, 101<sup>st</sup> ed., GP Publications, Wellington, 1998, pp.80-86.

<sup>10</sup> R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p.242.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.280.

5. A moral emphasis, and high level of support for international norms.
6. Hawks and doves? Opinions differ on the degree to which small states pursue an assertive or compliant foreign policy.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis intends to specifically focus on the notion of ‘compliance’ within New Zealand’s foreign policy during the Suez Canal crisis of 1956. East and Henderson’s criterion will be evaluated at the conclusion of the thesis in an effort to compare New Zealand’s behaviour during the Suez crisis with accepted patterns of small state activity. As this thesis intends to assess a case study of small state behaviour during an international crisis, these notions remain important as a means of evaluating New Zealand’s action against traditional models and patterns. Of especial interest to this thesis are the notions of low level of participation in world affairs, the limited scope of foreign policy, and emphasis of internationalism and moral issues. Though, as Thakur (1991) notes, political cleavages may provide a better indicator of small state behaviour.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Small state behaviour in international crises*

During the Suez crisis (1956) the foreign policy of the Holland - led National Government appeared to be influenced by a number of factors, including:

- The Prime Minister’s declaration of unconditional support to the United Kingdom at the start of the crisis.
- The decision to allow the *HMNZS Royalist* to remain with the British Mediterranean fleet.
- New Zealand’s dependency on the United Kingdom as both an international market and supplier.
- New Zealand’s reliance on the United Kingdom for the provision of information and consultation.

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<sup>12</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p.269.

The Government argued that any threat to the United Kingdom would inevitably jeopardize the quality of life within New Zealand, as Britain played a major role in receiving the nation's exports.<sup>14</sup> It was believed that any economic disruption to this market would soon be felt at home<sup>15</sup>. Holland maintained strong links with the United Kingdom and Commonwealth which provided New Zealand with cultural and security ties throughout the 1950s. Even under Labour, who had advocated a greater internationalist approach within its foreign policy during the 1930s - 40s<sup>16</sup> sound links with the United Kingdom were always maintained.<sup>17</sup>

Economic dependency and Commonwealth identity led to Holland's unconditional support for the United Kingdom as the crisis broke in late July 1956. During these early days the British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden requested permission to use the recently purchased New Zealand cruiser *HMNZS Royalist*, which was then undergoing sea trials with the British Mediterranean fleet. Holland had no hesitation in agreeing to the request though did state New Zealand would wish to retain any final decision regarding the vessel's use.<sup>18</sup> Solidarity towards the United Kingdom remained firm as the crisis developed through August and September 1956, illustrated by New Zealand's support of Britain at two London Conferences and public statements at home.<sup>19</sup> Henderson (1980) suggests even

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<sup>14</sup> R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p. 256. Thakur also explains the 'lack of a home market large enough to sustain self-sufficient economic growth leading to dependence on foreign markets is a problem common to small states'.

<sup>15</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy Statements and Documents 1943-57*, A.R. Shearer Government Printer, Wellington, 1972, p. 441.

<sup>16</sup> See appendices.

<sup>17</sup> M. Ashby, 'Fraser's Foreign Policy' in M. Clark, *Peter Fraser: Master Politician*, Dunmore Press Ltd., Palmerston North, 1998, p.169. Ashby notes the essential paradox of Fraser's policy as the champion of small power rampant vs a profound loyalty to Britain and the Commonwealth.

<sup>18</sup> See later Chapters. Templeton (1994) notes that *Royalist* 'would of course be available to fight alongside the Royal Navy whenever necessary'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire: New Zealand's Involvement in Middle East Defence and the Suez crisis 1947-57*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1994, p.123.

<sup>19</sup> R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p.268. Notes 'As standing multilateral conferences, international organisations offer states like Australia and New Zealand forums

solidarity between states can be problematic and that 'if the loyal ally appears entirely satisfied it will be ignored'.<sup>20</sup> There was increasing concern among officials as to the United Kingdom's true intentions for *Royalist* and the lack of consultation and information that they were receiving from London.<sup>21</sup> Thakur (1991), illustrates this great power/small power relationship in regards to military issues:

The bargaining position of the smaller state is decidedly weaker. It lacks the resources and facilities of the major power to collect, collate, store and retrieve military assessments. More subtly, regular and special intelligence briefings by the larger states can help mould the world - views of smaller allies towards conformity with the international images dominant in the larger state's policy-making hierarchy. The conflict can be total and hence unifying for the small state, but marginal and domestically divisive for the intervening great power.<sup>22</sup>

*Royalist* was still in the Mediterranean when Israel invaded the Sinai on 29 October and New Zealand's situation became further complicated when Eden on 30 October indicated his intention to separate the two combatants to protect the Suez Canal. Holland faced the possibility of a New Zealand warship being involved in unsanctioned hostilities against Egypt. Inevitably the Government managed to extricate the vessel from the region, though not before *Royalist* had been involved in a number of potentially 'warlike' situations.<sup>23</sup>

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in which to maximize their international influence without having to expend scarce resources on traditional bilateral diplomacy with every independent actor in world affairs'.

<sup>20</sup> J. Henderson, 'The Foreign Policy of a Small State' in J. Henderson, K. Jackson, R. Kennaway, *Beyond New Zealand*, Methuen, Auckland, 1980, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> I. McGibbon (ed.), *Unofficial Channels: letters between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner 1946-1966*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1999, p.213; Vital (1967) also notes 'Where detailed knowledge of extra regional matters is [not] possessed it must be borrowed which, is to say, that it comes from non autonomous sources... The result is that when a small power's leader thinks of affairs that which he and his officials are not directly concerned he is hard put not to be powerfully influenced by the views from the great power capitals'. D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.30.

<sup>22</sup> R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, pp.276-277.

<sup>23</sup> See later Chapters.

John Henderson (1991) notes the debate over the ‘belligerent’ or ‘compliant’ nature of small states,<sup>24</sup> while David Vital (1967) also suggests that foreign policies of small states are often characterised by ‘passive’ or ‘aggressive’ activity. Both theorists believe such abstract notions can provide explanations of small state behaviour. This thesis intends to examine the proposition that New Zealand’s stance during the Suez crisis best infers a compliant/passive foreign policy, where the state was prepared to follow a larger ally to a point where it compromised its independent judgement.

An assessment of New Zealand’s position during the Suez crisis will be undertaken to determine whether its foreign policy was governed by a ‘compliant’ or ‘passive’ desire to support the United Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> The influence of *Royalist* on this compliant foreign policy will also be appraised. It will be argued that the cruiser’s presence in the Mediterranean further complicated New Zealand’s ‘inflexible’ compliant foreign policy, hampering independent decision - making and eventually leading to a critical breakdown of communication between Wellington and London. Henderson (1980), like McIntosh (1977) notes that: ‘New Zealand has been prepared to go along with the wishes of its major allies,’ and that the main, ‘benefit of the Empire and Commonwealth was seen to be the opportunity for New Zealand to make its view known to the key decision - makers of the major allied powers’.<sup>26</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) offers a definition of for the notion of compliance as: ‘complying, disposed to comply; ready to yield to the wishes or desires of others’.<sup>27</sup> David Vital illustrates a ‘similar’ concept of ‘passive’ behaviour:

<sup>24</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand*, p.7.

<sup>27</sup> J.A. Simpson, and E.S.C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II & III 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, pp.92 and 615. An alternative definition for belligerent is provided by the *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus*, ‘marked by a readiness to fight or argue; aggressive’. See J.M. Sinclair (Consultant), *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harper Collins Publisher, Glasgow, 1993, p.100.

The struggle to maintain freedom of choice in the external world is explicitly or implicitly renounced. This is a policy of renunciation. It implies acquiescence in the fact (or belief) that the state is not viable as an independent international entity.<sup>28</sup>

Vital's (1967) notion of passive behaviour, though not identical is similar to Henderson's (1991) concept of 'compliance'. During the Suez Canal crisis, the National Government appeared to implicitly renounce some 'freedom of choice' in foreign policy and especially, in regards to the deployment of *HMNZS Royalist* to the Mediterranean<sup>29</sup>. While the case study of New Zealand's involvement during the Suez Canal crisis does not exactly fit Vital's (1967) concept of 'passive behaviour', elements of his first definition appear important. The notions of 'compliance' and 'passive' behaviour derive from a number of external / internal influences. Henderson (1991) acknowledges that such behaviour may indicate a limited range of foreign policy expertise.<sup>30</sup> The New Zealand Department of External Affairs had been created in 1943 under Labour Prime Minister Peter Fraser and was to a certain degree still 'immature' and somewhat reliant on the Commonwealth Relations Office in London.<sup>31</sup> Henderson also notes how a decision - maker's perception of the domestic and international environment can influence foreign policy choices, and that a high level of activity and aggression can reflect

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<sup>28</sup> D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.121.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that this thesis intends only to assess the National Government's foreign policy in relation to the Suez Canal crisis of 1956. The notions of 'compliance' and 'passive' behaviour are being discussed in relation to this particular crisis, and not being adopted as a 'general explanation' of New Zealand foreign policy during 1956.

<sup>30</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11. Henderson (1991) and Furiol (1984) also note 'The formulation and implementation of foreign policy is impaired by organisational and informational deficiencies. Vulnerability ensues from pressures and mistakes that arise from being unable to amass information and expertise in relevant decision making areas. For instance in the area of intelligence small states lack the resources to collect much relevant information and have to...rely on intelligence supplied by friendly powers' See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, pp.34-36.

leadership influences.<sup>32</sup> Vital believes (1967) small state foreign policy choices are made as a result of 'objective factors', which include:

- The external international environment.
- The state's human and material resources.
- The condition of the state's military and administrative resources at the time, and the nature of the society.
- The character and ambition of the Executive.<sup>33</sup>

Vital also suggests small powers may be particularly:

Vulnerable to the pressures of those powers with which it maintains close economic ties, founded though they may be on ostensibly amicable political relations. Indeed, it is possible to envisage circumstances where vulnerability to non - forcible pressure from nominally friendly powers may be many times greater than unfriendly powers.<sup>34</sup>

New Zealand's position during the Suez crisis appears in part to be influenced by Vital's notion of non - forcible pressure. In the case of New Zealand, this pressure originated from Commonwealth solidarity, a commitment to Britain and the desire to protect economic interests. National's position at the London Conferences indicated a Government ready to give all possible support to a larger ally with no consideration of possible repercussions and failure to ensure

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<sup>32</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11. Salmore and Salmore (1978) note the importance of the Executive in the formulation of foreign policy by using an example of British policy during the Suez crisis. Epstein (1964:93) writes 'It is plain to see that the Suez commitment was an Executive decision made without the prior approval, formal or informal of Parliament. It may have been a personal decision of Eden rather than the Cabinet as a whole'. See B. Salmore, and S. Salmore, 'Political Regimes and Foreign Policy' in M. East, *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*, Sage Publishing, California, 1978, p.106; R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p.266. notes how Mulhall (1986) believes 'the scope for foreign policy to be influenced by belief systems of political leaders is greater in small states than large ones'

<sup>33</sup> D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.122.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118; Thakur's (1991) synopsis is similar to that of Vital (1967). See R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, p.276.



diplomatic safeguards. Holland's perception of the international environment was prejudiced by:

- A desire to support the United Kingdom.
- The need to protect trade and market interests (which also centered on activity with Britain).
- A desire to maintain and strengthen the Commonwealth unity.
- The need for regional Cold War alliances.
- The support of the United Nations and United States, as long as it did not interfere with the first three points.

Holland's acquiescence in allowing Britain to include *Royalist* within military planning further exacerbated New Zealand's already 'compliant' foreign policy. The decision to involve the cruiser in Naval contingencies together with rhetoric espoused by the Prime Minister further reduced options available and room to manoeuvre by Government. This thesis intends to argue that the vessel's presence in the Mediterranean further impeded choices of other foreign policy alternatives including an approach to the United Nations. Holland had made a number of statements committing New Zealand to the United Kingdom and Eden had asserted any early withdrawal of the cruiser would be viewed as a lack of confidence on the Government's part in British policy.<sup>35</sup> The deployment of the cruiser further indicated the actions of a compliant state lacking External Affairs experience and machinery to act independently during an international crisis.

Though New Zealand history currently records that *Royalist* was withdrawn before participating in hostilities against Egypt,<sup>36</sup> this thesis intends to reassess the events of 1956 and question on a balance of probability whether the Government's compliant foreign policy led

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<sup>35</sup> PRO: PREM.1094. Eden to Holland via UKHC. 18 September, 1956.

<sup>36</sup> See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*.

to an over - commitment and participation by *Royalist* in Naval conflict.

Thakur (1991) and Henderson (1991) note that while small states are more crises prone, larger powers are more likely to pursue military responses.<sup>37</sup> During Suez (1956), New Zealand in conjunction with a larger power, appeared to advocate a military response, or solution to an international crisis. This military reaction also appears to reflect an element of 'compliance' as New Zealand outwardly, at least, provided unconditional support to a larger / mentor power.<sup>38</sup>

This thesis intends to examine whether New Zealand's compliant foreign policy during the Suez crisis led to a loss of independence in decision making, culminating in the inability of the Government to remove *Royalist* from the British fleet before it was involved in Naval hostilities. The cruiser's presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, while providing an impediment to an inflexible foreign policy, frustrated other alternative diplomatic initiatives. In this context let us consider two working hypotheses:

- (1) That New Zealand was governed by an increasingly 'compliant' foreign policy during the Suez Canal crisis (July – November 1956) and that this stance seriously impeded the development of other diplomatic alternatives.
- (2) That *HMNZS Royalist*'s presence with the United Kingdom fleet hampered the adoption of other foreign policy options, while further reinforcing the 'compliant' stance adopted by Government, and that this commitment eventually led to New Zealand's involvement in unsanctioned hostilities, possibly even war.

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<sup>37</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11.

<sup>38</sup> Singer notes the influence of larger 'mentor powers' on the voting patterns of small states within international organisations. See M. Singer, *Weak States in a World of Powers: The Dynamics of International Relationships*, The Free Press, New York, 1972, pp.323-324.

### *Methodology*

Material used in this research is based on primary documentation backed up with a variety of interviews, newspaper articles and secondary sources, including Malcolm Templeton's (1994) *Ties of Blood and Empire*. An attempt was made to gain access to the 'McIntosh Papers' held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade but this proved unsuccessful. It was acknowledged by Foreign Affairs that certain material pertaining to the Suez crisis was still being 'held under restriction' and that 'I should for now, focus my efforts on other sources'.<sup>39</sup> No relevant material was located within the Alexander Turnbull Library. The Ministry of Defence also proved unhelpful in providing documentation pertaining to the *Royalist's* stationing in the Mediterranean, and it was discovered in the National Archives in Wellington that the 'letters of proceedings' including the ship's log for the month of November 1956, were 'missing'. Templeton (1994) also notes this discrepancy and suggests the log remains incomplete until April 1957.<sup>40</sup> This of course, creates considerable difficulties in any reconstruction of events during the height of the Suez crisis (c. 31 October – 6 November). Primary material used within this thesis originated from a variety of sources:

- New Zealand Prime Minister's Department.
- New Zealand Naval Board.
- New Zealand Department of External Affairs.
- New Zealand High Commissions, including the permanent representative to UN.
- British Admiralty.
- Public Records Office.
- Commonwealth Relations Office.
- British Prime Minister's Department.

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from Graeme Eskrigge, Archives Policy Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 30 April 1999. The author was also informed that 'A particularly useful published work in your area of interest is *Ties of Blood and Empire* by Malcolm Templeton'.

- Files held in the Department of Political Science, University of Canterbury.
- Interviews with crewmen from *HMNZS Royalist*.
- *The Auckland Star*.
- *The Press*.

Contact was established with crewmembers that served aboard *Royalist* by advertising in the Christchurch daily newspaper '*The Press*', an unsuccessful attempt was also made in a Wellington paper. Subsequent interviews allowed a reconstruction of events and a unique perspective of the cruiser's operational activities in the Mediterranean. Written material from a number of crewmembers, some not necessarily prepared for this research also provided valuable empirical evidence as to the vessel's role with the British fleet. All replies indicated that *Royalist* was more committed to 'active' Naval operations than admitted to in Templeton's (1994) *Ties of Blood and Empire*. Further interviews were conducted with academics from the Political Science, Zoology and Engineering Departments at the University of Canterbury in an effort to clarify two contentious points made by Templeton (1994). These discussions provided ample scope to query certain conclusions reached in *Ties of Blood and Empire* and strengthen the belief that *Royalist's* was involved in Naval hostilities, without the express approval or knowledge of the New Zealand Government.

As a prelude to the Suez crisis, Chapter One will analyze New Zealand's position in the international environment of the 1950s, including defence and trade relations with the United Kingdom and America. The nation's commitment to the United Nations (1945) and UN Charter adopted under Prime Minister Peter Fraser will also be discussed, as will New Zealand's involvement in Middle Eastern politics and its relations within the Commonwealth.

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<sup>40</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.255.

The following three Chapters illustrate the case study of New Zealand participation in the Suez Canal crisis and examine the consequences of the nation's 'compliant' foreign policy. The case study will seek to explain the influences and motivation in the development of policy during the crisis, including the decision to station *Royalist* with the British fleet. Each Chapter examines New Zealand's position during various phases of the Suez crisis, while illustrating the level or degree of 'compliance' adopted by Government. This assessment will examine the increasing inflexibility of policy and the impediment it created towards the formulation of an effective and independent position. It will be argued that the deployment of *Royalist* was an impediment in the development of alternative policy, and that the nature of its stationing inevitably resulted in New Zealand's involvement in active operations.

Finally, the conclusion will summarise the results of the case study and relate its findings back to the central hypotheses. Comparisons with traditional patterns of small state activity will be made, and questions about the nature and consequences of adopting a compliant defence policy, during a period of crisis, analyzed. Questions will be asked whether this compliant or inflexible policy contributed to the Naval deployment to the Mediterranean and *Royalist's* eventual participation in active operations against Egypt, confirmation that the vessel did participate in active operations beg further questions:

- The whereabouts of the letters of proceedings for November 1956.
- Why implausible excuses have been given as to the operational status of *Royalist* during the crisis.
- Why the former National Government (2000) advocated the cruiser did not participate in unsanctioned aggression against Egypt.

This thesis intends to analyze small state behaviour during an international crisis by assessing the impact of New Zealand's 'compliant' foreign policy at Suez. It will argue that 'compliance' impeded the development of independent foreign policy and frustrated the adoption of other diplomatic alternatives. A second hypothesis has suggested that the deployment and stationing of *Royalist* was itself the result of New Zealand's compliance, and that the integration of the vessel with the British Mediterranean fleet led to its participation in warlike activities, without the knowledge of the New Zealand Government.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the aim of this thesis is to examine the political difficulties associated with the adoption of 'compliant' policy by small states. New Zealand's compliance may have led to a participation in hostilities and a rejection of international law and morality, contradicting accepted patterns and models of small state behaviour. Further analysis questions whether Holland's compliance led to a loss of control over *Royalist* during the British attacks on Port Said, and whether this Naval commitment further governed the formulation of New Zealand's foreign policy.

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<sup>41</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.138.

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## *Chapter One*

### *Evolution of foreign policy*

During both World Wars New Zealand played a role in the defence of Commonwealth interests in the Middle East, including the Suez Canal and oil fields. As war with the Soviet Union during the 1950s remained a possibility New Zealand indicated a readiness to fight in the Middle East again. The 'expectation' of having to defend the region led to Labour's decision to conduct a referendum on compulsory military training, prior to the general election, on 3 August 1949.<sup>42</sup> The National Government (November 1949) accepted compulsory military training and emphasised its commitment to Commonwealth defence and proposed creation of a Middle East Command Structure.<sup>43</sup>

Fears of a resurgent Japan and the rise of Communism also led to the formulation of a number of formal treaties with the United States (including ANZUS and SEATO). British influence and power in the Pacific was waning and New Zealand realised that future security arrangement would have to be based around America. Defence priorities within the Commonwealth also altered after the 1950s, with British Joint Planners placing a greater emphasis on New Zealand participation in South East Asian defence.<sup>44</sup>

### *New Zealand's Relationship with Britain*

Despite the transition from Colonial states to full statehood (1947), New Zealand's relations with the United Kingdom remained strong and enduring. Most New Zealand Governments up to the 1950s clamored for the accolades of being the most pro - British, however

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<sup>42</sup> D. Grant, 'Anti- Conscription, Conscription and the Referendum' in M. Clark, *Peter Fraser*, p.142.

<sup>43</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.16.

<sup>44</sup> W.D. McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, p.389.

security considerations during World War Two had led to a broadening of relations with the United States. Alister McIntosh (1977) notes:

Although we were a country of European settlement situated in the far distant Pacific alongside Asia, we were, at the same time, dependent on the protection first of Britain and later the United States. It was the natural tendency, therefore to adopt the viewpoint of our protectors.<sup>45</sup>

The 'preferential trading system' provided New Zealand with access to British international markets during and after the Second World War, which cushioned the nation's 'narrowly based' pastoral economy.<sup>46</sup> Access to these markets served to further direct New Zealand's foreign policy towards Britain<sup>47</sup> and during the period of the Suez crisis (1956) two thirds of New Zealand's exports were taken by the United Kingdom. As will be illustrated in later Chapters, this high level of economic dependency provided a strong influencing factor in the Government's solidarity with the United Kingdom during the Suez Canal crisis. McKinnon (1993) states, 'New Zealand's economic eggs were so completely in the British basket that economic arrangements beyond the Commonwealth framework were a shadowy matter'.<sup>48</sup> Even during the 1950s the United Kingdom remained a vital market

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<sup>45</sup> A. McIntosh, 'The origins of the Department of External Affairs and the formulation of Independent Foreign Policy' in McIntosh, et al., *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.11.

<sup>46</sup> W.D. McIntyre, 'A review of the Commonwealth factor in Foreign Policy Making, 1943-1993' in A. Trotter (ed.), *Fifty Years of New Zealand Foreign Policy Making: Papers from the 28<sup>th</sup> Foreign Policy School 1993*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1993, p.40. New Zealand's exports to the United Kingdom had reached 81% in 1930 and 90% by 1940. See S. Hoadley, *The New Zealand Foreign Affairs handbook*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1989, p.71.

<sup>47</sup> Henderson (1991) notes how small states often have an economic focus to their foreign policies. In the case of New Zealand during the 1950s, economic policy was geared almost solely towards the United Kingdom. See earlier introduction or J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>48</sup> M. McKinnon, 'New Zealand in the Commonwealth Economy, 1935-65' in M. McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1993 p.83. This statement accurately reflects New Zealand's economic dependence on the United Kingdom during the 1950s, which Henderson (1991) notes, influences small state foreign policy.



though exports had 'dropped' to 66%.<sup>49</sup> McIntyre (1993) explains that during this period New Zealand was 'third equal with Switzerland after the USA and Canada in gross domestic product (GNP) per head and, with less than 50 registered unemployed in the whole country, the Prime Minister could boast that he knew them all by name'.<sup>50</sup>

During the 1940s and 1950s the 'unwritten alliance' of the Commonwealth governed the nation's defence commitments. The New Zealand armed forces were initially established to assist and support the United Kingdom in conflict, with the army 'geared to sending an expeditionary force to fight alongside the British'. The Navy began its life as a division of the Royal Navy, and was commanded by British officers, who also dominated the Naval board.<sup>51</sup> As we will see later, this board had an influence in the procurement and stationing of the New Zealand cruiser *HMNZS Royalist* during the Suez crisis. This system remained an important component in New Zealand defence and influence on foreign policy throughout the 1950s, even after the collapse of Imperial strategy in 1942.<sup>52</sup>

While the United Kingdom remained an important influence on foreign policy and decision - making, supported by a high level of economic dependency, there still remained a 'sturdy streak of independence in the New Zealand attitude to the rest of the world'.<sup>53</sup>

Both New Zealand and Australia committed troops to the Middle East during the First and Second World Wars to defend Imperial and Commonwealth interests. With the onset of the Cold War, American and British strategists prepared for global conflict

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<sup>49</sup> S. Hoadley, *The New Zealand Foreign Affairs handbook*, p.71; See appendices for trade figures.

<sup>50</sup> W.D. McIntyre, *Fifty years of New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> G. Laking, 'The Evolution of an Independent Foreign Policy' in J. Henderson, et al., *Beyond New Zealand*, p.10. Laking notes even under the more independent Labour, this independence was seldom 'pressed beyond the point where the British Government could only led to embarrassment or displeasure'; Labour was also well aware of Britain's importance to New Zealand's defence and economic well being as a small allied state.

against the Soviet Union and in contingency planning in New Zealand, it was believed that the Middle East would once again become the centre of conflict in the mid 1950s. The Labour Government (1940 - 49) also accepted the notion of 'forward defence' and agreed that New Zealand should provide 'an army division and five air squadrons to the Middle East' in the event of hostilities.<sup>54</sup> Participation in the Middle East had shaped a national interest in the region and a desire to 'protect that which belonged to the Empire and New Zealand' and this included the Suez Canal.<sup>55</sup>

The success of the National Party at the 1949 election served to 'strengthen' the nation's ties with the Commonwealth. The new Government was more than willing to 'trust Britain in foreign affairs and defence' matters.<sup>56</sup> McKinnon (1993) notes that throughout fourteen years of opposition National had always been ready to charge Labour with disloyalty if ever 'its "independent" policies looked to be creating complications for Britain'.<sup>57</sup>

In November 1951 the United Kingdom proposed the establishment of a Middle East Command to maintain and strengthen its presence within the region, and hopefully entice Egypt and Turkey into an alliance against the Soviet Union. However, the proposal encountered hostility from the Egyptians who regarded the new organisation as a British attempt to maintain control in the area. On 16 October 1951 Holland expressed his disappointment over Cairo's obduracy in responding to the United Kingdom proposals, 'Egypt has been invited to join us in a Middle East security pact, a defence pact,

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<sup>54</sup> I. McGibbon (ed.), *Undiplomatic Dialogue: Letters between Carl Berendsen & Alister McIntosh 1943-1952*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1993 p.174. McGibbon notes, the British maintained that any contribution to the region would have to be made on a much quicker timetable than that which had followed 1939-40.

<sup>55</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.20.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>57</sup> M. McKinnon, *Independence and foreign policy*, p.112; M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.4; As noted the change in Prime Minister heralded a slight alteration in foreign policy. Muhall (1986) recognises the influence of small state Executive on external relations, 'the scope for foreign policy to be influenced by belief systems of political leaders is greater in small states than large ones'. See R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of*

in which Egypt would be given a very important role to play...what has happened? Egypt has rejected this offer of friendship, and invitation of cooperation'.<sup>58</sup> Holland 'assertively' objected to any significant role within the new organisation being offered to Arab states, 'To talk about giving Iran and Egypt posts in a Middle East Command is even worse than offering a Deputy Commandership in Chief to the Turks'.<sup>59</sup> However, New Zealand seemed more than prepared to participate in the new organisation:

This area of the world is of vital importance not only to the security of the Commonwealth, but to the fortunes of the free world. Historically, it is an area of special interest to the United Kingdom and to New Zealand also as was demonstrated by the actions of our forces there in two world wars. The Middle East has been and will remain one of the decisive theatres.<sup>60</sup>

The contradiction was obvious. While the Government refused to support any significant role in the Command, for the Arab states, it argued that New Zealand, a small nation at the other end of the world should play a major role. New Zealand's 'commitment' to Middle East defence and British strategy was further illustrated in 1952 with the decision to deploy and station the *RNZAF* No.14 'Vampire' squadron to Cyprus.<sup>61</sup> Holland argued that the stationing of the squadron 'in a garrison role...would be very valuable to the *RNZAF* which should profit greatly in efficiency because of the fact that it would be operating with...the *RAF* and *RAAF*'.<sup>62</sup>

The fear of a resurgent Japan, rise of Communism, and the Korean War altered New Zealand's perception of defence through the

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*Size*, p.266; Henderson (1991), also recognises the importance of decision-makers perceptions in the formulation of policy. J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11.

<sup>58</sup> Statement by Holland, 16 October, 1951, in *New Zealand Parliamentary Debate, Volume 295, 25 September-14 November, 1951*, p.344.

<sup>59</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.20.

<sup>60</sup> Statement by Holland, 9 November, 1951 in New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.293.

<sup>61</sup> I. McGibbon, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.156.

<sup>62</sup> Statement by Holland, 12 April 1952, in New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, pp.293-4.

early 1950s, as it had done with Fraser in the 1940s. Increasingly regional concerns began to dominate Government thinking as New Zealand began looking towards the United States in terms of national security. The Suez crisis of 1956 coincided with a major change in the focus of New Zealand's defence and security to the Pacific and South East Asia.

***Defence Relations with the United States - and the Growth of Regionalism***

The fall of the British base in Singapore (1942) and subsequent failure to halt the Japanese advance through the Pacific led to a reappraisal of New Zealand's regional security, with the nation increasingly beginning to depend on the United States. By the middle of 1946 planners in the United States had come out strongly against any common defence scheme for the South Pacific, arguing American security interests lay in the North (not Southwest) and there was no power at this stage from which they felt necessary to defend themselves.<sup>63</sup> New Zealand viewed United States participation in the security of the region as essential, even though its own thinking still centered on 'commitments' to the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. This dilemma was to create serious problems for New Zealand during the Suez crisis, when the United States and United Kingdom advocated differing resolutions to the crisis.

As the Cold War dominated the late 1940s the United States began to view a rejuvenated Japan as a bastion against the Soviet Union. President Truman had advocated a 'soft' peace with the Japanese in an effort to rebuild the infrastructure, economy and relations, whereas Australia and New Zealand remained fearful of a resurgent militaristic Japan in the face of waning British power and interest east of Suez.<sup>64</sup> Fraser shared American fears of Soviet led Communism during the late 1940s and had even suggested that a 'dark, turgid, dangerous flood was threatening South East Asia'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> F.L.W. Wood, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.101.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.179.

However in the eyes of the Prime Minister Japan with racist and nationalistic tendencies, remained as the most likely sources of aggression.<sup>66</sup> The new Government consciously carried on the main lines of its predecessor's foreign policy after the 1949 election, but 'subtly altered the emphasis' with less stress on the United Nations and notions of collective security.<sup>67</sup> Holland agreed with Fraser about the hostile and expansive nature of the Soviet Union and advocated stronger ties with the United Kingdom and Commonwealth.<sup>68</sup> However, Doidge, then Minister of External Affairs believed the 'richest prize' for New Zealand would be a security guarantee from the United States. As 'an anti - communist party, the more anti communist of the two main parties National could not escape the warmth towards the United States as the leader of the anti communist alliance'.<sup>69</sup>

The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 assisted New Zealand and Australia's argument for further security arrangements with the United States, while involving New Zealand in an 'international crisis'. The same day, Truman approached the United Nations seeking condemnation for the northern incursion and to demand that the communist troops withdraw. The Security Council, in the absence of the Soviet Union passed a resolution expressing concern at the breach of peace, called for an end to hostilities, and requested international assistance.<sup>70</sup> The New Zealand Government, operating safely within international fora, agreed with the British and the United States view of the communist invasion. Though, as McIntyre (1995) notes:

It seems that the matter did not go to the Cabinet, and Holland, the Prime Minister, was at first "not at all anxious" to get involved. But after hearing, on 29 June, of the British Naval

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<sup>66</sup> F.L.W. Wood, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.104.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.236.

<sup>69</sup> M. McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, pp.117-118.

<sup>70</sup> W.D. McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, pp.269-271.

commitment, he decided “on the spur of the moment” to offer New Zealand warships. On the afternoon of 29 June the offer of two frigates was announced and *HMNZS Tutira* and *HMNZS Pukaki* left for Korean waters on 3 July 1950.<sup>71</sup>

Holland’s ‘spur of the moment’ decision to deploy the two frigates to Korea indicated the United Kingdom’s influence on New Zealand’s foreign policy. A similar pattern was evident during the Suez crisis, and with the deployment of *Royalist* to the United Kingdom fleet. The deployment of *Tutira* and *Pukaki* highlighted:

- The influence that Holland had on foreign policy decision making, though he did not hold the External Affairs portfolio.
- The readiness of Holland to support the United Kingdom militarily in international crises.
- A pattern of Holland’s impulsive decision - making, which would again be evident during the Suez crisis.
- The influence of the United Kingdom on Holland’s perceptions.<sup>72</sup>

The Korean War and Chinese intervention signalled a decisive phase in New Zealand foreign policy and diplomatic relations, as the United States indicated its desire for a quick rehabilitating peace with Japan in an effort to ‘shore up’ its interests in the Pacific.<sup>73</sup> The war had made the Americans more anxious to have the public support of their allies and this for the first time gave the Dominions some bargaining power.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.273.

<sup>72</sup> Vital (1967) noted the foreign policy decisions can reflect the objectives factors, ‘such as the character and ambition of the Executive’. See D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p. 122; Holland was clearly influenced by the United Kingdom and the notion of Imperial strategy. The decision to provide military vessels to Korea (and to the Suez Canal crisis) illustrates further divergence from traditional patterns of small state behaviour, as Henderson (1991) notes how small states are less inclined to pursue military responses during international crises. Though the case of Korea could again reflect a ‘compliant’ approach in foreign policy. Unlike the Suez crisis, New Zealand operated within a United Nations framework in Korea, which provided ‘international consensus’ and ‘protection’ in the deployment of forces. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6 and 11.

<sup>73</sup> F.L.W. Wood, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.106.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.106.

The eventual signing of a treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States (ANZUS) occurred on 1 September 1956 served to allay the National Government's fears in the South Pacific.<sup>75</sup> This movement towards the United States indicated a 'flexibility' and willingness by National to examine defence options beyond the traditional framework provided by the Commonwealth. This flexibility or assertiveness led to guarantees in regional security, balanced with the ability to still support British strategy. McKinnon (1993) notes:

For Doidge and Holland and others in the Cabinet, the value of the security treaty was not so New Zealand could fight in a Pacific war, but precisely because it might not. The Second World War pattern was envisaged - New Zealand would be denuded, its forces fighting with the British in the Middle East, and the Americans, as in 1942, would make up the difference.<sup>76</sup>

The absence of the United Kingdom in the ANZUS treaty caused great debate within the Parliament and led to attacks by Labour who accused National of being anti - British and pro - American. While Holland agreed New Zealand was fostering closer relations with the United States he argued it 'was not incompatible with devotion to the mother country'.<sup>77</sup> As we will see in later Chapters, New Zealand was forced to choose between the 'dual dependency' of the United States and United Kingdom during the Suez Canal crisis.

In 1954 the question of South Pacific security was again raised as the French remained locked in conflict in Indo China and the United States believed South East Asia was sliding towards Communism<sup>78</sup>. At the Manila Conference in 1954 the United States and Britain proposed the establishment of a collective defence

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<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.251.

<sup>76</sup> M. McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, pp.121-122.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>78</sup> B. Brown, *New Zealand Foreign Policy in Retrospect: 1947-54 and in the 1960s. Papers read to the 1969 Otago University Extension Foreign Policy school*, New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Wellington, 1970, p.18.

organisation, which committed its members, including New Zealand, to resist aggression in South East Asia (SEATO).

New Zealand's membership in SEATO reflected a pattern, or willingness by the National Government to participate within a regional organisation, as a means of compensating for limited military resources, as advocated by Henderson (1991).<sup>79</sup> Having British participation in the new agreement also appeased critics of its exclusion in ANZUS in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand.<sup>80</sup> As McKinnon (1993) notes 'charges of "disloyalty" were heard less frequently from Labour after October 1954'.<sup>81</sup>

### *New Zealand and the United Nations*

During the Second World War Prime Minister Peter Fraser had remained one of the most vocal supporters for the creation of an international organisation, advocating harmony and justice between nations.<sup>82</sup> Ashby (1998) notes Fraser's foreign policy 'instincts were apparently contradictory: as a committed socialist but also thoroughly British, his beliefs and sentiments lay with both collective security and the importance of the Commonwealth'.<sup>83</sup>

However the organisation that eventually emerged from the allied planning at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 fell short of Fraser's expectations.<sup>84</sup> Carl Berendsen had expressed concern at the end of the war over small state representation and large power supremacy within the newly formed United Nations.<sup>85</sup> In correspondence with

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<sup>79</sup> J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>80</sup> F.L.W. Wood, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.110. The signing nations included America, Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand. See M. McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p.125.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Henderson (1991) recognises the importance of internationalism and morality in small state foreign policy, which serves as a means of guaranteeing their own security. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>83</sup> M. Ashby, *Peter Fraser: Master Politician*, p.178.

<sup>84</sup> M. Templeton (ed.), 'New Zealand at San Francisco' in M. Templeton, *New Zealand as an International Citizen: Fifty Years of United Nations Membership*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Wellington, 1995, p.13. Also see D. Grant, *Anti Conscriptio, Conscriptio and the Referendum*, pp.136-7.

<sup>85</sup> Berendsen, Sir Carl, Minister in Washington 1944-48, Ambassador to the United States 1948-52. See I. McGibbon, *Undiplomatic Dialogue*, pp.1-5.



Alister McIntosh, Berendsen announced 'I am quite sure that the present Dumbarton powers don't wish the smaller powers to have any effective say, and will do their utmost to prevent it'.<sup>86</sup> Fraser and Evatt<sup>87</sup> expressed concerns about any inclusion of the 'great power' veto in the Security Council. However, it soon became evident that 'given the attitude of the great powers, the opponents' faced the choice of defeating the veto and losing the Charter, or accepting one along with the other.<sup>88</sup> New Zealand and a number of other states opposing the veto, were inevitably forced to abstain from voting against its inclusion. Regardless, Fraser emphasised the importance of the organisation's creation, declaring, 'It is my deep fear that if this fleeting moment is not captured the world will again relapse into a period of disillusionment, despair and doom. This must not happen'.<sup>89</sup>

One of New Zealand's first tests within the United Nations came with the question over the partition of Palestine, as Britain (as mandatory power) had advocated its withdrawal from the Palestinian region, in a letter to the Assembly on 2 April 1947. The United Kingdom was desperate to extricate itself from the region as the situation between the Arabs and Jewish settlers worsened. On 20 April 1948 Berendsen expressed his concern over the proposed withdrawal and implementation of the partition:

The New Zealand delegation took the view that while partition with economic union was the best course to adopt, nevertheless if the Assembly assumed the right - as we believed it should - to divide that country into a Jewish state and an Arab state, the Assembly must at the same time assume the duty of ensuring an orderly and peaceful implementation of that decision.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> I. McGibbon, *Undiplomatic Dialogue* p.79.

<sup>87</sup> Evatt, Herbert, Australian Minister of External Affairs, 1941-49. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.15.

<sup>88</sup> M. Templeton, *New Zealand as an International Citizen*, p.16.

<sup>89</sup> P. Fraser, *In Time of War: Selections from the Wartime Addresses of the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser*, Government Printer, Wellington, 1946, p.38.

<sup>90</sup> Statement by Berendsen 20 April 1948, in New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs., *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.165.

New Zealand voted in favour of the UN partition resolution for Palestine on 29 November 1947.<sup>91</sup> Berendsen believed the question provided a 'test case' for the international resolve of the United Nations, questioning if the 'old problem...which the United Nations has not yet shown itself ready to face, [is] whether we can hope to preserve peace and order in the world by words alone'.<sup>92</sup> He further announced 'The future of this organisation and the future of the world may indeed depend upon the way in which it is decided. What the world needs today is not resolutions, it is resolution'.<sup>93</sup> Far from resolving the hostilities between the Palestinians and the Jewish settlers, the division of the state resulted in numerous Arab/Israeli conflicts, including in part, that of the Suez war of 1956.

Cold War rivalry increasingly dominated United Nations debate, as Soviet use of the veto became more frequent. Fraser's misgivings about the use of the veto in voting procedures were realised by the early 1950s. Brown (1993) notes that by 1954:

The veto had already been exercised by the Council 59 times, 58 by the Soviet Union and once by France. The problem was worsened because the Soviet Union had gone far beyond using a veto to protect its vital interests. In fact it wielded the veto with tactical opportunism to help its friends and allies, notably in the Middle East.<sup>94</sup>

Berendsen increasingly adopted 'anti communist' rhetoric within his speeches as fears of global conflict with the Soviet Union increased. Adding to this discontent were Russian activities in Eastern Europe, including the Czech coup (1948) and Berlin blockade. Berendsen announced in August 1947:

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<sup>91</sup> R. Macintyre, *Beyond New Zealand*, p.204.

<sup>92</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.168.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> B. Brown, 'New Zealand and the Security Council: Part I: The 1954-55 term,' in M. Templeton, *New Zealand as an International Citizen*, p.24.

The world is now unquestionably divided into two opposing groups. As I see it these groups consist on one part of those who, on the whole mean well by the world...On the other hand you have a group who quite clearly mean well for themselves, and intend to impose their way of life, not only on their own unfortunate people, but on as many others as they can get within their clutches.<sup>95</sup>

The New Zealand representative believed that the world had to stand firm against a 'group of international thugs and gangsters'<sup>96</sup> Kegley and Wittkopf (1993) note:

New Zealand's position in this conflict was unequivocal: it stood firmly in the Western camp. Soviet action in Western Europe and elsewhere had very quickly dissipated wartime good will for Russia and reminded the New Zealander's of the totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime'.<sup>97</sup>

New Zealand was elected to the United Nations Security Council in 1953, for a two - year term commencing January 1954. A number of issues arose during the nation's first term on the Council which were directly related to the United Nations partition resolution for Palestine (1947) and the subsequent failure of the ensuing peace process (1949). These problems included disputes between Israel and Syria over the distribution of waters from the river Jordan and a quarrel between Egypt and Israel over passage through Suez.<sup>98</sup> In 1951 the Security Council had passed a resolution calling on Egypt to cease interfering with vessels carrying cargoes to Israel. The Egyptians ignored this resolution because they were still technically at war with Israel, having only signed an armistice agreement in 1949 and claimed they were only acting in self - defence. Israel again complained to the Security Council in January 1954 and 'the three

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<sup>95</sup> I. McGibbon, *Undiplomatic Dialogue*, p.131.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>97</sup> C. Kegley, and E. Wittkopf, *World Politics Trend and Transformation*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., St Martins Press, New York, 1993, p.126.

<sup>98</sup> B. Brown, *New Zealand as an International Citizen*, pp.25-26. Brown notes that 'disputes between Israel and Egypt over the right of passage through the Suez Canal which

Western permanent members (Britain, France and the United States) requested New Zealand...take the lead in tabling an appropriate response'.<sup>99</sup> On 23 March 1952, Leslie Munro<sup>100</sup> tabled a resolution calling for Egypt to allow free and unimpeded access through the Canal. As a small trading nation reliant upon 'sea routes' New Zealand's position on unimpeded access through the Canal was based on a 'general principle' of free passage for maritime vessels.<sup>101</sup> New Zealand wished to preserve an imperial lifeline and secure the United Kingdom's interest in the Middle East. The Soviet Union in trying to cultivate allies and further its influence in the Middle East, vetoed the New Zealand resolution.<sup>102</sup> Egypt's seizure of the Israeli vessel *Bat Galim* later that year led to New Zealand's argument for freedom of navigation through international ways. This time the Western members were satisfied to wait for the vessels inevitable release, realising that another resolution would only result in a Soviet veto.<sup>103</sup> Increasingly New Zealand recognised that as a result of the veto and bipolar international system the United Nations was failing to provide a forum by which international conflict could be resolved and collective security guaranteed. As a non - permanent member of the Security Council, New Zealand's negative opinion of the Egyptians was further entrenched by Cairo's anti - British policies. It is important to recognise this attitude when evaluating New Zealand's

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continued in 1954 were a precursor of the wider disputes which led to the Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956'.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp.25-26.

<sup>100</sup> Munro had replaced Berendsen as New Zealand's permanent representative to the United States and United Nations in 1952 (after being appointed in 1951). See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.86.

<sup>101</sup> R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis of 1956: Reappraisal*, An unpublished paper presented at the Australasian Middle East studies Association conference, Footscray institute of Technology, Victoria, Australia, 19-20 August 1998, p.3, as Macintyre notes that Macdonald met with an Israeli Minister, M Nurock, who 'suggested that New Zealand should participate in counter measures to the Arab programme of economic blockade'.

<sup>102</sup> Statement by Munro 23 March, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol. IV, No.3, March 1954, Department of External Affairs, Wellington, 1954, pp.16-22. Also see B. Brown, *New Zealand as an International Citizen*, p.27.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

response to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956.<sup>104</sup>

*New Zealand and the Commonwealth .*

On 2 November 1950 Holland emphasised the importance of Britain and America in New Zealand foreign policy:

I have always been proud to belong to what I am happy to call the British Empire, the greatest power for good that the world has ever known.

While we express pride in our British citizenship and our association in the Empire, we are able to recognise and are proud to claim the friendship of our great ally, the United States of America. Remember that in the last war it was Great Britain which held the fort for the first two years until other people got ready. Today the position is exactly reversed, and the United Kingdom, because of sacrifices in those two wars is unprepared. Today the United States is holding the fort, and we pay her tribute.<sup>105</sup>

The formulation of ANZUS (1951) served to guarantee New Zealand's regional security, while allowing the nation's continued undertaking to Commonwealth defence especially in the Middle East. In theory this sentiment appeared fine, but the question remained where would New Zealand stand if a rift occurred between the United Kingdom and United States, especially during a time of international crisis. This proposition shall be further discussed later, in relation to New Zealand and the 1956 Suez Canal crisis.

Holland's decision to enter defence arrangements with the Americans in 1951, which excluded the United Kingdom illustrated:

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<sup>104</sup> This disillusionment resulted in less emphasis being placed upon notions of internationalism and collective security by the 1950s National Government, which seems to run counter to East and Henderson's characteristics of small state behaviour. However while less emphasis was being placed on an internationalism, New Zealand participation in regional organisations were growing. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6. Templeton notes how a number of key members of the 1949 National Government had formulated negative opinions of the Arab people, and subsequently 'believed that being pushed around by the "Gypos" was not on'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, pp.2-3; also see R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis of 1956*, p.9.

- An adoption of an assertive foreign policy.
- Diversification and flexibility of foreign policy (that was needed during the Suez crisis).
- An apparent weakening of imperial consensus, recognition that American power in the Pacific was dominant.

On 20 October 1954 the direction of Commonwealth defence also shifted towards regional issues and the Pacific. The United Kingdom recommended New Zealand should plan to make a major contribution to South East Asia, emphasising 'that Malaya was now their front line of defence'.<sup>106</sup> The British were determined to hold Malaya at the Songkha line with aid from New Zealand and Australia, and believed that the formation of a Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve would provide an important deterrent.<sup>107</sup>

On 19 October, the day before New Zealand had been instructed to change its Commonwealth defence focus, the United Kingdom signed a treaty with the Egyptians that provided for the withdrawal of all British troops from the Canal region by June 1956.<sup>108</sup> This new agreement stipulated that the Suez Canal base would be shared between the Egyptians and United Kingdom for the next seven years and be maintained by British civilians in case of attack from outside power (excluding Israel), thought most likely to be

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<sup>105</sup> Statement by Holland 2 November, 1950, in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Policy*, p.240.

<sup>106</sup> W.D. McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, p.389.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.389-390. McIntyre also notes 'The reserve would also be available for SEATO purposes. The Joint Planners suggested that the Naval forces could consist of the British Far East Fleet, supplemented by an Australian destroyer or frigate and a New Zealand frigate. New Zealand might re-deploy its ground attack squadron from the Middle East and send half squadrons of transport and reconnaissance planes'; See *Ibid.*, p.90.

It also was felt that the strategic importance of the Suez Canal had diminished as a result of its vulnerability to nuclear attack. See I. McGibbon, *New Zealand in World Affairs*, p.167.

<sup>108</sup> A. Nutting, *Nasser*, Constable and Company, London, 1972, p.70. Nutting (1970) notes relations between Egypt and the United Kingdom were quite cordial during this period, though began to decline in 1955 with the establishment of the pro - Western Baghdad Pact (1955). Nasser ( as a member of the Non aligned movement) viewed the new Pact as a threat to his leadership in the Arab world, and believed that it could tie Iraq to the Western alliance and NATO, thereby shifting the centre of political gravity away from Cairo to Baghdad. See A. Nutting *Nasser*, p.77.

the Soviet Union. New Zealand's responded coolly to the British initiative, with Holland regarding the British withdrawal from the region highly 'unpalatable' and a possible risk to British, and indirectly New Zealand's economic well being.<sup>109</sup> Clearly New Zealand's new commitment to South East Asia did not end the Government's preoccupation with Middle East defence, as McIntosh suggested to Corner in September 1954:

Personally, I don't see why we should not do both: a Division earmarked for Middle East to be ready in X number of days in the event of global war and augmented Brigade Group to be earmarked for holding operations in South East Asia, probably to reinforce a Battalion which will in the meanwhile be formed and located in the strategic reserve area.<sup>110</sup>

In 1955 the Government debated the possibility of conflict with China, with New Zealand officials believing further war in Asia, especially as a result of Korea was just as likely as hostilities with the Soviet Union. On 24 March 1955 Holland announced the increased focus on regional defence:

I suggested that it did not seem realistic that we should have our defence commitments in the Middle East when the problems of the area in whose defence we would be likely to be employed were so much nearer to our own back door... We are now being asked to consider whether we should switch our defence commitments from the Middle East.

It is almost with a feeling of regret that we leave our old battlegrounds in France and North Africa.

We were asked to revise our programme and to switch our existing military commitments from the Middle East to the Pacific. By this means we can shorten our communication lines, and from every point of view the change is to be commended. I am free to say that that Government will cancel the Middle East commitments so far as they concern us, and will then ask if we will agree to shift our commitments to the Pacific area. I have

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<sup>109</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.31. The importance of maintaining an economically healthy United Kingdom was of primary concern to New Zealand. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.172.

recommended to the Government that that course be adopted....<sup>111</sup>

By 1955 the direction of New Zealand foreign policy had shifted markedly towards South East Asia and Pacific regionalism, with New Zealand's membership of ANZUS and SEATO and participation in the Commonwealth structure in Malaya. However foreign policy remained desirous of maintaining a strong Commonwealth and United Kingdom. By providing international markets for New Zealand exports, Britain ensured the nation's 'economic wellbeing', while the concept of 'Commonwealth defence' in part provided for its security.<sup>112</sup> Under the policies of Peter Fraser (1940 - 49) greater emphasis was given towards Internationalism and the United Nations in the post war world. But this aside, New Zealand's support of Britain always remained. The Cold War and election of National in 1949 led to an increased commitment to regional issues and bilateral defence relations especially with the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. The formulation of ANZUS (1951), while providing the means by which to assure New Zealand's regional security also illustrated the 'flexible' and 'assertive' nature of the National Government in seeking security arrangements beyond the United Kingdom. During the 1950s the notion of internationalism waned as the Cold War and use of the veto paralyzed the United Nations and dominated the Security Council. New Zealand's membership of the Security Council (1954 - 1955) clearly illustrated the nature of superpower rivalry and the nationalistic tendencies of Egypt.

Britain's 'influence' on New Zealand foreign policy was plainly evident with Holland's 'spur of the moment' decision to provide frigates to Korea, after learning of Britain's decision to

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<sup>111</sup> Statement by Holland 24 March 1955, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign Affairs*, pp.393-394.



provide forces. By the middle of 1950 the focus of New Zealand's defence policy was shifting from the Middle East to South East Asia, and though Holland expressed his regret at leaving the 'Northern Hemisphere theatre', this departure from the Middle East would be short - lived.

As we have seen New Zealand's foreign policy was seemingly limited in focus and generally dependant upon the United Kingdom and United States. This activity, as noted in the introduction conforms to the pattern of small state behaviour, where a smaller nation remains reliant upon a larger ally for trade and security. New Zealand's foreign policy also indicated a growing assertiveness since the 1930s (especially under Fraser 1940 - 49) with the support of international organisations like the United Nations and adherence to international convention. The election of National in 1949 led to a broadening of defence and foreign policies to include the United States (i.e. 'dual dependency'), however, traditional links and identification with the United Kingdom remained.

In terms of traditional small state theory, New Zealand could be viewed:

1. As a responsible member of the international community, via its membership of the United Nations.
2. As having high level of economic dependency, especially towards the United Kingdom.
3. As being alliance prone, with membership in ANZUS, SEATO, Commonwealth.
4. As being generally hawkish in nature in the protection of national interests and support of major allies.

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<sup>112</sup> See East (1978) and Henderson (1991) Characteristics of Small State Foreign Policy in J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6; Support of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth was also regarded as a good vote catcher at general elections.

In the next Chapter we will examine the application of these characteristics to New Zealand in its handling of the Suez crisis (1956).

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## Chapter Two

### *Nationalisation, The New Zealand Reaction and the First London Conference - 26 July - 10 September*

#### ***Divided we stand!***

The sharp and hostile response of New Zealand Prime Minister Sidney Holland<sup>113</sup> to President Nasser's<sup>114</sup> nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956 characterised the nation's support for the United Kingdom during the crisis.<sup>115</sup> His statement of 'unconditional support' proved an impediment to the development of effective policy as the crisis worsened, as it:

1. Limited flexibility of defence and foreign policy.
2. Explicitly/Implicitly tied New Zealand to British objectives.
3. Undermined viable policy alternatives.

New Zealand's solidarity towards the United Kingdom stemmed from Holland's desire to protect the nation's main international trading partner. Such unity was based on a popular assumption at the time that what was good for Britain was good for New Zealand and, was a manifestation of the high level of 'economic dependency' of New Zealand on the United Kingdom.<sup>116</sup> The Prime Minister was even so bold as to assure Britain that where she went on the 'Suez problem

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<sup>113</sup> Prime Minister, Sir Sidney George (1893-1961), *National politician*, leader of the opposition 1940-49, Prime Minister 1949-57. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.16.

<sup>114</sup> President Nasser, Gamal Abdel (1918-70), led Egyptian revolution of 1952 which led to abdication of King Farouk, head of state from 1954, President of Egypt, 1956-70. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.19.

<sup>115</sup> Holland's response was also no doubt influenced by New Zealand's first term on the United Nations Security Council 1954-1955, where the issue of Israeli passage through the Canal was debated. This situation resulted in a diplomatic intervention by the Soviet Union, via the use of the veto. See previous Chapter, or B. Brown, *New Zealand as an International Citizen*, pp.25-26.

<sup>116</sup> See appendices for trade figures between New Zealand and the United Kingdom during the 1950s. As mentioned in earlier sections, economic dependency is a major influence, and characteristic of small states. See Henderson (1991), Thakur (1991), Vital (1967).

New Zealand will be right alongside her'.<sup>117</sup> The shared cultural identity of the two nations also figured markedly in the Government's reaction, with the country having fought beside the United Kingdom in two World Wars within forty years. Holland's reaction to the nationalisation indicated that the state was prepared to follow Britain 'wherever she may go' - and this by implication might include the use of force. Another important factor on the formulation of Suez policy came with the decision to allow the cruiser *HMNZS Royalist* to remain with the British Mediterranean fleet, which was conducting exercises off Cyprus during the crisis.<sup>118</sup> The aim of this Chapter is to examine the consequences of a 'compliant'<sup>119</sup> foreign policy in the context of New Zealand's unfolding relations with the United Kingdom (c. July 1956.).

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<sup>117</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debate* Vol.309, 7 August -12 September 1956, RE Owen Government Printers, Wellington, p.960.

<sup>118</sup> See appendices photograph, *HMNZS Royalist* entering Malta, July 1956.

<sup>119</sup> Compliant, definition, yielding or lacking in independent judgement and initiative, explicit/implicit renunciation of freedom of choice dependent. See introduction.

### *Nationalisation !*

President Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal<sup>120</sup> on 26 July 1956 was in response to American and British Governments pulling investment out of the development of the high dam at Aswan.<sup>121</sup> This action sent immediate shock waves through the Western World, with France and Britain, the major shareholders in the Suez Canal company responding to the situation with the greatest of horror.<sup>122</sup> In contrast the nationalisation was viewed by a number of Third World non-aligned states, especially India as a challenge to the remnants and trappings of Colonialism.<sup>123</sup>

The British Conservative Prime Minister, Anthony Eden<sup>124</sup> expressed his outrage at the Egyptian act in a communiqué to Sidney Holland on 28 July. 'We cannot allow him to get away with this ...and we must take a firm stand. If we do not, oil supplies of the free world will be at his mercy and Commonwealth communications and trade will be gravely jeopardized'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> The Suez Canal is about 161 kilometres long and connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Suez and provides the quickest route from Britain to Australia and India. The French engineer Ferdinand De Lesseps constructed the Canal in 1869. See R. Macintyre, *Palestine-Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, Macmillan, Auckland, 1997, p.68.

<sup>121</sup> Macintyre (1997) notes how the United States and Britain, cancelled the loans to punish Nasser for Egypt's movement towards the Soviet Union and China. There has also been speculation that the American's pulled out because of lobbying from grain growers in the United States, prior to the 1956 presidential election. See R. Macintyre, *Palestine-Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, p.67; A. Eden, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden: Full Circle*, Cassell, London, 1960, pp.420-421.

<sup>122</sup> The British Parliament adopted an immediate bipartisan stand to the nationalisation, with the Opposition Labour leader Gaitskell condemning Nasser in the House of Commons. Statements that Nasser was another Hitler, and a pocket dictator were also made. See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, Constable, London, 1967, p.47. The French Government likened the seizure of the Canal to that of the Rhineland by Hitler. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-57*, Volume XVI, Suez Crisis July 26-December 31 1956, United States Government Printing Office, 1990. Telegram from the Embassy in France to Department of State *Paris July 27, 1956, 5pm*, pp.7-8.

<sup>123</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.54.

<sup>124</sup> Prime Minister Eden, Sir (Robert) Anthony (1897-1977): *Conservative Politician*, secretary of state for foreign affairs 1935-55, Prime Minister 1955-57. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.15.

<sup>125</sup> Filemore 6-3033 /JO.7-9422. Message from Eden to Holland July 28, 1956. Eden (1960) believed that Nasser was undermining British interests in the Middle East. See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.421.

In consultation with France and the United States, Eden suggested that the Canal should be placed under an international authority.<sup>126</sup> He left no doubt that this would require ‘political pressure’ on Egypt, if this failed, force might have to be used to make Nasser acquiesce.<sup>127</sup> Unbeknown to Holland, and of course other Commonwealth leaders, Eden had already started discussions with his advisers on deposing the Egyptian leader by force.<sup>128</sup> William Clark, Eden’s private secretary, noted that the Prime Minister ‘made it absolutely clear that military action would have to be taken and that Nasser would have to go. Nasser could not be allowed, In Eden’s phrase, “to have his hand on our windpipe”’.<sup>129</sup>

### *New Zealand’s Response*

Holland replied immediately to Eden’s message on 28 July 1956, while in transit in San Francisco.<sup>130</sup> Subsequently this message was to become one of the major handicaps to New Zealand’s diplomatic posturing as the crisis developed and worsened. The Prime Minister hastily announced his ‘regret’ that the crisis should have ever arisen and suggested New Zealand would support any measures the United Kingdom saw fit with regards to the nationalisation: ‘You may be assured that New Zealand will as always support any steps which the United Kingdom will feel obliged to take to ensure that vital British rights are fully protected’.<sup>131</sup> The Prime Minister’s effusive response reflected:

- A limited perception about the intensity of the crisis.

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<sup>126</sup> See appendices.

<sup>127</sup> Filemore 6-3033/JO.7-9422.

<sup>128</sup> On 30 July 1956 Eden ordered a ban on the export of all further war material to Egypt, four days later, 20 000 British army reservists had been called up and Naval and air reinforcements had been sent to the East Mediterranean. See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.48.

<sup>129</sup> A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, ‘Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process’, *Journal of Strategic Studies 11, Volume 12*, 1988, p.399.

<sup>130</sup> Holland was returning from the (July) Prime Ministers Conference in London, accompanied by the Secretary for External Affairs Alister McIntosh. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, 1994, p.55.

<sup>131</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence between Holland and Eden, 28 July 1956.

- An implicit faith that Eden would bring the developing crisis quickly under control.<sup>132</sup>
- That New Zealand's integrity would not be compromised by following the United Kingdom unconditionally.

Holland's declaration of support effectively restricted subsequent diplomatic posturing or manoeuvring that would be required by New Zealand foreign affairs officials, like Alister McIntosh as the situation deteriorated. Holland's declaration appeared to be 'off the cuff' and was made without consultation with his Cabinet colleagues. He failed to realise that his comments had committed New Zealand unwittingly to a course of action where the use of force was the most likely option. This statement which precluded Parliamentary consultation on the implications of the nationalisation, had effectively placed Wellington in a position whereby Eden could maintain political pressure on New Zealand to support action against Egypt. Holland had committed New Zealand to British policy, without being fully aware of its political implications. In a message to the Minister of External Affairs on 31 July, the New Zealand High Commissioner to London, Clifton Webb<sup>133</sup> presented the British view of the crisis, confirming it was Eden's desire that the Canal should come under some international control. When questioned on how this goal would be achieved, Webb believed the British Prime Minister gave an 'evasive and unconvincing answer'.<sup>134</sup>

Lord Home called McCarthy and Frank [Corner] down to his office again to let them know in the strictest secrecy that Eden was not prepared to speak freely in the presence of whole group but that he wanted Australia and ourselves to know that the

<sup>132</sup> Thakur (1991) notes the importance of 'perception' in large state/ small state relations. See R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, pp.276-77; D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.118.

<sup>133</sup> Webb, Sir (Thomas) Clifton (1889-1962): *Politician and diplomat*, Minister of external affairs 1951-54, High Commissioner in London, 1954-58. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.23.

<sup>134</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence between Webb and Macdonald, 31 July 1956.

... United Kingdom intended to use force if necessary to bring about internationalisation of the Canal.<sup>135</sup>

While applauding the stand that the United Kingdom was taking against Nasser, Webb prudently expressed some concerns:

Their desire not to take it lying down from this power drunk bounder is very understandable and let us hope that they have not committed themselves to something which, like the call to 'massive retaliation' at the time of Dien Bien Phu cannot be carried out - either because of lack of support from USA and /or France or even from their own public here.<sup>136</sup>

This correspondence indicates that New Zealand was aware of the possibility that the United Kingdom might use force against Egypt. The uncertainty that remained for the Government was what role Eden would expect New Zealand to take within the unfolding crisis and whether the United States would also support any military action taken against Nasser?

Webb's correspondence failed to mention the potential repercussions if Holland did support any aggression against Nasser outside a United Nations framework. He realised, however, the importance of not siding with the British in any unfavourable international light 'I am sure that you will all agree with what is stated in Totara's [Prime Minister] telegram No.215 that the West must not allow itself to be put in the wrong in the eyes of world opinion'.<sup>137</sup> Quoting *The Times* (London), Webb illustrated the example of the Suez group (or 'Gunboat Tories') that were exercising influence over the British Government: 'Mr. Julian Amery MP, argues that Nasser must be compelled - if necessary by force, and if necessary by Britain alone - to revoke his nationalisation decree'.<sup>138</sup> He believed that the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence between Webb and Macdonald, 31 July, 1956.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. This sentiment was further expressed by Harold MacMillan then Chancellor of the Exchequer whom stated, 'If we [Britain] should be destroyed by Russian bombs now that would be better than to be reduced to impotence by the disintegration of its entire position



United Kingdom would continue with diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis as Eden had announced his intention of discussing the establishment of an authority governing the use of the Canal at a forthcoming Conference in London.<sup>139</sup> But he thought the only way to implement such an arrangement would be through the use of military force. Webb also noted Washington's views on the nationalisation of the Canal:

I see that the *New York Times* comment is that 'no sagacious or right thinking person expects for one moment that Britain, France and the U.S are sitting down in London to talk about the possibility of making war upon Egypt. As one would expect, this fairly reflects American opinion, it seems clear that, if military action were taken, Britain would have to 'go it alone', or perhaps with only French assistance (of doubtful value).<sup>140</sup>

The majority of the New Zealand Parliament appeared to, back Holland's opposition to the nationalisation of the Canal and support the United Kingdom.<sup>141</sup> This position reflected Parliament's desire to back the United Kingdom during times of crisis, such as the First and Second World War and a realisation of the important role that the United Kingdom played in receiving the nation's exports. On 2 August Deputy Prime Minister Keith Holyoake illustrated the threat the nationalisation of a Canal posed to New Zealand's economic interests:<sup>142</sup>

If the United Kingdom were cut off from its oil supplies, to name only one of the important commodities that pass through

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abroad'. Memorandum of conversation London 1 August 1956, J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.108.

<sup>139</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.63.

<sup>140</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence between Webb and Macdonald, 31 July 1956. Nutting suggested however that when Dulles addressed the House of Commons on 1 August, he did mention 'the possibility of using force, although only in the very last resort and after all other methods had failed'. See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.52.

<sup>141</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.309, 7 August- 12 September 1956, p.960.

<sup>142</sup> Holyoake's statement regarding trade through Suez was distorted as no mention was made of the actual percentage or tonnage of goods passing through the canal. Templeton states that in the nine months to June 1956, there were twelve direct sailings from New Zealand through Suez worth £125,000. M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.59.

the Canal, we in New Zealand could, within a short time, feel the effects ourselves, for the tankers which now supply New Zealand might have to be diverted to meet an emergency situation.<sup>143</sup>

Holyoake's statement illustrated the relatively high degree of economic dependency that New Zealand had with United Kingdom during the 1950s<sup>144</sup> and the perceived threat that Nasser was posing indirectly to the nation's prosperity. Most politicians averred that Nasser was a potential threat to New Zealand's prosperity.

Far from using the nationalisation as a means of attacking the Government, the Labour party adopted a bipartisan approach to the situation.<sup>145</sup> Walter Nash<sup>146</sup> initially acknowledged the right of the Egyptian Government in nationalising the Canal, stating logically it was in Nasser's interests to keep the waterway open and running as efficiently as possible if Egypt were to finance the construction of the Aswan dam.<sup>147</sup> Even so on 7 August he denounced Nasser's act as immoral on the evidence of agreements, treaties and conventions pertaining to Suez. He declared that the 'seizure of the Canal was wrong and that [he hoped] it would be put right'.<sup>148</sup>

The bipartisan stand adopted by Labour and National reflected the overriding sentiment held by the New Zealand population towards the United Kingdom. This support was due to the shared cultural and historical ties between the two nations, and the important link that the United Kingdom provided in terms of trade. Labour's approach also served to provide added pressure to the National Government to take a

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<sup>143</sup>PM 217 1/6. Press statement by Holyoake, 2 August 1956.

<sup>144</sup> See appendices for trade figures.

<sup>145</sup> Nash's position on the nationalisation did infuriate a number of more 'radical Labour MPs' and was more moderate than his Labour counterparts in Australia and Britain. See K. Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, John McIndoe Ltd., Dunedin, 1976, p.298.

<sup>146</sup> Nash, Walter (1882-1968), Deputy Prime Minister 1940-9, Leader of the Opposition 1951-57. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.19.

<sup>147</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.309, 7 August –12 September 1956, p.894 and 902. The legality of the nationalisation was also noted by an Auckland University law Professor in *The Press* Thursday August 2, 1956.

<sup>148</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.309, 7 August –12 September 1956, p.902; The British Labour party leader, Hugh Gaitskell also announced that Labour deplored the high handed step taken by Nasser. See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.425.

strong ‘loyalist’ stand along side Britain or risk being attacked within Parliament.<sup>149</sup> The Government’s invitation to the first London Conference (16 August) was rather questionable, as the majority of the country’s trade passed via the Panama Canal rather than through the Suez Canal.<sup>150</sup> It was evident to Eden, however that he could rely on New Zealand Government’s support at the Conference, even though:

- The majority of New Zealand’s trade passed through the Panama Canal, less than 5% went through Suez.
- New Zealand was not a signatory to the Constantinople Convention of 1888;<sup>151</sup> but,
- The Government was a close ally to that of Britain and had already indicated its bias towards Eden, before the Conference had commenced.<sup>152</sup>

Conversely Australia’s participation at the Conference was assured<sup>153</sup> being the largest trader east of Suez with export and import trade through the Canal exceeding £ 900 million a year.<sup>154</sup> The invitation to Holland asserted:

The communiqué reflects the decided view of all of us that in future the Canal must be put under an international authority. Your support for this principle and for the convening of the

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<sup>149</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.309, 7 August –12 September 1956, p.960. If National had not come out strongly in support of the United Kingdom, Holland would have been vulnerable to attack on the grounds of cultural identity, support in two World Wars, Cold War alignment and trade dependency.

<sup>150</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.83.

<sup>151</sup> See appendices for Convention.

<sup>152</sup> New Zealand’s acceptance of the invitation to the first London Conference did illustrate a willingness to participate within international organisations, which is recognised as traditional patterns of small state behaviour, as espoused by East and Henderson. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>153</sup> Eden and Menzies had been friends since 1935 and upon arriving in London on 10 August Menzies ‘had said Nasser was wrong from beginning to end and must be resisted’. See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, McGraw Hill Book Company, New York, 1969, p.402.

<sup>154</sup> PM 217 1/6. Message to McIntosh from NZHC Canberra, 6 August 1956.

Conference which it is proposed to call would be the greatest help and value and I much hope that you will be able to give it.<sup>155</sup>

The Prime Minister accepted the invitation on August 3, speculating the forum would:

Consider the implications of the action taken by the Government of Egypt and to formulate some satisfactory system of international control which will remove the dangers of the present situation, and provide a sound basis for the free operation of the Canal such as existed before the nationalisation of the Suez Canal company.<sup>156</sup>

Holland's 'unconditional declaration' of support for Britain indicated a divergence from the United States and Australia. Leslie Munro, New Zealand's permanent representative to the United Nations informed Holland on 4 August that Menzies was 'unimpressed by British precautionary measures' and more importantly 'that he did not intend to back the United Kingdom in the use of force'.<sup>157</sup> Munro also illustrated the possible 'divisions' between the United States and Britain if the Conference failed.<sup>158</sup>

Wellington was now aware of the 'possible' diplomatic damage to relations with the United States, and especially ANZUS in siding with the United Kingdom. Holland faced the realisation that two major allies, Australia and America while opposed to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal were publicly rejecting any support of force by the British.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington 3 August 1956 (not referenced)

<sup>156</sup> *New Zealand to Attend: Minister Likely to be sent*, The Press, August 4, 1956, p.11.

<sup>157</sup> PM 217 1/6. Summary for Holland of telegram 231 from Washington, 6 August, 1956. Menzies may have cautiously realised the political implications of supporting Eden in the use of force could have unduly affected Australian relations with America. Besides Menzies had acknowledged that Australian defence concerns now lay in South East Asia.

<sup>158</sup> PM 217 1/6. Summary for Holland of telegram 233 from Washington, 6 August, 1956.

<sup>159</sup> Menzies was concerned that advocating force would isolate the Asian commonwealth states prior to the first Conference, Dulles argued so long as there was no interference with navigation, there should be no military intervention. See K. Kyle, *Suez*, St Martins Press, New York, 1991, p.154.

On 4 August the British High Commissioner, Scoones<sup>160</sup> approached Holland with a request from Eden concerning New Zealand's recently purchased cruiser *HMNZS Royalist*, which was undertaking exercises in the Mediterranean.<sup>161</sup> The British Prime Minister questioned whether the New Zealand cruiser could remain with the 'fleet in the event that Naval operations became necessary'. Holland gave an 'affirmative answer in principle'.<sup>162</sup> Scoones informed Eden of the decision in a rather mysterious fashion:

Mr. Holland has authorised me to say that you may proceed on the assumption mentioned in paragraph 3 of your No.653. He is most anxious that this offer should not become known on any account and if challenged he intends to deny it. He will not be sending any separate message to Prime Minister.<sup>163</sup>

With the provision of the *Royalist* to the Mediterranean fleet, it appeared Holland had provided outward tangible proof to the United Kingdom of New Zealand's position towards the crisis, backing up his rhetoric with a military vessel. This message seems to have indicated the 'realisation' by Holland of the 'perils' in deploying *Royalist* to the British Mediterranean fleet. These perils, most probably highlighted to Holland by External Affairs officials, may have included:

1. New Zealand's participation in unsanctioned aggression.
2. The ship being sunk in hostilities.
3. Diplomatic damage via the Americans and ANZUS , coloured Commonwealth and United Nations.

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<sup>160</sup> Scoones, General Sir Geoffrey, (1893- 1975), British High Commissioner to New Zealand (UKHC), 1953-57. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.21.

<sup>161</sup> *Royalist* had been purchased from the United Kingdom the month before. A full account of the *Royalist's* Involvement shall follow in Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>162</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.67.

<sup>163</sup> PRO: PREM. 11/1508 Telegram from UKHC Wellington to Commonwealth Relations Office, 6 August 1956. Holland's hesitation and secrecy may have reflected advice from McIntosh on the perils of deploying *Royalist*, to the British Mediterranean fleet. Holland may have also not wished to prejudice New Zealand's stand of neutrality in the wider Arab Israeli conflict.

4. Domestic problems, in providing a capital ship to a potential warzone, without recalling Parliament for debate.

On 7 August Holland expressed his hope that the London Conference would create a situation whereby the interests of both the 'international community' and Egypt would be guaranteed under the auspices of an 'international regime'.<sup>164</sup> While desiring such a negotiated outcome, he indicated the need for more 'consultation' between Britain and New Zealand should the Conference fail:

We must reckon with the possibility that Egypt will not attend or will reject the Conference's recommendations. The need, in that event, for alternative courses of action is obvious. The possible use of force has been mentioned and there have been press and radio references to precautionary measures taken by the United Kingdom and French Governments. In the absence of more precise information upon the nature of the joint action apparently contemplated by the United Kingdom and France, and upon the ends towards which it would be directed, my Cabinet colleagues and I have difficulty in assessing fully the implications of failure of the Conference.... I should be grateful, therefore, for any further information you may be able to give which would throw light upon decisions the New Zealand Government might ultimately be obliged to make.<sup>165</sup>

Holland's communiqué reflected the Prime Minister's concern at the inadequate levels of consultation between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The report, concerning the possible use of force by Eden against Nasser obviously alarmed Holland who had already made a number of speeches in support of the United Kingdom and deployed *Royalist* to the Mediterranean fleet. Eden's reply on 9 August expressed gratitude in New Zealand's decision to attend, and support the creation of an authority to govern the use of the Canal.<sup>166</sup> The British Prime Minister stated:

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<sup>164</sup> PM 217 1/6. Message from Holland to Eden, 7 August 1956.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

We must therefore prepare to meet the eventuality that Nasser will refuse to accept the outcome of the Conference or that he takes some further action against us. It is in these circumstances that I have felt that it would be prudent for us in the United Kingdom to take certain military precautions.

At this first stage of our thinking the only request we have to make of you is the one, to which you have already agreed so helpfully, that we should be able to proceed for planning purposes on the assumption that we could use the R.N.Z.N cruiser *Royalist*. I am deeply grateful for your ready response on this... when we have further progress with our tentative plans I will send you a further message.<sup>167</sup>

On 6 August, Holland agreed that *Royalist* 'could remain with the British fleet' if Naval operations became necessary. Now three days later, Eden had informed New Zealand that its cruiser was being incorporated into British Naval planning purposes. Holland had been 'generous' both in the deployment of the cruiser and his rhetoric supportive of the United Kingdom, yet Eden, was not prepared to fully inform New Zealand of his intentions and plans for Nasser and the Canal. This lack of dialogue between the two nations further 'compromised' New Zealand's position in the great power/small power relationship.<sup>168</sup> Munro expressed concerns to McIntosh over the decision to allow the *Royalist* to remain with the British fleet and stated how a Washington newspaper had already run an article on the provision of the vessel to the Mediterranean. He announced 'the stand you have taken is [a] most important one, implying as it does that we will support Britain if under certain circumstances she uses force'.<sup>169</sup>

Munro, who was in constant touch with American officials,

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<sup>166</sup> Document not referenced Message from Eden to Holland, 9 August 1956.

<sup>167</sup> Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 9 August 1956. Eden commissioned a review of Commonwealth Governments prior to the London Conference. It was believed 'Of all Commonwealth countries New Zealand is the most likely to support us, over military action. But even she may hesitate if the United States and Australia both hang back. To induce New Zealand to contribute to military operation it would be necessary to know something of the plan envisaged' see PRO: PREM.1094 172037, 9 August 1956. Nasser had been infuriated by Eden's declaring 'in so many words that he would never negotiate with Egypt's president'. See A. Nutting, *Nasser*, p.152.

<sup>168</sup> See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.11; R. Thakur, *The Elusive Essence of Size*, pp.276-277; D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.30; New Zealand was now in an inferior position to the United Kingdom in terms of communication and information.

recognised the danger of Holland's unconditional public support for the United Kingdom and expressed anxiety over the lack of information between Wellington and Washington:

In my position here you will agree that I should be kept fully informed, especially as the United States holds a position of such crucial significance. I am most anxious to ensure that press telegrams are sent to me at once of speeches such as your last, and that policy developments by the Government in this vital matter are communicated to me promptly.<sup>170</sup>

He informed McIntosh that Dulles regarded the Suez crisis as the 'gravest incident since the Second World War' and 'while the United Kingdom and France had agreed to the convening of the Conference they were in no mood to allow Nasser to get away with any favourable settlement'.<sup>171</sup> Munro believed Menzies:

Considered that the United States was avoiding any form of approval of the use of force. He thought the Administration had very strong views about what Nasser had done, and that they would cooperate in putting pressure on him both during and after the Conference. But actual armed participation could, he thought, be fairly completely discounted.<sup>172</sup>

Holland now found himself in an extremely awkward position whereby:

- He had made a strong (perhaps - impulsive) initial commitment to Britain regarding the nationalisation.<sup>173</sup>
- Australia and the United States had openly questioned the use of force against Nasser.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> PM 217 1/6. Message from Munro to McIntosh, 7 August 1956.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> As Templeton suggests 'Holland had gone out on a limb in his impulsive response to Eden's first message'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.66.

<sup>174</sup> Eisenhower had not ruled out the use of force entirely at this stage (especially if the Soviets had become involved), but only after 'every peaceful means of resolving the



- The *Royalist* was to remain with the British fleet on station in the Mediterranean.

On 9 August Holland reaffirmed his commitment to Britain, further emphasising the ‘vulnerability’ of the nation to the nationalisation of the Canal:

Britain could count on New Zealand standing by her through thick and thin. I believe that is the mood of the people of New Zealand. As I see it, the issue on the Suez Canal is whether or not we are going to have an international waterway of vital importance to many nations under the control of one nation. Where she is in difficulty we are in difficulty, and the western world is to be in difficulty if Britain is not to have a free flow of her ships through this vital waterway.<sup>175</sup>

Holland’s desire to maintain maximum solidarity with the United Kingdom was making it increasingly difficult for New Zealand to adopt any other diplomatic alternatives to the crisis. The Prime Minister was betting on the fact that Nasser would inevitably buckle against British pressure and renounce his control of the Canal. If however, Egypt remained firm over the nationalisation, New Zealand was increasingly committing itself to a course of action which could include the use of force.

On 10 August McIntosh summarised the ‘position of the Government’ in regards to the nationalisation of the Canal, which was to provide the basis of New Zealand’s contention at the London Conference:

- New Zealand was not prepared to see the Canal under the sole control of Egypt’ deeming that it ‘should be under international control.

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difficulty had previously been exhausted’. See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, pp.376-7.

- Opposition to the imposition of restrictions on shipping and supported the principle of freedom of passage and recognition of international waterways.
- Support for the action of the United Kingdom, United States and France in calling a Conference to discuss the question of the Canal.
- That the Conference's aim should be the creation of an equitable situation for both the international community and Egypt.
- Recognition of the grave consequences should the Conference fail.
- Unconditional Prime Ministerial support for the United Kingdom.
- Need for clarification, with regards to any joint action contemplated by the United Kingdom and France.<sup>176</sup>

On 11 August External Affairs Minister Tom Macdonald, who had been chosen to represent New Zealand at the Conference asserted that 'the interests of all countries concerned would be best served by the establishment of an international regime for the Suez Canal'.<sup>177</sup> He also declared:

The Government has made it very clear that it views with the greatest of concern Colonel Nasser's high handed repudiation of the agreement with the Suez Canal. The manner in which this arbitrary action was taken and the selfish reasons which prompted it augur ill for the future of the Canal.<sup>178</sup>

New Zealand was governed at the London Conference by a desire to support the United Kingdom and not allow Nasser to retain exclusive

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<sup>175</sup> PM 217 1/6. Press Statement by Holland. He also stated 'I don't think that it is unfair to anybody to say that there are some nations in the world that appreciate a show of strength' 9 August 1956.

<sup>176</sup> PM 217 1/6. Telegram from McIntosh to London, Washington, Canberra and others, 10 August 1956.

<sup>177</sup> PM 217 1/6. Department of External Affairs Press Statement, 11 August 1956.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

control of the Canal.<sup>179</sup> Holland still craved more information regarding possible British intentions should the Conference fail<sup>180</sup> especially now as New Zealand had committed a Naval vessel to a possibly hostile Mediterranean fleet. As we will see the deployment of *Royalist*, was to become a further impediment to New Zealand policy.

### ***The First London Conference.***

The first London Conference (16 - 22 August) was composed mainly of Commonwealth, NATO and SEATO members in an effort to strengthen Eden's case against Nasser.<sup>181</sup> As Kyle (1991) suggests, the group of twenty - four invited nations:

Consisted of three groups of eight: eight parties to the 1888 Convention including the Soviet Union and Egypt, eight countries whose citizens owned the most tonnage using the Canal (that qualified the United States); and a third group of eight whose pattern of international trade showed a special dependence'.<sup>182</sup>

Of the summoned participants only Egypt and Greece declined Eden's invitation to attend the [Tripartite] Conference.<sup>183</sup> Greece's refusal was due to continued British involvement in Cyprus whereas Nasser's rejection was primarily a result of Eden's televised statement on 8 August.<sup>184</sup> Eden had days earlier stated live on the BBC that Nasser

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<sup>179</sup> As noted, the Government and indeed most of the country had grown suspicious of Nasser, as a result of his anti-Colonial/anti Western rhetoric, movement towards the Soviet Union and fear that Nasser would use the Canal as an extension of Egypt's foreign policy. See Ministry of External Affairs, *New Zealand Foreign policy and Statements*, pp.427 and 440-444.

<sup>180</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, pp.70-71; See PM 217 1/6. Telegram from McIntosh to London, Washington, Canberra and others, 10 August 1956.

<sup>181</sup> Shepilov described the London Conference as a 'tendentious selection ... and the majority of these are participants in aggressive military groupings - the North Atlantic Bloc, the Baghdad Pact, and SEATO' see K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, pp.412-413. Nutting suggested that the Conference had 'a built in majority of Western powers and their friends and allies' See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.54.

<sup>182</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.163. New Zealand's unconditional support to the United Kingdom guaranteed the nation's invitation to the London Conference. Macdonald's attendance also served as a 'public relations' exercise for both the New Zealand and British Governments.

<sup>183</sup> Nasser did dispatch his personnel emissary Aly Sabry to observe the proceedings and meet with any interested delegates See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.403.

<sup>184</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.184. (Mahmoud) Fawzi, (Egyptian Foreign Minister) had stated that if [the] objective [of the] West was really to be certain [that] freedom [of navigation] [would] be maintained, this could certainly be achieved without [the] atmosphere or processes of

was 'not a man who can be trusted to keep an agreement' announcing how the British 'all know how Fascist Governments behave, as well we all remember, only too well, what the cost can be giving in to Fascism'.<sup>185</sup> Holland's response to Egypt's withdrawal of representation was predictable:

I think it is a great pity that President Nasser has refused to attend the London Conference on the international control of the Suez Canal. I have never known anybody's case to be weakened by willingness to discuss it with other interested parties. The London Conference offers an opportunity for that kind of discussion.<sup>186</sup>

Macdonald was met in New York by Munro who had been 'active in sounding out American opinion'.<sup>187</sup> Munro informed the Minister that 'Top level Americans fully [understand] all [the] dangers of Suez but [the] main thing just now is Republican and Democrat conventions. In that atmosphere America will not approve or join in use of force and will use every means to settle by negotiation'.<sup>188</sup> The British position was illustrated after a meeting with Lord Home.<sup>189</sup> Macdonald stated 'My impression of [the] British [is that they are] very angry, [and] very determined but rather vague as to what action to follow if Conference fails'.<sup>190</sup> It became increasingly evident to the External

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[the] proposed London Conference. If [the] objectives on the other hand were to secure imperialism and domination then he thought [the] atmosphere and proposed processes of London Conference were quite logical. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.162.

<sup>185</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.184.

<sup>186</sup> Statement by Holland 13 August in *External Affairs Review* Vol.VI, No.9, August 1956, p.28.

<sup>187</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence from Macdonald to McIntosh, 16 August 1956. New Zealand's participation at the first London Conference seems to adhere to East (1978) and Henderson's (1991) belief that small states tend to opt for participation within international or regional organisations as a means of maximizing limited resources, see J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6. However as a loyal ally, New Zealand's participation also served to strengthen Eden's case against Nasser.

<sup>188</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence from Macdonald to McIntosh, 16 August 1956.

<sup>189</sup> Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 1955-60.

<sup>190</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence from Macdonald to McIntosh. Macdonald also stated 'I took the line with press that what harms Britain, harms New Zealand hence our interest and close attachment to Britain', 16 August 1956; Nutting states 'In his heart Eden hoped that the Conference would produce a solution unacceptable to Nasser' See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.53.

Affairs officials that there was an obvious divergence of opinion between New Zealand's two major allies. Clearly, in providing *Royalist* to the British Mediterranean fleet, New Zealand appeared to be siding with one ally against the other, and this made the Government of course very concerned.<sup>191</sup>

On 16 August McDonald addressed the Conference, illustrating the nation's vulnerability in terms of disruption to oil supplies and threat to overseas markets, especially that of the United Kingdom.<sup>192</sup> He stated that Nasser was pursuing a 'violent anti Western policy' and 'in recent months it [Egypt] has conducted a vicious propaganda campaign against the United Kingdom and has attempted to subvert legitimate British interests in the Middle East area'.<sup>193</sup> On 17 August he stressed the importance of 'confidence' and 'trust' in Egyptian control over the Canal,<sup>194</sup> citing Egyptian interference with Israeli shipping:

To my mind the significance of this fact is clear, despite Colonel Nasser's declarations of willingness to abide by the 1888 Convention there can be no assurance that he would not, in pursuit of some national interest or grievance, discriminate against the shipping of other countries as he discriminates today against that of Israel.

This example from history has a clear bearing upon the question of trust .It provides a warning and a guide, it is an example, the significance of which becomes all the greater in the light of recent events.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> New Zealand was worried least its support for Britain unduly affected relations with the United States via its commitment to ANZUS, the lack of unity in the Western Alliance.

<sup>192</sup> A 1838 163 /4/7/3/3E. Suez Canal Conference – London, 1956, Economic Implications for New Zealand; PM 217 1/6. 'If the United Kingdom were forced to use the longer route, tanker now coming to New Zealand would have to be diverted. Reduced supplies to the United Kingdom would eventually affect our markets in that country', 16 August 1956.

<sup>193</sup> PM 217 1/6. Statement by Macdonald at first London Conference, 16 August 1956.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Macdonald also noted that the United Nations Security Council on 1 September 1951 had already called upon Egypt 'to terminate the restrictions on passage of international commercial shipping and goods through the Suez Canal wherever bound and to cease all interference with such shipping itself'. PM 217 /1/6. Excerpt from Macdonald statement , London Conference, 18 August 1956.

The Minister further questioned Nasser's act of nationalisation. 'But even assuming that the legality of the act of the nationalisation were upheld, one is still forced to observe that an act may not be illegal - especially in a field so ill - defined as international law - but can still be immoral'.<sup>196</sup> Macdonald also declared his support for the creation of an international authority to govern the use of the Canal:

The New Zealand Government has welcomed the opportunity to assist at this Conference. We consider imperative the establishment of a system for the Suez Canal which will ensure forever against its arbitrary misuse. Such a system must, in our view, be on an international basis ... All these conditions appear likely to be substantially satisfied by the Three Power Proposals submitted to all delegates invited to this Conference.<sup>197</sup>

This speech almost adhered perfectly to the 'systematic brief' that McIntosh had provided the Minister prior to his departure on 11 August.<sup>198</sup>

The Americans believed their own sentiments were reflected in Macdonald's speech (17 August)<sup>199</sup> with Dulles agreeing:

That there could be no confidence in the political stability of Egypt, or that its Government was sufficiently removed from political passions and ambitions as assure that under exclusive Egyptian control the Canal would not be used as instrument of Egyptian policy'.<sup>200</sup>

While serving as a non - permanent member on the United Nations Security Council in 1954 New Zealand had discussed Egyptian interference with Israeli traffic through Suez. Nasser had refused to allow Israeli shipping through the Canal, 'until a permanent peace

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<sup>196</sup> PM 217 1/6. Statement by Macdonald at the first London Conference, 16 August 1956.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> PM 217 1/6. Telegram from McIntosh to London, Washington, Canberra and others, 10 August 1956; PM 217 1/6. Department of External Affairs Press Statement, 11 August 1956.

<sup>199</sup> See appendices.

<sup>200</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.222. Memorandum of a conversation, Soviet Embassy London 18 August 1956, 11am.

agreement had been established with Israel'.<sup>201</sup> The Egyptian obstruction culminated in the seizure of the Israeli ship, *Bat Galim* that sought to pass through the waterway on 28 September 1954, despite the fact that the Security Council had in 1951 called upon Egypt to terminate such acts of interference with shipping in the Canal.<sup>202</sup> This provided both ammunition and basis, for Macdonald's allegations that the Canal might be used as an extension of Egypt's foreign policy.

On August 19 Macdonald informed McIntosh of the Eden Government's resolve at the Conference, announcing the 'British are most anxious that no one should think they are bluffing about their determination to use force to safeguard their vital interests'.<sup>203</sup> Macdonald believed:

That if India and other Asians think [the] British are merely bluffing and that war is not a possibility, they will not use persuasion on Egypt to accept an effective international system but will indicate to Egypt that they need not bother to do anything except give vague assurances. If however, Indians and others believe that Britain is determined to go to war if necessary they will (so [the] British calculate) advise Nasser that he must make substantial concessions.<sup>204</sup>

He also expressed concerns over the potential divisions within the Commonwealth and the possible use of force by Eden:

For this reason the British are annoyed with [the] Canadians - with whom they are having the more trouble than anyone else.

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<sup>201</sup> Macintyre (1997) notes that the United Nations Security Council in 1951 and 1954 found the Egyptian action to be illegal, and that all ships had the right to use the Canal in time of war as in time of peace. See R. Macintyre, *Palestine-Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, p.66.

<sup>202</sup> *External Affairs Review*, Vol. V No. 1/2, January February 1955, p.24.

<sup>203</sup> PM 217 1/6. Telegram from Macdonald to McIntosh/Holland. This telegram had an attachment stressing to McIntosh/Holland 'the determination of British Ministers to use force, thus making war a possibility. The United Kingdom are particularly concerned that other countries should not think they are bluffing', 19 August 1956; This also enabled the Canadian's to advocate an appeal to the United Nations, in contrast Australia and New Zealand were too close to the British, and were forced to follow the British initiatives.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

They are concerned lest Canada should publicly advocate [a] peaceful solution. They argue that Canada would endanger peace by if they did this, because they would be obliged to go to war to secure what she considers vital to her interests.<sup>205</sup>

But surely, one may argue, the British are bluffing. Surely the British Ministers realise that it would be ruinous to British interests to use force. To this I can only answer, since the day Nasser nationalised the Company the British Government has pushed ahead every possible military preparation. There has been no delay or faltering, and preparations continue.<sup>206</sup>

Ominously, Macdonald examined the question of repercussions should the Conference fail to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. 'Every British officer with whom we discussed the matter takes the following line':<sup>207</sup>

- The use of force would be quite unreasonable and the counsel of caution and negotiation through the United Nations is the reasonable course.
- Ministers are quite unreasonable, being absolutely determined to use force if necessary to [gain] the adequate international control they consider vital to Britain's interest.
- Officials have given up trying to restrain Ministers because they conclude it is a hopeless task.<sup>208</sup>

Aware of Macdonald's growing apprehensions,<sup>209</sup> McIntosh sought the opinion of Munro on 17 August and provided him with his own

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid. British officials pointed out that it is one thing to counsel the British privately to use peaceful measures (as Menzies is doing) but quite another, and harmful to do this publicly. The Canadians in not attending the London Conference could have been under pressure from the United States to advocate non violent measures in resolving the conflict

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Templeton suggests 'in Wellington, officials found this message "very disturbing"'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.77.



thoughts regarding the United Nations and any possible use of force against Nasser:

It will probably not be possible to reconcile direct Anglo - French action against Egypt with the United Nations Charter. Our declaration of support for Britain is of course firm. I suggest however that as a preparatory step some consideration should be given to implications for New Zealand (especially within the United Nations) of involvement in military action, which may be brought before [the] Security Council as an act of aggression.<sup>210</sup>

Munro replied to McIntosh on 20 August, indicating ‘that if the United Kingdom decides to use force, we are committed with her’.<sup>211</sup>

He also stressed:

- As far as a great power is concerned, legality is subordinate to the maintenance of vital interests and can be accommodated to it. In the case of Suez New Zealand may have to accommodate principle to interest and friendship.
- The use of force would probably be regarded as an infringement of the United Nations Charter.<sup>212</sup>
- If the London Conference fails, an Assembly debate is inevitable and if force is used the climate of opinion will be hostile to its users.<sup>213</sup>

### ***New Zealand and the Eighteen Power Proposals***

On 20 August the American and Indian delegations presented the Conference with two differing solutions to the impasse of Suez. John Foster Dulles who led the American contingent had discretely distributed copies of his draft declaration to all members on the

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<sup>210</sup> PM 217 1/6. Telegram from McIntosh to Munro, 17 August 1956.

<sup>211</sup> PM 217 1/6. Summary for the Prime Minister of Telegram no.259 (17 August 1956) from Washington, Suez and the United Nations, 20 August 1956.

<sup>212</sup> As we will see in later Chapters, this sentiment had important ramifications for *Royalist's* deployment and involvement in ‘active’ operations.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

evening of 18 August.<sup>214</sup> Macdonald informed Holland on the morning of the presentations:

This session this afternoon can be fairly described as the critical point of the Conference because at it we will be giving consideration to proposals that have been circulated over the weekend by John Foster Dulles. The proposals are very much in line with our own thinking and we will have no hesitation in giving them our support'.<sup>215</sup>

Krishna Menon was first to present his proposal which was described as 'rambling and repetitive'.<sup>216</sup> Menon believed his plan would provide the 'basis for negotiations for [a] peaceful settlement,' explaining how 'India was as much concerned in the Suez Canal' as anyone was. He also stressed the waterway was the 'life – line' of her economy as much as any nation of the West.<sup>217</sup> The Indian address (backed by the Soviet Union, Ceylon and Indonesia)<sup>218</sup> centred on a 'Five Point Proposal' that included:

- The Constantinople Convention of 1888 be reviewed.
- The Canal be open to all nations without discrimination.
- The basis for tolls should be fair and just.
- The Canal be maintained at all times for the purposes of navigation.
- That due consideration be given to Egyptian ownership and operation.
- That a consultative body of user nations be established.

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<sup>214</sup> Though tabled as a United States proposal, Dulles had undertaken consultation with both France and the United Kingdom. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.228. Telegram from the Delegation at the Suez Conference to Department of State, London, 18 August 1956 11pm.

<sup>215</sup> PM 217 1/6. Message to Holland from Macdonald, 20 August 1956.

<sup>216</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.242. Telegram from the Delegation at the Suez Canal Conference to the Department of State, London, 20 August, 1956, 9pm.

<sup>217</sup> PM 217 1/6. India's Five Point Plan on Suez. Menon also announced that seventy six percent of Indian imports and seventy percent of exports passed through Suez, 20 August 1956.

<sup>218</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.193.

- That the Egyptian Government transmit an annual report to the United Nations regarding the Suez Canal.<sup>219</sup>

In presenting his proposal, Dulles stated that the aim of the Conference should be 'to formulate a fair and equitable plan that would recognise the legitimate interests of all countries'.<sup>220</sup> The Secretary of State, however, made it clear that the delegates 'could not make binding decisions for those who did not agree' and 'that the Conference was not in negotiation with Egypt, because she was not present'.<sup>221</sup> He claimed that it was his intention 'to keep the way open for a direct approach to Nasser once the Conference had freely made up its mind'.<sup>222</sup> The main points of the American proposal were:

- That a system guaranteeing the use of the Suez Canal should be established on the basis of the 1888 Constantinople Convention.
- That the Canal should be operated and maintained as an international waterway in accordance with the principles of the 1888 Constantinople Convention.
- That the Canal should remain insulated from the politics of any one country.
- That there should be respect for Egyptian sovereignty.
- That Canal dues and tolls be maintained as low as possible i.e. no profit.<sup>223</sup>

Dulles explained that institutional arrangements between 'Egypt and other interested parties in the operation, maintenance and development of the Canal' should also be established<sup>224</sup>:

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<sup>219</sup> PM 217 1/6. India's Five Point Plan on Suez, 20 August 1956. See appendices.

<sup>220</sup> PM 217 1/6. Suez Canal London Conference, 21 August 1956.

<sup>221</sup> H. Finer, *Dulles Over Suez: The Theory and Practice of his Diplomacy*, William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1964, p.161.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note 110, p.251. See appendices.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p.251.

To this end operating, maintenance and developing the Canal and enlarging it so as to increase the volume of traffic in the interest of world trade and of Egypt would be the responsibility of a Suez Canal board. Egypt would grant this board all rights and facilities appropriate to its functioning here as outlined.<sup>225</sup>

The American envoy campaigned vigorously to gain delegates support for his initiative and eventually succeeded in securing the support of eighteen of the twenty - two assembled nations. Dulles believed that 'the big achievement' was in securing support from 'four Asian - African countries Ethiopia, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to introduce as their own the United States proposal with some very nominal amendments'.<sup>226</sup> Only India, Indonesia, Ceylon and the Soviet Union remained opposed to the American proposal.

Eden sought Dulles to present the Eighteen Power Proposals to Nasser on 21 August.<sup>227</sup> However the Secretary of State rejected any such notion and explained 'I am disinclined to do so as this might engage me for a considerable time. Also, while the US has played a dominant role in the Conference so far, I think it is preferable that we should become less conspicuous'.<sup>228</sup> Macintyre (1988), speculates that Dulles' refusal may have reflected his suspicions that the mission would fail due to the irreconcilable differences between the parties... [or] the fear of being drawn closer to the British and French positions (with the possibility of military force).<sup>229</sup> Eden's second choice was

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p.252.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p.253. The Dulles proposal also became known as the Five Nation (or Power) Proposals; See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note, p.252.

<sup>227</sup> Kyle notes, 'The British at one point floated the idea that the Secretary of State should be the sole emissary. They had detected his personal distaste for the Egyptian ruler and felt that they could rely on direct contact sharpening the antagonism.' See K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.197.

<sup>228</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.237. Message from the Secretary of State to the President; As Macintyre (1988) notes, 'Dulles' refusal to chair the Suez Committee had the effect of undermining the credibility of the Eighteen Power Proposals before they were even presented by Menzies to Nasir'. See R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis of 1956*, pp.8-9.

<sup>229</sup> R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis of 1956*, p.9; Love (1969) suggests 'The mission was never intended to succeed. Eden and the French wanted Menzies to present the eighteen Power Proposal on a preemptory take- or- leave -it to ensure Nasser would reject it. For the Americans, it was another delaying tactic,' see K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.412.

Robert Menzies - who on 22 August agreed to lead the 'Suez Committee' to Egypt.<sup>230</sup>

On 23 August, the last day of the Conference, Macdonald tabled a statement announcing the creation of the Committee that would present the Dulles proposals to Nasser.<sup>231</sup>

I am authorised by the Governments of Australia, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, to state that they have requested representatives of the Governments of Australia, Ethiopia, Iran, Sweden and the United States of America, with Mr. Menzies, the Prime Minister of Australia, as their chairman, to approach on their behalf the Government of Egypt to place the statement recorded as Conference document no.12 before that Government, and to find out if Egypt would agree to negotiate a convention on the basis thereof. If Egypt expresses its willingness to enter into such negotiations, further arrangements, in consultation with Egypt, will be made to proceed with negotiations.

The position of Spain is, I understand, as set forth by its Delegation yesterday.<sup>232</sup>

### *The Conclusion of the Conference*

On 25 August Holland declared his satisfaction with the Conference and the performance of Macdonald, 'He has played a role which has brought great credit to New Zealand and to himself and has immensely helped the Commonwealth cause'.<sup>233</sup> Though, as Macintyre (1988) notes 'the Australasian argument was little more

<sup>230</sup> R. Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, Cassell Australia Ltd., Melbourne, 1967, p.156. Macintyre (1988) notes a school of thought that suggests Macdonald was responsible for Menzies nomination. See R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis*, p.8.

<sup>231</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign relations of the United States*, Editorial note, p.284. The Five-Nation Committee also became known as the Suez Committee. On 22 August Macdonald had submitted a proposal which envisioned that several Governments would be selected from among the eighteen supporters of the proposal and asked to approach the Government of Egypt to submit the Eighteen Power Proposals, to explain its purposes and objectives, and to ascertain whether Egypt would agree to negotiate a Convention on the basis of it'. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp.261-2.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284. Spain also became a member of the Eighteen Powers after lobbying from Dulles.

<sup>233</sup> Statement by Holland 25 August in *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.8, August 1956, p.29.

than a drum beat in unison with Britain and France'.<sup>234</sup> Holland's accolades were, however, somewhat premature as the Menzies mission made plans to meet Nasser on 3 September.<sup>235</sup>

Menzies was described as 'the worst imaginable choice to head a successful mission but an excellent choice for a mission intended to fail'.<sup>236</sup> Mahmoud Fawzi (the Egyptian Foreign Minister) noted Menzies 'saw nothing amiss in asking Abdul Nasser to accept two premises for negotiations: (1) the incompetence of Egyptians and (2) the untrustworthiness of Abdul Nasser himself'.<sup>237</sup> Nutting (1972) described the meetings between Menzies and Nasser:

Nor did Menzies in any way try to sugar the pill which he was to ask the Egyptians to swallow. From the first to last he made it clear that his proposals were being offered on a take - it - or - leave - it basis...

He bluntly told Nasser that current British and French troop movements were not a matter of bluff but an indication that both countries meant business which Egypt would ignore at her peril.  
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The ever growing presence of French and British troops amassing in the Mediterranean was not lost upon Nasser who suggested to

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<sup>234</sup> R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis*, p.8; Macintyre also notes that in the wake of the Conference both 'Canberra and Wellington preferred not to contemplate the likelihood of being dragged into war in support of Britain and France over the Canal in an operation that might be in violation of the U.N Charter.' Unlike Australia, the deployment of *Royalist* to the Mediterranean had increased New Zealand's chances of being dragged into hostilities even further. See R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis*, p.8; Both Australia and New Zealand's positions at the first London Conferences reflected actions of small states wishing to support an important ally during a time of crisis. Australia's support was also indicative of nation wishing to protect its economy and trade routes. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>235</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.220; Love notes (1969) Menzies did not conceal his prejudices to the likes of Nasser...on the contrary, he once said of him with jocular pride: 'I am a reasonably bigoted descendant of the Scottish race'. See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.412; Also see M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.77, 'at the end of the Conference, Macdonald told the Prime Minister that it seemed virtually certain that Nasser would reject the American proposals'. The *Christchurch Press* also shared this pessimistic sentiment on Saturday 25 August, running an article *Egypt's View on Canal: Dulles Plan will be Rejected*, p.9.

<sup>236</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.412.

<sup>237</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.220.

<sup>238</sup> A. Nutting, *Nasser*, pp.154-155; It seemed somewhat ironic that Menzies was prepared to threaten Nasser with the use of force, while not commit Australia to hostilities.

Menzies that their meetings should be confined to one a day - at the Committees convenience.<sup>239</sup> He remarked that he was being 'occupied by other matters with Egypt being obliged to "overcome economic considerations" and "keep an hourly watch on military preparations in the Mediterranean"' .<sup>240</sup>

Nasser found the idea of 'international control' for the Canal unacceptable and by 5 September the American delegate indicated 'there was no possibility of agreement on the basis of the Eighteen Power Proposals'.<sup>241</sup> The same day Eisenhower announced that the 'United States was committed to a peaceful solution of the problem, and one that will ensure to all nations the free use of the Canal for the shipping of the world'.<sup>242</sup> Menzies believed the president's comments were tantamount to 'diplomatic sabotage':

Whatever sketchy chances we ever had were, I think, fatally injured by the astonishing intervention of President Eisenhower, whose statements during our Conference were received with glee by the Egyptians and were undoubtedly treated by Nasser as indicating that he could safely reject our proposals'.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Summary of developments in Suez situation, Washington, 4 September, 1956, p.368.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., p.368; Eisenhower was being kept informed of British military deployments and exercises by the 'Watch Committee' composed of Department of State, Army, Navy, Air force CIA etc... The committees function was to analyze and evaluate information and intelligence relating to the imminence of hostilities ...that could jeopardise the security of the United States. Eisenhower was aware of British military planning in August, the movement of over 8000 British troops to Malta and Cyprus and the increase of Naval and air force strength in the Mediterranean. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.378 and 380.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p.392. Two crucial proposals were presented to Nasser from the London Conference 1. That the operation of the Canal should be insulated from the influence of the politics of any nation. 2. That , to enable this to be done, there should be established under an international convention to which Egypt would be a party , a body charged with the operation , maintenance , and development of the Canal. See A. 1838 780/6/1/2. Communication from Suez Committee to Australia.

<sup>242</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Dwight D Eisenhower, 1956*, p.373; On 28 August Dulles had under mined the British and French positions by suggesting that the Suez Canal was not a major concern of the United States, R. Macintyre, *Australia New Zealand and the Suez Crisis*, p.10.

<sup>243</sup> W.S. Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez crisis*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991, p.186.

On 7 September the Australian Prime Minister's office announced 'It looks as though President Nasser is not prepared to move at all and therefore the probability is that by this weekend Mr. Menzies will have to announce that his mission was a failure'.<sup>244</sup> Menzies also expressed concerns over the possibility of the British taking the problem of the Canal to the U.N Security Council. He believed that this approach to the United Nations before the talks in Cairo had concluded would only enable Nasser 'to put the blame on us [west] for the failure of the discussions'.<sup>245</sup>

Nasser officially rejected the proposals presented by the Menzies mission on 9 September and declared that the 'collective domination of an international board would plunge the Suez Canal into the turmoil of politics instead of ...insulating it from politics'.<sup>246</sup> The Egyptian President also reiterated his 'proposal for a Conference of all user nations for the purposes of reviewing the 1888 Convention'.<sup>247</sup> Nasser maintained:

That a crisis atmosphere had been created by threats to use force, mobilisation of troops and other hostile. He reiterated his willingness to negotiate a peaceful solution which respected the rights of Egyptian sovereignty and ownership, safe guarded freedom of passage through the Canal, and ensured dependable and efficient operation and development of the Canal; but he also maintained that the proposals presented by the committee were unacceptable, and serve to undermine these objectives.<sup>248</sup>

New Zealand's reaction to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was characterised by Sidney Holland's 'unconditional support' of Britain. This response conditioned New Zealand foreign policy, as the Government strove to maintain solidarity with the United Kingdom and support for Anthony Eden. Political support crossed party lines,

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<sup>244</sup> A. 1838 780/6/1/2. Correspondence from AGR Rouse, 7 September 1956.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.418.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p.418; Nasser's proposed Conference would of course include members of the Third World non aligned and Communist states which would tip the 'balance' in favour of Egypt.



such was the country's affinity towards the United Kingdom, with both National and Labour criticising Nasser in the New Zealand House of Representatives.<sup>249</sup>

Allowing the continued presence of the *HMNZS Royalist* with the British Mediterranean fleet also reflected Holland's desire to support Eden in some tangible manner. While a number of External Affairs officials had called for caution over its deployment, the Government during this early phase of the crisis had no intention of withdrawing the vessel. The stationing of *Royalist* with the British fleet and Governmental rhetoric on the nationalisation, had clearly given Eden the impression that New Zealand would support the United Kingdom as the crisis developed.

New Zealand politicians appeared to be following the 'doctrine' created by Michael Joseph Savage, who had stated, 'Both with gratitude for the past, and with confidence in the future, we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go; where she stands, we stand'.<sup>250</sup> However the growth in Third World States and non – aligned movement, especially after the Bandung Conference (1955) had created a world less tolerant 'of gun boat diplomacy'. The New Zealand House of Representatives generally viewed Holland's support of the United Kingdom as an act of loyalty rather than any act of 'compliance'.

Understandably, New Zealand officials such as Alister McIntosh and Leslie Munro increasingly expressed their concerns over the position taken by Holland. Both realised that in supporting any aggression against Nasser, New Zealand could find itself in violation of the United Nations Charter and at odds with a major ally in the United States. Communication from London and the United States

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<sup>248</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note, p.442.

<sup>249</sup> Both Labour and National recognised the importance of the United Kingdom in terms of the nation's trade relations and defence structure. Cultural identification and affinity played a major part in New Zealand relations with Britain.

<sup>250</sup> Broadcast by Michael Joseph Savage, September 1939. B. Gustafson, *Michael Joseph Savage*, A.H. and A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1968, p.28.

provided McIntosh with enough information to realise that the British were taking the situation extremely seriously and were indeed considering the use of force against Nasser. Holland was aware the United States was not prepared to support the use of force against Egypt, as a result of the up coming Presidential elections and a desire to not be associated with outdated Colonial ambitions.

McIntosh viewed the first London Conference as a means of supporting Britain, while seeking a diplomatic solution to the crisis. This would hopefully save the nation from having to support, or even participate in the use of force against Egypt. Holland believed that supporting the United Kingdom would eventually result in Nasser's capitulation and hopefully without the use of force. By the end of the Conference Holland was in the position where:

- The Government was supporting Britain 'unconditionally' in its dispute with Egypt over the act of nationalisation.
- The nation had provided the *HMNZS Royalist* to the British Mediterranean fleet, which was undertaking exercises of the coast of Egypt.
- The growing awareness of potential international repercussion, especially with the United States and 'coloured Commonwealth,' if the Government supported any use of force against Egypt.

The consequences of Holland's desire to remain entrenched with the United Kingdom would shape New Zealand's role in the Suez crisis through September and October 1956. This stance will be further developed in the next Chapter.

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## Chapter Three

### *Failure of Negotiations, movement towards War!*

#### ***Intensification of the crisis.***

The failure of the Menzies Mission to Egypt had done little to diminish the New Zealand Government's support for the United Kingdom. In an address to Parliament on 11 September 1956, Macdonald summarised the events of the first London Conference and the situation that had arisen, with Nasser's rejection of the Eighteen Power Proposals:

It was understood that if Egypt was not prepared to negotiate upon the basis proposed by the London Conference a new situation would be created... . That situation now exists, and consultation is taking place among interested states, including New Zealand.<sup>251</sup>

The same day, Holland declared rather emotively the nation's unrelenting commitment to Britain:

New Zealand does go and does stand where the Motherland stands. We would not be a Dominion today if it was not for the Motherland. I am sure that I am expressing the opinion of the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders when I say that the policy of this Government and this country is to support Britain in every way that is within our reach and to stand where Britain stands and to go where Britain goes. It just happens that in this present crisis the Minister of External Affairs and I are the recipients of scores of cables every day which we are trying to keep up with. They are sent to us by the Motherland – to this little Dominion, this loyal outpost of our Empire – in order that we may be fully informed hour by hour of the developments of this great crisis.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Statement by Macdonald, 11 September, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol. VI, No. 9, September 1956, pp.2 and 4.

<sup>252</sup> R.E. Owen, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 309, 7 August-12 September 1956, Government Printers, Wellington, p.1671.

This depiction of United Kingdom / New Zealand dialogue was exaggerated by Holland, in an effort to portray the image of partnership and 'two - way' communication and consultation. On 7 September Eden informed the Commonwealth leaders of his intention to present the issue of Suez to the United Nations Security Council. He hoped that the Council would find Nasser's act a threat to the peace, and demand a negotiated and just 'solution on the basis of the Eighteen Power Proposals'.<sup>253</sup> Eden realised that going 'through the UN hoop' was a step, which he might have to take before contemplating any use of force against Nasser.<sup>254</sup> He believed compromise with the President via United Nations channels would further encourage him in his aspirations in the Middle East. Simply put, Eden demanded that 'this man must be destroyed before he destroyed all of us.'<sup>255</sup>

In early September John Foster Dulles persuaded Eden not to take the issue of Suez to the United Nations and instead suggested the creation of the Cooperative Association of Canal Users (or CASU). Selwyn Lloyd (1978) notes:

Dulles, operating under basic instructions to prevent military intervention was acutely aware that a commitment to support hostilities could have a damaging effect on Eisenhower's candidacy for re - election as President. He had to think up some plan which would delay us, and in particular, at that stage, our reference to the United Nations.<sup>256</sup>

The goal of the new association was 'to carry out the stated purpose of the Convention of 1888 to guarantee at all times and for all the powers

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<sup>253</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.79.

<sup>254</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.58. Nutting attributed this comment about the United Nations to Selwyn Lloyd, when he pressed him on whether the approach to the UN was for 'war or negotiation'. Dulles was opposed to taking the issue to the UN, due to a lack of unity between the French, United States and United Kingdom and the vulnerability this would create with the USSR.

<sup>255</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, pp.424-425.

<sup>256</sup> S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, Jonathon Cape Ltd, London, 1978, p.131.

the free use of the Suez Maritime Canal'.<sup>257</sup> On 12 September Eden declared that the Government had decided in agreement with the French and Americans to establish a body which would 'enable the users of the Canal to exercise their rights'.<sup>258</sup> He informed the House of Commons:

If the Egyptian Government should seek to interfere with the operation of the association or refuse to extend to it the essential minimum of cooperation, then that Government will once more be in breach of the Convention of 1888 ...In that event, Her Majesty's Government and others concerned will be free to take such further steps as seem to be required either through the United Nations or by other means for the assertion of their rights.<sup>259</sup>

Dulles was shocked by Eden's 'warlike presentation' in the Commons even though Britain, France and United States had earlier agreed upon the precise wording of the speech. The next day, in an attempt to temper the situation, he speculated that if Egypt used force to prevent the right of passage through the Canal:

Then, obviously, as far as the United States is concerned, the alternative for us at least would be to send our vessels around the Cape... It is not a boycott of the Canal, as far as I know, to refrain from using force to get through the Canal. If force is interposed by Egypt, then I do not call it a boycott to avoid using force to shoot your way through. We do not intend to shoot our way through. It maybe that we have the right to do it,

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<sup>257</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.452. The political constraints on America during September were not overly evident on Holland. The Presidential elections were looming, and Eisenhower campaigning on 'the man of peace ticket' did not want to be associated with hostilities against a Middle Eastern state. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.83.

<sup>258</sup> Speech by Eden, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.9, 13 September 1956, p.16. The British Labour party expressed their opposition to Eden's policy. Central to their discourse was the apparent 'attitude of the Government to the use of force as a means of solving [the] dispute'

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16. A report on 12 September suggested there were strong indications that, 'the U.K and France may launch military action against Egypt in the event that their minimum objectives cannot be obtained by non-military means'. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Annex to Watch Committee Report, No.319 SC 00358/56, September 12 1956, p.488.

but we don't intend to do it as far as the United States is concerned.<sup>260</sup>

This time Eden was appalled, regarding Dulles's comments as 'an advertisement to Nasser that he could reject the project with impunity.' He stated that 'such cynicism towards allies destroys true partnership. It leaves the only choice of parting, or a master and vassal relationship in foreign policy'.<sup>261</sup>

On 14 September Eden, took up Dulles' suggestion and announced his intention to convene another Conference in London to debate the formulation of a Users Association.<sup>262</sup> The eighteen nations invited to attend were composed of the states that had supported plans for the internationalisation of the Canal at the first London Conference.<sup>263</sup> In the words of Finer (1964):

Britain and France and the U.S.A., and as many of the other London Conference Powers as possible, would join together in an association, whose ships would in concert sail through the Canal in accordance with their usual individual needs, employing its own pilots and other personnel to secure proper passage, and receiving dues for passage. From the moneys received Nasser would be paid the share that they felt Egypt ought justly to have. They would seek Egyptian cooperation. If that were forthcoming, good; if not, they would pass through the canal with the aid of their own pilots.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.492; On 11 September Eisenhower was questioned whether the United States would back Britain and France if they resorted to force against Egypt. He replied 'This country will not go to war ever while I am occupying my present post.' See A. Nutting, *No End of a lesson*, p.62; Gaitskell upon learning of Dulles's comments, invited Eden to also promise that Britain would also not shoot her way through the Canal, to which the Prime Minister avoided answering. See M. Foot, and M. Jones, *Guilty Men, 1957*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1957, p.125.

<sup>261</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.427; Eden (1960) notes that a correspondent asked a 'fair comment' of Dulles two days later, 'With the United States announcing in advance that it will not use force, and Soviet Russia backing Egypt with its propaganda does not that leave all the trump cards in Nasser's hands?'. See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.480.

<sup>262</sup> In fact Eden called the Conference on behalf of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. See *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.9, September,1956, p.20.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20. On the same day (14 September), Fadden declared Australia's support for the plan for a Users Association. He stated "We are one million percent with the United Kingdom, France and the United States." See A.1838 163/4/7/3/3. pt., 6A.

<sup>264</sup> H. Finer, *Dulles over Suez*, pp.207-208.

The creation the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA) created a mood of anxiety in the New Zealand Government. Macdonald was shocked and believed that the action might 'provoke some incident in the Canal' for which 'our side would get the blame'.<sup>265</sup> The announcement caught Holland unaware, causing the Prime Minister considerable embarrassment in Parliament. His surprise was evident in a statement regarding the new Conference, on 13 September:

As further information is required to enable the matter to be discussed by Cabinet, I have caused cables to be sent and I wish to inform the House that I shall make a statement on the matter as soon as Cabinet has been able to give further consideration to the matter.<sup>266</sup>

While causing Holland discomfiture, the announcement also illustrated the lack of consultation between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. However, 'it was agreed that New Zealand and Australia had no choice but to give public support'.<sup>267</sup> This situation provided yet another classic example of a larger state 'controlling' the lines of communication and information to a smaller state in a time of crisis.<sup>268</sup> As Templeton (1994) writes:

All Holland wanted in return for his support of Britain was the public appearance of a junior partnership. Now he had to scramble to avoid admitting that he did not know what was going on. Moreover, there were misgivings on the part of Webb, Macdonald and officials about the practicability of the new proposal. There was no opportunity for the Government to form a considered view.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.80.

<sup>266</sup> Statement by Holland, 13 September 1956, *External Affairs Review*, Vol. VI, No. 9, September 1956, p.5. Holland believed that his support for Eden, and the provision of the *Royalist*, entitled New Zealand to be kept abreast of events as they developed.

<sup>267</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.82.

<sup>268</sup> Henderson (1991) notes 'in the area of intelligence, small states lack the resources to collect much relevant information, and either have to go without or rely on intelligence supplied by friendly powers'. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.7.

<sup>269</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.81-82. Eden was so confident of Commonwealth support that even Bonn was informed of Britain's agreement in calling a

New Zealand's invitation to the Conference arrived via the American Embassy in Wellington, on 17 September and stipulated that it was 'important for us to continue in our joint efforts to find a peaceful solution to the difficult issues confronting us'.<sup>270</sup> Macdonald replied to the United States Charge d'Affaire the following day that he could not attend, but that Clifton Webb would represent New Zealand.<sup>271</sup> Selwyn Lloyd wrote 'Australia and New Zealand sent two redoubtable former Ministers for External Affairs in Sir Percy Spender, later the Australian Judge of the International Court, and Sir Clifton Webb, a former law Officer of wide experience'.<sup>272</sup> The decision to send Webb instead of Macdonald might have indicated the Government's disapproval of not being consulted by Eden, prior to his announcement of SCUA. Perhaps the Government was also exhibiting a subtle degree of disapproval to the United Kingdom.<sup>273</sup> Publicly however, Holland expressed his encouragement with the new Conference:

Particular importance will [be] attach [ed] to discussions on the proposed Canal Users' Association. Last week I indicated that further information was being sought concerning details and organisation of the proposed Association and the practical problems related to its establishment. The present Conference will provide an opportunity for consideration of all these matters, and the Government is very willing to participate in a meeting which is likely to play a significant part in the ultimate solution of the Suez problem.<sup>274</sup>

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second London Conference. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.82; simply put, 'New Zealand was expected to tow the line'.

<sup>270</sup> PM 217 1/6. Letter to Macdonald from American Charges d'Affaire, 17 September 1956.

<sup>271</sup> PM 217 1/6. Letter to Dulles via American Charges d'Affaire, 18 September 1956.

<sup>272</sup> S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.143.

<sup>273</sup> The decision to send 'lesser representation' indicated that a degree of initiative still remained within the New Zealand Government, and that Holland was not yet totally compliant towards the United Kingdom. Interestingly enough, by sending two delegation heads with backgrounds in law, Australia and New Zealand appeared to be indicating their desire to resolve the crisis by legal means, and therefore peaceably. As Templeton (1994) notes, Australian and New Zealand officials conferred by phone prior to the Conference, perhaps this was a subtle attempt by McIntosh to distance New Zealand from supporting any use of force. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.82.

<sup>274</sup> Press Statement by Holland, 17 September 1956.



Holland still believed the conclusions reached at the first London Conference constituted an equitable solution to the Suez crisis and remained hopeful that Nasser would 'yet recognise the essential justice of the original Eighteen Proposals'.<sup>275</sup>

Walter Nash, the Leader of the Labour opposition offered his guarded support and while sympathetic to Eden, increasingly advocated taking the matter to the U.N: 'Let the proposed meeting of User Nations ...consider what immediate action is best under present circumstances in connection with the dispute, and then refer the matter to the United Nations and other associated organisation for action'.<sup>276</sup>

Even as the National Government debated the lines of communication between the United Kingdom and New Zealand, its support for Eden remained outwardly firm. It was decided that New Zealand's position at the Conference should be governed by:

- A desire to assemble the maximum degree of agreement amongst the eighteen participating powers.
- Continued support and assistance for the United Kingdom 'especially in a situation where as [the] prospect of the use of force diminishes, her negotiating position threatens to become weaker'.<sup>277</sup>

### ***The Second London Conference***

The second London Conference met at Lancaster House, London from 19 - 21 September, with all invited eighteen parties providing representation. The membership of the Conference was exclusively based around the states that had supported the Menzies Mission to

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<sup>275</sup> Statement by Holland, 17 September 1956, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.9, September, 1956, pp.5-6.

<sup>276</sup> Press Statement by Nash, 17 September 1956.

<sup>277</sup> PM 217 1/6. Telegram to Webb (and Munro) from Macdonald, September 1956.

Cairo at the beginning of September.<sup>278</sup> In an attempt to persuade the states to attend, Dulles had informed the participants that attendance at the Conference in no way committed them to join the Users Association.<sup>279</sup> The agenda was to focus upon three items including, Menzies report on the mission to Cairo, Nasser's proposal for a universal Conference on Canal guarantees, and consideration of the plan to create the Users Association.<sup>280</sup>

There was ample reason for Dulles to offer his incentive to attend, as disapproval of the new Users Association was evident. Finer (1964) suggests:

On the eve of the second London Conference, it looked as though the eighteen powers were dissolving their partnership. Pakistan rejected SCUA as it stood at the time of Dulles's explanation on September 13. Spain, Iran, Sweden, and Japan were decidedly cool towards it. Britain and France were strongly in favor only *if* it had "teeth" in it. Germany, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, and Italy would go along with it, but Italy had payment agreements with Egypt involving serious reservations. The U.S.A did not know what it wanted, [except] peace and did not know how to go about achieving that—whether with SCUA, whatever it was in Dulles's mind by now or without it.<sup>281</sup>

The New Zealand Government's concerns over the new organisation were being compounded by the conflicting opinions and reports

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<sup>278</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note, p.516. The second Suez Conference was convened not only to consider the creation of a Users Association, but also the continued violence along the Israeli Jordanian border.

<sup>279</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.436.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p.436; During this period, McIntosh had received a copy of the Egyptian proposal for the creation of a Universal Conference on 20 September, via the New Zealand Legation Japan. The Secretary was informed that the Australian and British embassies had not received a copy, the document stated the Government, 'wishes now to declare that it believes that without prejudice to Egypt's sovereignty or dignity, solutions can be found for questions relating to (a) the freedom and safety of navigation in the Canal, (b) the development of the Canal to meet future requirements of Navigation and (c) the establishment of just and equitable tolls and charges. To this end the Government of Egypt proposes that as an intermediate step a negotiating body should be formed which would be representative of the different views held among the states using the Suez Canal and that discussions should take forthwith to settle the composition, the venue and the date of the meeting of such a body. To it may also be entrusted the task of reviewing the Constantinople Convention of 1888.' See 5/D/5/ and letter and enclosure 200 Cir.3 3/20. 20 September, 1956.

<sup>281</sup> H. Finer, *Dulles over Suez*, p.244.

provided by officials. Webb believed if Nasser refused passage to vessels piloted by the Users Association it would further strengthen the Tripartite Power's case against him within the United Nations. Corner advised McIntosh on 19 September that 'the retreat was continuing', and that the Users Association was merely a face saving measure for the British Prime Minister. He believed that the organisation had been initially created as a means of bringing the crisis to a head, 'possibly culminating in the use of force' but that this had been ruled out due to the lack of unity of the issue with the United States and at home.<sup>282</sup> Munro viewed the creation of the Users Association as a pretext to the use of force against Nasser, believing that any obstruction to traffic through Suez would provide more than an excuse for Eden to use force against Egypt.<sup>283</sup>

In his opening address to the Conference Webb explained how the New Zealand Government saw 'some merit in [the] proposal to set up a User's Association pending the establishment of a more permanent regime - that is to say some international system'.<sup>284</sup> He reaffirmed the Government's preference towards the Eighteen Power Proposals by announcing:

Those Eighteen - Power Proposals for internationalisation were, in our view, and still are, sound and sensible. I think if we try to look at it without bias, we will see that international control of the Canal is the desirable set up, and so we can say that at any rate we have moral right on our side.<sup>285</sup>

On 20 September the New Zealand delegation approved the goal of international control for the Canal and unity between member states. There was a belief that the approach to the United Nations should not

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<sup>282</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.86; In fact military preparations had just been postponed, see S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.134.

<sup>283</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.86.

<sup>284</sup> Statement by Webb, 19 September, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.9, September 1956, p.22.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

be made prematurely, since all the possibilities to settle the matter by negotiation had not been exhausted.<sup>286</sup>

The second London Conference opened with an air of skepticism on the part of many of the amassed nations; the Swedish delegation even suggested ‘that possibilities of a settlement other than the Eighteen Power Proposals should be investigated’.<sup>287</sup> Several other nations indicated:

That no negotiations had yet taken place with Egypt – the Menzies Committee had been entrusted with the restricted duty of explaining the Eighteen Power Proposals. There was early and strong pressure for quick reference to the United Nations and for the need of further and freer negotiation with President Nasser.<sup>288</sup>

The Conference illustrated the developing gap between British and American goals for resolution of the crisis. Eden had made it clear that he viewed the meeting as a means of denying Nasser the revenue from the Canal and sought agreement that the delegates would pay their dues to the new organisation.<sup>289</sup> In contrast Dulles maintained membership of the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA)<sup>290</sup> ‘would

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<sup>286</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.532. The American’s noted that the New Zealand delegation endorsed CASU on 20 September 1956.

<sup>287</sup> PM 217 1/9. p.2. second London Conference and the Proposals for the establishment of SCUA, 25 September, 1956.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2. A number of states that had only expressed their desire to avoid the use of force were persuaded to support SCUA in an impromptu speech by Dulles on 19 September 1956. The Secretary of State ‘stressed that if force was to be renounced (and he implied that it would be) there must be a substitute for [it]. He said that the United Nations, and peace would be doomed if nations did not put their full weight behind solutions which they believed to be in conformity with justice and international law.’ See PM 217 1/9.

25 September 1956, p.2.

<sup>289</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, pp.63-64.

<sup>290</sup> The last day of the Conference had seen considerable debate over the naming of the new organisation, with a number of participating states objecting to the acronym *CASU* or Cooperative Association of Suez Canal Users. Inevitably the delegates settled upon SCUA, though Lloyd expressed his earnest hope that it would never be used! See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, pp.436-437. Even Webb noted in a telegram to Holland the difficulties in creating an acceptable acronym. ‘Abbreviations of Association changed to SCUA after Luns of Netherlands had suggested that CASU might lead to quips about *casu belli* (presumably by bad Latinists). Another possible combination of initials was a dirty word in Spanish and another in Portuguese. It was noted that SCUA sounded something to be driven through passage (though, as has already been observed, this skewer as a very blunt point). See PM 217 1/11. Telegram from Webb to McIntosh, 23 September 1956.

not involve the assumption by any member of any obligation'. Rather he advocated a situation whereby members would voluntarily take action 'with respect to their ships and payment of Canal dues as would facilitate the work of the Association'.<sup>291</sup> The United Kingdom viewed SCUA as a means of forcing 'its own management onto the Canal and thus either administer a mortal humiliation to Nasser or provoke him to fight and thus allow the Anglo - French expeditionary force to destroy him'.<sup>292</sup> In contrast, Dulles in part, sought the creation of the Users Association as another means of delaying British action against Nasser.<sup>293</sup>

The conclusion of the Conference led to a majority of the nations agreeing in principle to the aim of the Users Association. 'In the final statements none of the delegates rejected the idea of setting up a Users Association. The United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia expressed definite approval'.<sup>294</sup>

On 21 September Webb reported the Conference's findings to McIntosh, explaining how it was 'the view of this Conference that these [Eighteen Power Proposals] still offer a fair basis for a peaceful solution to the Suez Canal problem'.<sup>295</sup> He announced optimistically, that the Association was 'designed to facilitate any steps which may lead to a final or provisional solution to the Suez Canal problem'. However Munro and Macdonald were concerned with the announcement, that the new body would deal with problems, if traffic

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<sup>291</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.64. Lloyd (1978) describes a conversation with Dulles, 'I started talking about dues. To my horror I discovered that his idea was that the dues should be paid to SCUA, and then 90% of them handed on to Nasser'. See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.162.

<sup>292</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.436.

<sup>293</sup> S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.140.

<sup>294</sup> PM 217 1/9. 25 September 1956, p.2. While none of the nations 'rejected the notion of establishing SCUA', Japan, Ethiopia and Pakistan stayed out See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.437.

<sup>295</sup> PM 217 1/11. Telegram from Webb to McIntosh, 21 September 1956.

through the Canal 'were to diminish or cease'.<sup>296</sup> Webb believed representatives of the Eighteen Governments:

Found their cooperation at the Conference valuable and constructive. The Eighteen Governments will continue to consult together in order to maintain a common approach to the problems which may arise out of the Suez question in [the] future.<sup>297</sup>

Holland was provided with a full summary of the Conference's findings. SCUA's membership was to be restricted to the states, which had participated in the 19 September Conference though provision had been made for other nations to join as long as they conformed 'to criteria laid down by the Association'.<sup>298</sup> On 21 September the Conference issued a declaration, concerning the new Association's aims, goals and mechanics. SCUA's purpose included:

- Facilitating steps towards the final or provisional solution of the Suez Canal problem.
- To help and assist members exercise their rights as users of the Canal.
- Promote efficient transit of the Canal.
- Extend its facilities to non - members of SCUA.
- To receive and distribute the revenues accruing from dues payable from users of the Canal.

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid. As mentioned earlier Macdonald and Munro had been concerned over the creation of the Users Association, and what its role would be if traffic were impeded through the Canal.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid. The Conference had noted on 21 September the Governments of [the] United Kingdom and France [had] informed the Security Council of the current situation' and that 'the Conference considers that recourse should be had to United Nations whenever it seems that this would facilitate a settlement'. Webb believed that course of action outlined would be 'capable of producing by peaceful means, a solution which is in conformity with principles of justice and international law as declared in Article 1 of [the] Charter of the United Nations' See PM 217 1/11. 21 September 1956, pp.1-2.

<sup>298</sup> Statement issued by second London Conference 21 September in *External Affairs Review*, Vol. VI, No.9, September 1956, p.24.

- To consider and report to members regarding any significant developments effecting the use of the Canal.
- To assist in dealing with any problems arising from the failure of the Suez Canal to serve its intended purpose.
- To facilitate any solution of the Suez problem adopted by the United Nations.

***To Carry out the Above:***

- Members will consult together in Council.
- The Council will establish an Executive group with delegated powers.
- An administrator will be appointed to make arrangements with shipping interests.
- After 60 days notice membership maybe terminated.<sup>299</sup>

Webb expressed optimism at the end of the Conference, believing that ‘whereas a week earlier there was every reason to believe that force would be used to put the scheme in operation it was clear that no such idea [was] now entertained’.<sup>300</sup> It was agreed that SCUA’s inaugural meeting would convene in London on 1 October, allowing time for the delegates to return to their respective Governments to debate whether to accept membership of the new organisation.<sup>301</sup>

It was apparent that the majority of the delegates, including New Zealand were anxious for the question of Suez to be brought before the United Nations as quickly as possible.<sup>302</sup> Dulles disagreed with

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<sup>299</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp.557-558. For full text of Declaration from second London Conference, see appendices.

<sup>300</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.87.

<sup>301</sup> PM 217 1/9, 25 September 1956, p.2.

<sup>302</sup> Presenting the issue of Suez to the United Nations would have offered New Zealand a degree of protection within international bodies. As Henderson (1991) notes small states prefer to operate in the confines of international organisations as a means of maximizing limited resources. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.10.

any such proposal, believing that the Users Association should be established so that it could be presented to the United Nations as evidence of continued efforts by the Western Powers to reach a settlement.<sup>303</sup>

On 23 September Webb informed McIntosh of Eden's decision to refer the problem of Suez to the Security Council. He explained the British had acted because 'of information yesterday afternoon that Russia was about to take this course' and that they did not want to be 'put on the defensive within the United Nations'.<sup>304</sup> Dulles complained the referral had been undertaken 'without adequate consultation with the United States' as he had been in transit to the United States when the decision came through<sup>305</sup> and while he did 'not agree with their point of view he would not object to their proceeding with their action'.<sup>306</sup> Dulles had wanted 'SCUA as [an] asset to take to [the] United Nations both as evidence of continued efforts to reach [a] settlement and also as [a] possible interim settlement which the Security Council might recommend'.<sup>307</sup> The United Kingdom justification for approaching the United Nations was based around two arguments:

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<sup>303</sup> PM 217 1/9. 25 September 1956, p.4. Dulles was further playing for time as any referral to the United Nations would force the United States to declare itself on were it stood with the Suez crisis, on the use of force and Eden's colonial stand. See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p. 148.

<sup>304</sup> PM 217 1/9. 25 September 1956, p.1; The United Kingdom had announced on 22 September its intention of taking the matter to the United Nations. Eden had argued that this was dispel 'the atmosphere of indecisiveness regarding reference to the Security Council which had grown out of ...[the] recently concluded London meeting'. There was a common belief amongst the Tripartite Powers that the Soviets were preparing to approach the Security Council with the question of Suez. The French had agreed to co-sponsor the diplomatic move, and Eden sought similar cooperation from the United States. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp.560-562.

<sup>305</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.88; J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.634.

<sup>306</sup> PM 217 1/9. 25 September 1956, p.4. Dulles believed that it was sound for the United Kingdom to approach the United Nations – The only difference that he had with such a step was one of timing. 'The Secretary expressed the view then that it would be undesirable to rush to the Security Council because such action might serve to dissuade some states from joining the Users Association'; J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.564.

<sup>307</sup> PM 217 1/11. 23 August 1956, p.1.



1. Public opinion everywhere is clamoring for reference to the United Nations and
2. [The] first stage of the Security Council action will be presentation of legal case (if [such] documentation is presented to [the] Conference by the United Kingdom) and by [the] time the legal debris is cleared away SCUA will have been established and made its first moves.<sup>308</sup>

The decision to approach the United Nations further illustrated the expanding rift between Eden and Dulles over Suez. Increasingly New Zealand was becoming aware of the divergence, especially as Dulles had acknowledged that there were fundamental differences in the approach of the two nations to the nationalisation of the Canal.<sup>309</sup> The decision to support the United Kingdom, coupled with the provision of *Royalist*, was directing New Zealand away from the United States and towards the use of force.<sup>310</sup>

New Zealand was not alone in its doubts over SCUA.<sup>311</sup> Menzies announced on 25 September that the Users Association was not as:

Comprehensive or precise as one could have wished. But if sufficient shipping nations not only adhere but pay their dues to the new Association the fruits, which Colonel Nasser hoped for will be largely ungathered by him and his attitude towards making the agreement we offered him vastly improved.<sup>312</sup>

The Australian Prime Minister also maintained:

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>309</sup> H. Thomas, *The Suez Affair*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1966/67, p.273.

<sup>310</sup> The influence of *Royalist* on New Zealand's position will be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>311</sup> Templeton (1994) notes, Eden had used an excuse that several delegates, including Webb, had indicated that an appeal to the United Nations would make it easier for their country's to support SCUA. However, Webb had never received any instructions to support such a proposal, and never even mentioned the meeting ! See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.88.

<sup>312</sup> 19.46 N.360. Correspondence between HCNZ Canberra to Macdonald, 25 September 1956.

We need to get out of the timid state of mind in which the very mention of the word 'force' becomes forbidden. There is no community of nations which could say, with a clearer conscience (than the British Commonwealth) that it has set a great twentieth century example of using force only when forced into it and then not for conquest but for resistance to aggression. But does this mean that we are to be helpless in the presence of an accomplished threat to our industrial and economic future? I believe not.<sup>313</sup>

Ironically enough, Menzies concluded that the Commonwealth sought 'peace at all times' but that 'we are not bound to carry that search so far that we stand helpless before unlawful actions'.<sup>314</sup> He believed that a 'watered down' settlement as a result of Nasser's dictatorial intransigence would merely strengthen Egypt's hand and weaken ours.<sup>315</sup> Menzies hoped that pressures from SCUA would make Nasser understand that his action was unprofitable to his country and 'that he was abandoning the substance for shadow'.<sup>316</sup>

The next day the New Zealand Government learnt that Evatt (Australian Labor party leader) had announced Australia would never condone the use of force or economic sanctions, which he described as 'a most wicked and cruel form of warfare'. Evatt contradicted the Prime Minister further by stating 'even people who shared the same objectives as Menzies would be disgusted by such a violent outburst which was appalling and deplorable on the eve of Security Council

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p.2. Menzies believed the merit of the Users Association was 'the more Canal revenue diverted from Egypt the less the Egyptian people will believe it pays to repudiate'. 'Should the United Nations by reason of the veto prove unable to direct any active course of positive action we may find ourselves confronted by a choice which we cannot avoid making'. These choices included (a) organising "[A] full blooded programme of economic sanctions (b) using force to restore international control (c) 'call it a day' and 'resign ourselves to the total collapse of our position of interests in the Middle East' with all that implies. See 19.46/no.360, 25 September 1956.

<sup>315</sup> Menzies was strongly supportive of the United Kingdom, even though the emphasis of Australian foreign policy, had like changed focus to South East Asia during the mid - 1950s, See Chapter One. Also Menzies had not committed Australia to the use of force, or deployed any military units in support of the British action.

<sup>316</sup> 19.46/no.360, 25 September 1956, p.2.

discussions'. Rather he believed that the answer to the Suez crisis lay in negotiation.<sup>317</sup>

### SCUA

SCUA's inaugural meeting convened in London on 1 October 1956 - four days before Britain and France planned to present the question of Suez to the United Nations. It had become apparent that New Zealand still viewed the Association as an interim solution to the crisis, with its main purpose to provide a means by which the user countries could further enter negotiations with Nasser.<sup>318</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd viewed the Users Association as a 'a kind of trade union in which member countries are banding together to defend their rights in relation to the Canal'.<sup>319</sup> The first meeting of SCUA focused upon:

- The establishment of an Executive group.<sup>320</sup>
- The appointment of an administrator.
- The choice of headquarters.
- Payment of dues.
- Work to be undertaken by the Executive Group.
- Budget.<sup>321</sup>

The meeting also noted the upcoming Security Council debate on the Anglo/French item. Both countries believed 'the situation created by the unilateral action of the Egyptian Government in bringing to an end the system of international operation of the Suez Canal, which was

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<sup>317</sup> PM 217 1/11. Correspondence from NZHC Canberra to McIntosh, 26 September 1956.

<sup>318</sup> PM 217 1/9. Suez Canal Dispute Suez Canal Users Association, 2 October 1956.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. However Lloyd had informed 'Munro that he never believed in SCUA'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.90.

<sup>320</sup> The Executive was to consist of the five nations that made up the Menzies mission to Egypt in September with the addition of the United Kingdom and France. It was hoped New Zealand would be the first alternative choice if either Australia, Sweden, Ethiopia or Iran proved unwilling to participate. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp. 616-617.

<sup>321</sup> PM 217 1/9. 2 October 1956, pp.1-2.

confirmed and completed by the Suez Canal Convention of 1888,' needed debated.<sup>322</sup>

Britain and France had formulated a draft resolution, pending the discussions within the Security Council, focusing upon the Eighteen Power Proposals and establishment of a Suez Canal Users Association.<sup>323</sup> This draft resolution intended to:

- Reaffirm the principle of freedom of navigation of the Canal in accordance with the 1888 Convention.
- Consider that the guarantees, which the users enjoyed under the system on which the Convention was based, should be restored.
- Endorse the Eighteen Power Proposals.
- Call on Egypt to cooperate, by working out on the basis of those proposals a system of operation for the Canal.
- Pending the outcome of such negotiations call upon Egypt to cooperate with the Suez Canal Users Association.<sup>324</sup>

The Conference had been informed that 'Egypt [hoped] Security Council consideration of the Suez issue [would] lead to the creation of a negotiating body'.<sup>325</sup> They were convinced that a 'mutually satisfactory agreement [could] be reached through negotiation provided the United Kingdom's basic objective [was] not to "get Nasser"'.<sup>326</sup> The Egyptians had decided to submit their own item to the United Nations alleging 'the actions taken against Egypt by certain

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<sup>322</sup> PM 217 1/9. The United Kingdom and France believed 'the action of the Egyptian Government in ending the system of international operation has subordinated the operation of an international public service which was set up for the benefit of all nations to Egyptian interest and arbitrary Egyptian control, and thus gravely impaired international confidence, prejudiced the rights of user countries, and endangered the maintenance of international peace and security', 2 October 1956, p.2.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>325</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.624.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., p.624.

countries including the United Kingdom and France constitute a danger to international peace'.<sup>327</sup>

On 2 October Munro informed McIntosh of the further deterioration in relations between the United States and the United Kingdom. Dulles had announced that fundamental differences existed between America and 'its principal European allies Britain and France' over the Suez question.<sup>328</sup> The Secretary of State believed the variations stemmed 'from the problem of Colonialism' and that 'the United States [had] a special role to play in lifting peoples from Colonial rule to independence'. Because of these difficulties it made it impractical 'for the United States to identify itself in every respect with Britain and France'.<sup>329</sup> Munro noted British officials in Washington seemed 'undisturbed by Dulles's statement which they suggest is due to bad reporting combining clumsily and inaccurately an anti - Colonial approach with American policy over Suez'.<sup>330</sup> He announced however:

Nevertheless I confess to some concern over the repercussions in Britain and perhaps New Zealand. Walker in New York today told me there was a rift between Dulles and Eden as Dulles was extremely annoyed over the timing of [the] British decision to go to the Security Council as Dulles considered this was taken

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<sup>327</sup> PM 217 1/9. The Anglo - French item was presented first, the United States voted for both resolutions. See 1 October 1956, p.2.

<sup>328</sup> PM 217 1/11. Correspondence from Munro to McIntosh, 2 October 1956.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*; As Lloyd (1978), notes, Dulles believed that this almost the only time he had made a really bad blunder'. However Lloyd felt very bitter about what had happened. See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.152; Worse was still to come for Eden as the Secretary of State announced 'as far as the formula for the User Association is concerned, there has been no detectable change in it since it was first conceived. He said that he did not know of any teeth being pulled out of it - there weren't any teeth in it to begin with'. See PM 217 1/11. Correspondence from Munro to McIntosh, 2 October 1956; Nutting writes 'Eden read the Dulles statement quickly and then, with a contemptuous gesture, he flung the piece of paper at me across the table hissing as he did so, "And what do you have to say for your American friends?"... 'I knew instinctively that this was the final let down. We had reached breaking point'. A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.70; In his memoirs Eden also alludes to this fracture between Britain and America, 'The next day a damaging statement came from Mr. Dulles at a press conference. This, however, unintentionally was likely to make Nasser believe that if he held fast, the United States would fall apart from France and Britain over the seizure of the Canal'. See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.498.

<sup>330</sup> PM 217 1/9. Correspondence from Munro to McIntosh, 2 October 1956.

during his flight from London or simultaneously with his return, so that he could not oppose the decision.<sup>331</sup>

Munro's statement highlighted the Government's increasing concern about the repercussions if SCUA or approach to the United Nations, failed to produce a peaceful resolution to the crisis and Eden resorted to force to settle the dispute. New Zealand's situation was further complicated, through an inability to clarify the situation of *Royalist* in the event of the use of force. Increasingly New Zealand strategy was being influenced by:

1. The Anglo/American rift, and lack of a 'Western' or 'International' consensus on how to solve the crisis.
2. Inadequate levels of consultation with the United Kingdom.
3. The problem of having a warship stationed in a potentially hostile region.<sup>332</sup>

Holland's continued support for the United Kingdom was mirrored in a number of letters to major newspapers during this period. For example, on 1 October 1956 Ralph S Wheeler of *The Press* (Christchurch) was attacked after composing an article sympathetic to the Egyptian Government. One reply even drew an analogy with support of the national game (Rugby): 'your correspondent, R.S. Wheeler is on Colonel Nasser's side. Perhaps something can be said for such an attitude – rather like an All Black supporter cheering a Springbok try'.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid.; Walker was the Australian permanent representative to the United Nations.

<sup>332</sup> The movement to the 'safety' of an international forum, would have increasingly satisfied McIntosh and members of the Department of External Affairs. Henderson (1991) recognises the preference of small states in operating through the relative safety of international and regional organisations. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.10.

<sup>333</sup> Letters to the Editor Suez Canal in *the Press* 3 October 1956 p.15. Again this sentiment reflected the racist and skeptical attitude of the New Zealanders towards the Arab peoples, see Chapter One for further comment.

*Approach to the United Nations Security Council and the Six Principles*

The Security Council began debating the Anglo - French item on 5 October. Lloyd informed the members it was Britain's belief that negotiations should be based around the Eighteen Power Proposals formulated at the first London Conference. He explained that until 'such negotiations had been concluded Egypt should cooperate with the Suez Canal Users Association' that had been established to 'safeguard their passage rights'.<sup>334</sup>

Dulles remained suspicious over British intentions in bringing the matter to the United Nations. However, Eden (1960) wrote that Dulles 'declared that he was with Britain on every point, except the use of force'.<sup>335</sup> On the morning of 5 October the Secretary summoned both Lloyd and Pineau, the French foreign minister to his residence to clarify whether the move to 'the UN was a genuine attempt at a peaceful settlement or was it an exercise in going through the motions to get freedom of action for stronger measures'.<sup>336</sup> Lloyd's reply emphasised the United Kingdom's honorable intentions:

We felt that the impact of SCUA was less than was hoped for. The timing was due to a hint, which we had received from an Indian source that the Russians were talking about bringing the matter to the UN. We could not afford even the remote possibility that the Soviet Union would beat us to it. The British purpose is quite genuine. We do not want to "railroad through" our proposal. We have always realised that in coming here we expose ourselves to a period of negotiation. But we cannot [be] here more than 10 days. In other words, next week something must happen. The 18 - power resolution is the best basis and we want Security Council endorsement of that. If

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<sup>334</sup> R.E. Owen, *External Affairs Review*, Vol. VI, No.10, October 1956, p.34. Both the United Kingdom and French delegations called upon Egypt to restore the guarantee, which it had impaired by nationalising the Universal Suez Canal Company.

<sup>335</sup> A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.502-3. Eden even suggests that Dulles had not ruled out the use of force against Nasser as a last resort.

<sup>336</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.276; As Lloyd (1968) notes 'Dulles said that we must make it clear in the Security Council that if a real effort to get a peaceful settlement were made and failed, it would be permissible to consider force as an alternative'. See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.154.

there is a veto or nothing happens, we must consider what to do next.<sup>337</sup>

Lloyd insisted that Egyptian recognition of SCUA was an essential part of negotiations along with acceptance of Canal dues through the new organisation.<sup>338</sup> In reply Dulles explained that they were playing for high stakes if the United Kingdom ignored the Charter by using unsanctioned force against Egypt.<sup>339</sup> He warned both Britain and France that ‘use of force in violation of the Charter would destroy the United Nations’ possibly forcing the United States back into isolationism.<sup>340</sup>

Under the auspices of the Security Council a series of private discussions, chaired by United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld were initiated on 9 October between the Foreign Ministers of Egypt (Fawzi), the United Kingdom (Lloyd) and France (Pineau). Dulles though present, took no part in the negotiations.<sup>341</sup>

On 10 October Munro announced that Dulles had called a meeting of the delegates from the first London Conference to ‘stress [the] desirability of maintaining unity among [the] eighteen [powers]

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<sup>337</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp.640-641. However Lloyd did indicate that he ‘would be content with Egyptian acceptance of “85% or somewhat less” of the Eighteen power proposals’. Fawzi stated Egypt would be prepared to accept a number of conditions including ‘combined meetings of the Egyptian authority and the Users Association to discuss operation of the canal’; See appendices for full listing; PM 217 1/11. Suez Canal Problem Public Meetings of the Security Council, 15 October 1956. pp.1-2.

<sup>338</sup> PM 217 1/11. 15 October 1956.

<sup>339</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.276.

<sup>340</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.642. Dulles summarised his discussions with Lloyd and Pineau in a message to Eisenhower on 5 October 1956 ‘It started with a “heart to heart” talk with Lloyd and Pineau. I said that obviously there was not real understanding between us, and I pointed to a number of concrete illustrations. I said we could not get on this way and must at least know the purpose of their action in bringing the Suez [question] to the United Nations. Was it for peace or war? Both Pineau and Lloyd said in effect that they did not believe there was any peaceful way of [achieving] a solution and they argued that only the use of force against Nasser would restore Western prestige in Africa and the Middle East’, see J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.648; Dulles had held a similar conversation with Fawzi. The Egyptian Foreign Minister had informed Dulles that he ‘foresaw no great difficulty in solving the problem with respect to the principle of “freedom of navigation”. Fawzi stated ‘that Egypt desired a peaceful solution to and was prepared to recognise the rights of the user nations, and user participation to the extent compatible with Egypt’s legitimate interests’. See J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.666.

<sup>341</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.90; PM 217 1/11. 15 October, 1956.



and to secure support to stress this unity to [the] press'.<sup>342</sup> Munro acknowledged that 'little was divulged of the plans of the big three' but he believed that the 'real negotiations [would] presumably take place in informal discussions'.<sup>343</sup>

The New Zealand Government was told three days later that agreement between the United Kingdom, France and Egypt had been reached on the basis of 'Six Principles'.<sup>344</sup> Love (1969) writes: 'Early in the New York talks Lloyd dictated "off the cuff" what later were adopted as the "Six Principles" of a Suez settlement. Dag wrote them down, Lloyd recalled, and they suddenly became the word of God'.<sup>345</sup> He also noted that the Six Principles had in fact been formulated at the first London Conference.<sup>346</sup> They comprised:

1. There shall be free and open transit through the Canal overt and covert. (In clarification it was stated that this principle covers the same ground as the Constantinople Convention, the technical as well as political aspects of which bind all three).
2. Egypt's sovereignty shall be respected.
3. Operation of the Canal shall be insulated from the politics of any country.
4. The manner of fixing toll charges shall be decided by arrangement between Egypt and Users.
5. A fair proportion of dues shall be allocated to development.
6. In case of dispute unresolved affairs between the Suez Canal Company and the Egyptian Government shall be settled by arbitration with suitable terms of reference and suitable provision for payment of sums found to be due.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> PM 217 1/11. Correspondence from Munro to McIntosh, 9 October 1956.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> PM 217 1/11. Correspondence from Munro to McIntosh, 12 October 1956.

<sup>345</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.445.

<sup>346</sup> S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.159.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

In positive terms the Six Principles which would govern the future operation of the Canal, were the only result of the discussions, as it was noted ‘no agreement was reached on practical arrangements designed to put the principles into effect’.<sup>348</sup> The Six Principles became the basis for the first part of an Anglo - French resolution that was to be presented before the Security Council. A second ‘part’ (or rider) was attached to the agreed principles demanding adherence to the ‘Eighteen Power Proposals’.<sup>349</sup> The rider insisted the Eighteen Power proposals were the right and proper method of putting the Six Principles into effect, completely ignoring the concessions that Fawzi had made in the private talks.<sup>350</sup> It contended: ‘Egypt had not yet formulated sufficiently precise proposals to meet the requirements of the Six Principles and invited the Egyptian Government to repair this omission “promptly”’.<sup>351</sup> Both Eden and Mollet anticipated the rider would provide a ‘political affront to Nasser’ forcing him to reject the resolution. ‘Eden regarded this [Six Principles] as to near a solution for comfort; he was determined on war from the beginning’.<sup>352</sup> The ‘expanded’ resolution was made up of the Six Principles agreed upon by the parties, and the original draft, amended:

- (a) To indicate that the Eighteen Power Proposals were suitably designed to give effect to these principles.
- (b) Inviting Egypt to submit alternative proposals.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> PM 217 1/11. Eden had announced that “ through all these negotiations peace has been our aim but not peace at any price. In dealing with a dictatorship, peace at any price means to increase, step by step, the danger of universal war”, 15 October, 1956; Fawzi expressed regret and concern at Eden’s comments which he alleged was contrary to providing the proper atmosphere for negotiating a peace settlement of the Suez Canal question. See *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.10, October, 1956, pp.36-37.

<sup>349</sup> Aware of the Conservative Governments stand and Eden’s instructions to maintain solidarity with Pineau, Lloyd accepted the resolution must include an endorsement of the Eighteen Power Proposals. See K. Kyle, *Suez*, pp.286-288.

<sup>350</sup> Nutting also notes that the United Kingdom and France had presented the issue to the United Nations ‘as a device to set the stage for war by inviting a Russian veto for the Anglo French resolution and so proving to the world that redress had to be sought by other means than debate in the Security Council’. A. Nutting, *Nasser*, p.162.

<sup>351</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, pp.78-79; See appendices for copy of full draft.

<sup>352</sup> K. Love, *Suez :The Twice Fought War*, p.446.

<sup>353</sup> PM 217 1/11. 15 October, 1956, p.3.

Fawzi hoped that the principles would be adopted as the basis of negotiations and that the second part of the resolution would be rejected, 'as it would make the Canal the prey of politics of many nations'.<sup>354</sup> The Anglo - French resolution was put to the vote in the Security Council in two parts. The principles were adopted unanimously and though the second part received a 'vote of nine in favor and two opposed' it was vetoed, as one of the dissenting voters was the Soviet Union.<sup>355</sup>

The Council adjourned with a general air of optimism at events at the United Nations and it was hoped that inter - changes between the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Egypt would continue as they had already 'yielded positive results'.<sup>356</sup> Hammarskjold also believed the outlook for negotiations were extremely favourably as further discussions had been planned in Geneva on 29 October at Fawzi's request.<sup>357</sup>

Webb informed Macdonald on 19 October of his own optimism surrounding Suez and announced that Selwyn Lloyd had spoken 'in very conciliatory terms' and how he had 'clearly moved a long way from insistence on international management of the Canal, which was the heart of the Eighteen Power Proposals'.<sup>358</sup> The High Commissioner believed the:

Tide now seems set fair towards a settlement by negotiation, which in my view, was always inevitable anyway. I doubt whether many in Britain would be prepared to resort to force over the difference between what Fawzi offers, even though in imprecise terms, and what some people consider necessary,

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>355</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.719.

<sup>356</sup> R.E. Owen, *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.10, October 1956, p.24.

<sup>357</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.94.

<sup>358</sup> PM 217 1/6. Correspondence from Webb to Macdonald, 19 October, 1956; it appeared to New Zealand that Britain's 'honourable' decision to present the issue of Suez to the United Nations had succeeded in resolving the crisis. Though, as Munro noted on 20 August 1956, 'As far as a great power is concerned, legality is subordinate to the maintenance of vital interests'. See PM 217 1/6. 17 Summary for Prime Minister, August, 1956.

especially now that Egypt has falsified confident predictions about her competency to run the Canal.<sup>359</sup>

‘Webb seemed well justified in his optimism, and New Zealand and the other “peripheral” members of SCUA could be forgiven for assuming at this point that everything was going along nicely.’<sup>360</sup> However, Corner did not share Webb’s enthusiasm as he had learnt that Eden was withholding the circulation of information to officials in the British Parliament. It seemed that ‘a remarkable feature of this phase of the crisis is the absence of top level communication from Eden to the Commonwealth leaders, whose support he dearly wanted and needed. Support he wanted not advice’.<sup>361</sup> Unbeknown to the Government discussions between the United Kingdom, France and Israel were already well advanced on how to depose Nasser.<sup>362</sup>

### *Jordan and Chequers*

Regardless of the progress made in the Security Council, Eden remained adamant that the only way to stabilise the Middle East and protect British interests in the region was if Nasser ‘went’. In October 1956 he remarked to Nutting, that the Egyptians ‘would never stick to any concessions’ and Britain therefore would have to ‘stick to [its] demands. If this meant deadlock, then we would have to force the issue somehow before Nasser could consolidate his act of piracy’.<sup>363</sup>

Further complications had arisen with a number of recent ‘reprisal attacks’ by Israel against Jordan, the heaviest of which occurred on 10 October on the West Bank village of Qalqilia. The incursion resulted in the death of 100 Palestinians, and forced Eden to

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.93.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p.92. ‘Corner speculated that where as Pineau was believed not to want an agreement, Eden did provided it was one which made Nasser lose face’. While the National Government was still attempting to achieve a degree of assertiveness in the crisis, the initial ‘compliant’ stand adopted by Holland, and deployment of *Royalist* had left New Zealand in position were it remained uninformed and unconsulted of Eden’s true intentions. As Henderson (1980) notes ‘if a loyal ally appears entirely satisfied, it will be ignored’. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand*, p.7. While Holland had demanded consultation, he had remained publicly satisfied, and was now, being ignored by Eden.

<sup>362</sup> R. Macintyre, *Palestine – Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, p.68.

remind the Israelis of Britain's treaty obligations to the Arab State.<sup>364</sup> The attacks concerned Eden least they tempted King Hussien of Jordan to turn to Nasser for moral and material support.<sup>365</sup> The King 'disillusioned' with British in - action dispatched his Foreign Minister to Egypt 'with an urgent appeal to Nasser to help relieve Israeli pressure on Jordan'.<sup>366</sup> Eden was horrified fearing the diplomatic mission would allow the defection of an ally into Nasser's camp. If Hussien were absorbed under the 'protective umbrella' of Egypt then Nuri-es-Said and Iraq, who were allied to Britain would be threatened. As Nutting (1967) states, 'British prestige was once again at stake here. Besides, if Jordan went, Iraq would be dangerously undermined and Iraq was a vital British asset as an ally in the Baghdad Pact and the site of an essential link in the chain of Britain's air defences in the Middle East'.<sup>367</sup> In a vain attempt to shore up the Jordanian defences, Eden contacted Nuri requesting an Iraqi Brigade go to Hussein's aid. Far from defusing an explosive situation, Israel protested both publicly and diplomatically in Paris 'that the projected Iraqi move constituted a hostile threat to Israel'.<sup>368</sup> Inevitably, Mollet was left to exert pressure on Eden to stop the Iraqi move. The French made the point 'that Britain surely did not want to provoke a situation in which she would find herself fighting for Jordan against Israel at a time when all efforts should be concentrated on the reckoning with Nasser'.<sup>369</sup> Pressure was also forthcoming from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff who informed Eden on 10 October, 'we could either go to the aid of Jordan against Israel with sea and air power or we could launch

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<sup>363</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.83.

<sup>364</sup> Eden (1960) notes it was made 'clear to Israel that an attack on Jordan would have to be resisted by us. To fail to carry out our engagement would be the end of our position in the Middle East'. See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.513.

<sup>365</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.84. Keightley the C-in-C British forces in the Middle East suggested the scope of and strength of the Israeli attack presage something more far reaching and that in the circumstances he might have to invoke the Anglo Jordanian Defence Treaty.

<sup>366</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.448.

<sup>367</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.86.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

MUSKETEER (the proposed attack on Egypt); we could not do both'.<sup>370</sup>

On 14 October Eden agreed to meet a small French delegation led by Albert Gazier the Minister for Social Affairs, and acting Foreign Minister in Pineau's absence,<sup>371</sup> at his country home Chequers, England. Gazier wanted to discuss the deteriorating relations between the United Kingdom and Israel and the problems that would ensue if the Iraqis entered Jordan. After informing Eden how nervous the Israeli's were, Gazier posed the question 'what would Britain do if Israel attacked Egypt?'<sup>372</sup> Eden replied that the Tripartite Declaration (1950) would presumably be evoked though he said 'he could hardly see himself fighting for Colonel Nasser'.<sup>373</sup> Gazier reminded the British Prime Minister that Nasser had recently contended the Tripartite Declaration did not in fact apply to Egypt, and furthermore was not prepared to let the signatories station troops on its territory. Challe put the French plan to Eden:

Israel should be invited to attack Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula and that France and Britain, having given the Israeli forces enough time to seize all or most of the Sinai, should then order "both sides" to withdraw their forces from the Suez Canal, in order to permit an Anglo - French force to intervene and occupy the Canal on the pretext of saving it from damage by fighting. Thus the two powers would be able to claim to be "separating the combatants" and "extinguishing a dangerous fire", while actually seizing control of its terminal ports, Port Said and Suez. This would not only restore the running of Canal

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<sup>370</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.295; The defence of Jordan against any Israel attack was known as operation *Cordage*, for which *Royalist*, as noted was an integral part, See Chapter Four.

<sup>371</sup> Pineau was of course still at the United Nations. General Maurice Challe the French Deputy Chief of Staff for the airforce was also in attendance. Initially, Eden speculated whether the meeting was to discuss possible French encouragement for Israel to attack Jordan, as the Jewish state had recently acquired a large number of *Mystère* fighters contravening the Tripartite agreement. See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.88.

<sup>372</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.296; Lloyd (1978) notes that during mid September 1956, the French had started discussions with the Israelis on the use of force against Nasser. See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.172.

<sup>373</sup> Nutting states Britain was obliged under the Tripartite Declaration to resist any attack across the armistice borders of Israel and neighbouring Arab states, A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.92; See also S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.174.

to Anglo - French management, but by putting us physically in control of the terminal ports.<sup>374</sup>

Eden remained non - committal, announcing that he would need time to consider the French proposals, but the Prime Minister was struck with the 'novelty and daring of the new scheme'.<sup>375</sup> At Eden's request Lloyd left the United Nations on 15 October, the pair journeying to France the next day for further discussions with Mollet and Pineau.

By now the French had sought to reassure Israel, of Eden's interest in their plans. Within 'two days members of the General Staff as well as political notables were letting it be known that they did not consider Britain's warnings over Jordan to be serious'.<sup>376</sup> On 17 October the emphasis of Ben Gurion's speeches changed dramatically from Hussien to Nasser, leading to the Prime Minister declaring: 'The Fascist dictator of Egypt is our most dangerous enemy. If we are forced to defend ourselves, this shall not be done at home. We shall carry the war to the other side with a lightning like stroke'.<sup>377</sup> Nasser had been the source of a number of problems to the Israelis:

1. Preventing access through the Suez Canal.
2. Preventing access to the Gulf of Aqaba.
3. Encouraging Palestinian (*Fedayeen*) guerrillas.
4. Threatening to destroy the Jewish State (and continuation of the Arab/Israeli conflict).
5. Procuring Soviet arms and spreading Soviet influence through the Middle East.<sup>378</sup>

The British Cabinet met on 18 October to hear of Eden and Lloyd's mission to Paris. Lloyd under 'cross - examination' admitted:

<sup>374</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.93.

<sup>375</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.297.

<sup>376</sup> Love states 'Ben Gurion still directed dire warnings to Jordan on 15 October that 'Israel [would] reserve freedom of action if a foreign military force [entered] Jordan,' K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.453.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

Eden had confirmed his whole - hearted endorsement of the French plan. He hoped that we would not have to be directly associated with these talks, at any rate at the political level. Lloyd added that the French had clearly been in cahoots with the Israelis for several weeks.<sup>379</sup>

At Israel's insistence the parties agreed to meet again on 22 October at Sevres in France.

### ***Collusion at Sevres.***

Ben Gurion had insisted on the meeting at Sevres outside Paris, to seal the deal with a British commitment in writing. Israel's primary concern centered on air cover for its cities against Nasser's long range Illushyn bombers. In addition Ben Gurion sought assurances from Eden that Britain would destroy the Egyptian airforce on the ground. Conveniently the Israeli requirements fitted into proposed British warplans, which provided for the destruction of Egypt's airforce as the first stage.<sup>380</sup> The Israelis were assured of three additional squadrons of French air force fighters and pilots, comprising 45 planes, in addition to the 60 Mystère IVs which had been recently incorporated into the Israeli airforce. Ben Gurion agreed, therefore to let Britain deter the pulverization of the Egyptian airforce'.<sup>381</sup>

Eden advocated the strictest secrecy at Sevres and sought a 'pretext' for Britain joining in hostilities against Egypt. It was agreed that this would be followed by an Anglo - French ultimatum to the two combatants to withdraw their forces 10 miles either side of the Canal, which the Israelis, with prior notice had already accepted. It was conceivable that Nasser would reject the proposal as it included 'the temporary occupation by Anglo French forces of key positions at Port Said, Ismailia and Suez'.<sup>382</sup> Once Egypt had rejected the ultimatum British bombers stationed in Cyprus would destroy their

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<sup>378</sup> R. Macintyre, *Palestine-Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, pp.65-70.

<sup>379</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.98.

<sup>380</sup> K. Love, *Suez*, p.457.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p.465.



airforce, disrupt communications and military capability in preparation for an Anglo French invasion by paratroopers and sea borne forces.<sup>383</sup> With arrangements between the parties complete, the final military and political touches were added to the Sevres Accord.<sup>384</sup>

As arranged, Israel crossed into the Sinai on Monday 29 October 1956, the same day as the seventy - eighth anniversary of the signing of the Constantinople Convention 'respecting the free navigation of the Suez Maritime Canal'.<sup>385</sup> The attack began at 1500 hours with a parachute drop on the Mitla Pass, about 30 miles from the Canal, followed by a three - pronged invasion of the Sinai Peninsula and 'although the British and French were officially neutral at this point, the French were already providing assistance to the Israeli Defence Force'.<sup>386</sup>

#### *New Zealand's Response.*

Not surprisingly, the Israeli invasion on 29 October caught the New Zealand Government completely unaware. Webb's inadequacy in reading diplomatic events in London was evident in a communiqué on 19 October that had suggested the crisis was over. Frank Corner, rueful of Webb's efforts noted to McIntosh on 12 November that Webb 'won't do anything; he just isn't interested; he's in retirement'.<sup>387</sup> The Egyptian concessions at the United Nations also seemed to have indicated a move towards diplomacy and a

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<sup>382</sup> A. Nutting, *Nasser*, pp.163-164.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid. Pineau had stated that 'the ultimatums to Egypt and Israel, based on intervening to protect the canal, were Eden's contribution to the collusion plan' apparently put forward at the first meeting in France 16 October. See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.463; See appendices for full text of Anglo French ultimatum.

<sup>384</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.465.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., p.475.

<sup>386</sup> A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, *Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process*, p.424.

<sup>387</sup> I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, pp.211-212. Henderson (1991), Thakur (1991) and Vital (1967) all note the importance of information in the great-small power relationship. Henderson (1980) also notes 'if the loyal ally appears totally satisfied it will be ignored', refer to J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand*, p.7. Webb's inactivity had further reinforced the image of New Zealand satisfaction with events, and was thus, subsequently ignored by Eden.

renunciation of the use of force by the United Kingdom.<sup>388</sup> However, the statement by Holland on 30 October clearly illustrated New Zealand's ignorance and surprise at events:

When asked to comment on reports of Israel's advance into Egyptian territory, the Prime Minister, Mr. S.G. Holland, emphasised that he had no information on the matter other than from press and radio sources. Clearly, Israel's position as a newly created State surrounded by hostile neighbors is a difficult one for a small country to sustain. Nevertheless, the New Zealand Government cannot but regard with the utmost concern what appears to be a complete disregard of the existing Armistice Agreement between Israel and Egypt. Mr. Holland said that during its period of service on the Security Council, New Zealand had many times urged that Israel and the Arab states should maintain restraint in the face of provocative action and should abide by the Armistice Agreements between them. New Zealand has always taken the view that acts of planned armed retaliation along the frontier are self - defeating in that they merely intensify and extend the range of reprisal and counter - reprisal. We have always emphasised, too, that acts of aggression cannot be condoned.<sup>389</sup>

Holland finally received a message from Eden later on 31 October, stating 'as you know, for a long time the Middle East has been simmering. Now it is boiling over'.<sup>390</sup> He explained it had been obvious that for some time Israel had been 'increasingly restive', and the fear was that they would turn on Jordan.<sup>391</sup> The British Prime Minister also explained:

We have emphasised that we cannot allow a war between Israel and Egypt to block the Suez Canal; that we and the French

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<sup>388</sup> A. Nutting, *Nasser*, p.161. Because of *Royalist's* stationing in the Mediterranean, the United Nations had failed to provide New Zealand with the level of protection, traditionally expected by small states in international organisations. While the crisis was being debated by the international community New Zealand was still tied to British policy by virtue of *Royalist*, and Holland's initial declaration of unconditional support. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

<sup>389</sup> Statement by Holland 30 October 1956 *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.10, October 1956, p.2.

<sup>390</sup> PM 217 1/12. Communiqué from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 31 October 1956.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

would feel bound if war broke out to require both countries to cease hostilities and withdraw from the Canal.

Our latest information is that Israel has accused Egypt of aggression and is delivering a counter - attack. The situation is fluid but we will let you have the latest information when we get it. Our concern in this matter is to stop the fighting and to ensure the safety of the Suez Canal on which so many nations' lives depend. We expect to raise all this at the United Nations in the most appropriate way. Your constant and friendly understanding have given us the greatest encouragement through a period of great tension and I am sure we can look for your continued support until we see this through.<sup>392</sup>

Clearly, Eden's message was far from the truth, as the Prime Minister sought New Zealand's continued support for British policy and perhaps the use of force against Nasser. The Conservative Government had recognised that any military action against Nasser could possibly split the Commonwealth between the new coloured members, (including India, Pakistan, and Ceylon) and the older white members of Australia and New Zealand.<sup>393</sup> Once again Eden needed New Zealand to come out publicly and declare confidence in the United Kingdom's action. Eden had New Zealand tied 'nautically' to the Mediterranean, with the deployment of *Royalist*, now he needed to 'anchor' Wellington's position, with the Government's political support.

Holland's 'unconditional' commitment to the United Kingdom had counted for little in terms of being consulted by Eden on British military plans against Egypt. As noted earlier, all Eden really wanted from the Commonwealth was support and not advice.<sup>394</sup> For better or worse New Zealand was now firmly anchored to the United Kingdom in its military endeavours against Nasser. In the next Chapter we will examine the political and military implications of the deployment of

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, pp.96-97. Nutting (1967) does acknowledge 'Canada could not be relied on to uphold us'; As Thakur (1991) recognises, the United Kingdom was controlling the lines of communication and information to New Zealand, and in the process molding its views of crisis. See R. Thakur, *Elusive Essence of Size*, pp.276-277.

<sup>394</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.92.

*Royalist*, with the British Mediterranean fleet, as the Suez crisis moved into a phase of open hostilities.

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## Chapter Four

### *HMNZS Royalist: An Instrument of Compliance.*

#### **31 October – 6 November 1956.**

Had it not been for the deployment of the *HMNZS Royalist* with the United Kingdom's Mediterranean fleet in July 1956, New Zealand might have adopted more pragmatic policies during the Suez crisis. What had begun as a Naval work up and series of exercises, eventually resulted in *Royalist's* commitment to hostilities against Egypt. The aim of this Chapter is to examine the implications of the deployment of *Royalist* on a policy of a small state during a period of international crisis.

On 4 August Eden wrote to Holland thanking him for his declaration of support in opposition to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and stated how he was heartened to know that New Zealand intended to stand solidly beside Britain. He informed Holland that the United Kingdom had no intention of using force against Egypt unless absolutely necessary, though he did explain it was essential 'certain preliminary precautions including the movement of some of some ships of the Royal Navy and land forces,' be made.<sup>395</sup> Eden said 'if military action should ultimately prove necessary it would be of the greatest value to be able to use the cruiser *Royalist*<sup>396</sup> in any Naval operations in the Mediterranean'.<sup>397</sup> The Admiralty meanwhile envisaged the cruiser being used for bombardment and anti - aircraft purposes. Eden, did not ask for permission 'out right' to use the ship, but rather if Britain could 'proceed on the assumption that, subject to your final decision when the time comes, the *Royalist* may proceed in

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<sup>395</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 4 August 1956.

<sup>396</sup> *HMNZS Royalist* had a state of the art radar system and excellent anti - aircraft capabilities.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

company with the Mediterranean fleet'.<sup>398</sup> Eden had a number of objectives for the use of *Royalist* which included:

1. Utilisation of the cruiser's radar and anti aircraft capabilities.
2. Possible military support or involvement of a loyal Commonwealth member in any Naval operations against Egypt.
3. A signal to others (i.e. especially members of the House of Commons) that he had tangible Commonwealth support.

On 6 August, Scoones the United Kingdom's High Commissioner in New Zealand, informed Eden that Holland had agreed to the assumption in paragraph three of your telegram. He also said that Holland was anxious 'this offer should not become known on any account, and if challenged now intends to deny it'.<sup>399</sup> Once again, Holland's decision to allow *Royalists* involvement in British planning bypassed Governmental and parliamentary consultation.<sup>400</sup> Holland's own perceptions were still governed by a desire:

1. To maintain solidarity with the United Kingdom.
2. Leave *Royalist* as an indicator of Commonwealth support, hopefully without committing the vessel to the use of force.
3. To garner more information as to the whereabouts and possible use of the cruiser.

As noted in Chapters Two and Three, New Zealand foreign affairs officials had expressed concern over the stand adopted by Holland. By early August, McIntosh had informed Webb that the 'gravity of the situation as well as [the] possibility of our being called upon to take a difficult decision is well recognised here'. He also asserted that the 'Government would expect to be consulted before [a] final decision

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid. The Admiralty had decided as early as 27 July that the use of the New Zealand cruiser would be beneficial in terms of bombardment and anti aircraft defense in any operation against Egypt. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.126.

<sup>399</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Message from Holland to Eden via UKHC Wellington, 6 August 1956.

[was] taken on [any] action which might involve New Zealand directly'.<sup>401</sup> On 8 August Eden reaffirmed the Admiralty's desire to involve *Royalist* in planning. He assured Holland of his request for absolute secrecy and stated he would send another message 'when we have made further progress with our tentative plans'.<sup>402</sup>

Later that evening Holland made special reference to defence and the Suez Canal in an address to the House of Representatives. On the question of the Navy he declared: 'We should expand our Naval defence preparedness because of the nature of our Island country'. He described the *Royalist* as 'the finest cruiser of its size to be found anywhere in the world'. On the question of Suez he announced his unwavering support to Eden.<sup>403</sup> As we will see this would put him at a great technical disadvantage when the crisis erupted into open warfare at the end of October 1956.

As the Suez crisis continued through August and September 1956 the Admiralty requested permission to extend the cruiser's departure from the Mediterranean beyond the planned date of 4 October.<sup>404</sup> The British Government had been informed that 15 September 1956 was the earliest date that any assault on the Canal could occur. However this date was pushed back and postponed in the wake of diplomatic manoeuvring (including the Menzies mission and SCUA) and American delaying tactics.<sup>405</sup> In a message on 18 September Eden argued that the 'presence of *Royalist* provided a strong stabilizing effect' within the region, and if moved 'might well be misconstrued in hostile quarters as implying a lack of support on

<sup>400</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.126.

<sup>401</sup> PM 217 1/6. Message from McIntosh/Holyoake to Webb, 2 August, 1956.

<sup>402</sup> PRO: PREM. 1094. Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 8 August, 1956. Communiqué received on 9 August, 1956, See Chapter Three for further text. Templeton speculates this message from Eden was an attempt to secure written permission to use the ship. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.127. Eden had approved the Commander of British land forces in the Middle East, General Sir Charles Keightley's plan MUSKETEER to retake the Canal on 11 August. See K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.398.

<sup>403</sup> PM 217 1/6. Press Release, 9 August, 1956, Chapter Three, p.11. for further text.

<sup>404</sup> PM 217 1/8. Cabinet Memorandum, 17 September, 1956.

<sup>405</sup> S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A personal Account*, pp.134-5.

your part for our policy'.<sup>406</sup> While wishing to retain the ship longer, Eden was unwilling to provide more specific information, including anything about the plans for MUSKETEER:

If operations should have to take place, the *Royalist* would have a very valuable contribution to make. We do not know exactly what situation we might be called upon to meet; this will depend on the course of events. I am therefore unable to give any detailed indication of the precise role which we might wish to assign to *Royalist*, should your Government agree. But I can tell you that the fleet may need to be a comparatively long time at sea during which we consider that air attack will be the main danger against which our Naval forces must be prepared. Of all our joint forces in the Mediterranean *Royalist* has the best anti-aircraft armament.<sup>407</sup>

Eden said 'in any event, of course, we fully accept that the use of the ship would be entirely subject to your decision, and to any conditions which you may make'<sup>408</sup>, thus putting the onus back on Holland. However, Eden failed to inform Holland how advanced his military preparations were and about the timetable he had planned for operations against Egypt. If the New Zealand Government had been privy to the United Kingdom's true intentions for Nasser, *Royalist* would have been most likely removed from the Mediterranean fleet.

The Cabinet recognised the implications of the British appeal were far reaching and that their response could well predetermine 'the association of *Royalist* with active measures against Egypt'.<sup>409</sup> A Government paper examined the circumstances, which had influenced the undertaking to the United Kingdom:

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<sup>406</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 18 September, 1956.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid. Eden (1960) makes a weak excuse about the poor level of consultation between Britain and the Commonwealth, 'The question of consultation before action with the Commonwealth countries was one that troubled us greatly. Of course we would have preferred to do this. However sharply pressed, such consultation was not possible in a matter of hours; it must take days at least' See A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.526. As noted in the introduction, the control and provision of information between great/small powers during crises is a powerful influence on foreign policy. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.7; D. Vital, *Inequality of States*, p.30.

<sup>409</sup> PM 217 1/8. Cabinet Memorandum, 17 September, 1956.



- That *Royalist* happened to be taking up Mediterranean duties when the Suez Canal crisis occurred.
- That several declarations of support for Britain's position were made.
- That as there appeared to be a strong prospect of immediate hostilities *Royalist's* value to the United Kingdom at that time was likely to be considerable.<sup>410</sup>

It was noted that New Zealand was the only country with a Naval unit operating with the British and French fleets and therefore, the only country being confronted with the possibility of being engaged in active operations.<sup>411</sup> The memorandum, which perhaps should have been a warning, questioned difficulties in obtaining direct lines of communication between the Government and *Royalist*. Cabinet noted it was necessary 'to emphasise to the New Zealand public that the Government [had] not completely abandoned responsibility for the ship'.<sup>412</sup> The memorandum also raised concerns over the use of the vessel in active operations, speculating how Captain Peter Phipps of the *Royalist* might have the responsibility of deciding whether or not New Zealand was to be at war.<sup>413</sup> We shall further examine the significance of Phipp's situation below.

Holland stressed to Eden on 21 September New Zealand's 'desire at all times of stress and difficulty to play our part in assisting Britain'<sup>414</sup> and agreed that *Royalist's* presence in the Mediterranean had made it possible for New Zealand to assist the United Kingdom during the crisis. The nation he said, wished to 'help further in a practical way' and concluded the cruiser could remain with the British Mediterranean fleet for a longer period. But Holland again requested

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

information regarding the ship, including an estimation of ‘how long *Royalist* might be required’ and an approximate date when the vessel would be released.<sup>415</sup> The Prime Minister sought further assurances that the United Kingdom would inform New Zealand immediately if the situation worsened and actual operations become likely, while emphasising the nation’s undertakings to the United Nations:<sup>416</sup>

I must emphasis that this undertaking is of great importance to us here. The conditions in which use of force might occur cannot, of course, be foreseen, but it is not straining possibility that in certain circumstances New Zealand could with the United Kingdom be charged before the Security Council with aggression. This you will appreciate is a serious prospect for a small country. I consider it essential accordingly that we have the fullest notice of your desire to use *Royalist* actively in order that full consideration may be given to our decisions not only in relation to the ship but also in relation to the necessity for a wide measure of public understanding and support.<sup>417</sup>

On 27 September the stationing of *Royalist* with the Mediterranean fleet came under local media scrutiny. An editorial in the *Auckland Star* attacked comments made by Macdonald, who had promised to keep the country informed of any developments. This, the paper argued, ‘raised more questions than it answered’.<sup>418</sup> The article speculated whether New Zealand still maintained control of the cruiser and if ‘the Captain of the *Royalist* retains, or has been authorised by our Government to exercise discretionary and individual powers to refrain from... a general fleet movement... on Port Said’.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Message from Holland to Eden, 21 September, 1956.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> As noted the importance of international organisations and morality tend to figure markedly in small states foreign policy, See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6. Holland was also concerned of any economic or defence backlash (especially with the United States) in supporting Eden’s stand against Nasser.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> ‘To what extent is the *Royalist* Committed’, *The Auckland Star*, Thursday, 27 September, 1956.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid. the journalist believed these were important questions as New Zealand was currently ‘not at war with any Mediterranean powers’ See the *Auckland Star*. Phipp’s had not received an indication from the Government, of what he should do if the British fleet moved upon Port Said. Templeton (1994) notes that *Royalist* was largely cut off from New

The article surmised ‘Unless the New Zealand Government retains the final say there must be a very real danger that an accident, or too hasty decision could lead to a situation for which New Zealanders would be unprepared and of which they might vehemently disapprove’.<sup>420</sup>

On 5 October Macdonald replied to the paper, exaggerating to the editor ‘that the New Zealand Government and Naval Board are kept fully informed of *Royalist’s* movements’.<sup>421</sup> He argued that the vessel remained under the full control of the New Zealand Government though for practical day to day duties, it was under the direction of the Commander in Chief (CinC) Mediterranean.<sup>422</sup> Macdonald stated: ‘ultimate control over *Royalist’s* movements is retained by the New Zealand authorities and there is no likelihood under any circumstances of any active use of *Royalist* without the prior consideration and full consent of the New Zealand Government’.<sup>423</sup>

On 15 October Eden received a message from the British Admiralty concerning the continued presence of *Royalist* in the Mediterranean. Eden had promised Holland on 29 September that he would let him know how long the United Kingdom intended to retain the cruiser.<sup>424</sup> The CinC Mediterranean suggested that *Royalist* should return to New Zealand in time for Christmas and had made arrangements to sail *H.M.S Kenya* (from Aden) via the Cape, to act as a replacement. It was noted if the cruiser were to reach New Zealand by Christmas (via the Cape) it would have to leave the Mediterranean no later than 25 October.<sup>425</sup> However on 22 October Eden received a

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Zealand sources, and all that Phipps knew was that Holland had said ‘Where Britain goes we go’. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.136.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> PA 8/20/56. Macdonald to A. Wood Esq., Auckland Star, Parliamentary Press Gallery, 5 October, 1956.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. Though in reality *Royalist* could be quickly drawn into conflict, without allowing time to gain consent from Wellington. McIntosh was also skeptical as to whether London was keeping the Government adequately informed on the whereabouts and duties of the vessel.

<sup>424</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Admiralty to Eden, 15 October, 1956.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., pp.2-3.

further message from the Admiralty, holding up any proposed release of *Royalist*:

I am sorry to have had to ask you to hold up my draft telegram for you to send Holland about *Royalist*....

The reason for this was an urgent signal from CinC Mediterranean asking permission to use *Royalist* for CORDAGE as well as MUSKETEER. We clearly could not grant this without express permission from Holland.

I shall quite understand if you do not see your way to pass on the request; but I feel it my duty as First Sea Lord to explain to you the operational reasons which have caused CinC Mediterranean to take such a markedly different attitude over the availability of *Royalist* for CORDAGE (which he urges almost as essential) from that which he adopted over MUSKETEER (where he simply recognized the political value of her presence).

As you are aware *Royalist's* great value is an anti - aircraft and radar picket ship. Since the acquisition of at least 60 Mystères by Israel from the French it has become essential to have a really first class picket ship to give the earliest possible radar warning to the carriers. The Israeli Mystères would be able to launch surprise attacks on our carrier force (which we don't think within the capabilities of the Egyptians) and above all the carriers must be effectively protected.

Apart from *Royalist* there is no thoroughly efficient ship available for this role. *Jamaica*, the only other ship in the Mediterranean, has a weak anti - aircraft armament and her radar has not been brought fully up - to - date. There are no other ships of equal value elsewhere which could be moved.

I see difficulty in persuading Holland to consent. He is clearly anxious to get *Royalist* home; and New Zealand is not, of course, concerned in our treaty with Jordan nor bound by the Tripartite Declaration. On the other hand he may be moved by the critical situation which we now face in the Mediterranean, since on top of the Suez emergency there is a serious risk that Israel may seize her opportunity to attack Jordan. In this event the United Nations could not stand aside, and here New Zealand might find herself brought in. But the United Kingdom would have to act quickly whatever the risks; and, treaty commitments apart, New Zealand would share our interest in preventing a fire in the Levant becoming a Middle East blaze. The carrier task force is essential for effective intervention. The loss of, or serious damage to, one or more carriers from Israeli air attack would be a disastrous price to pay for releasing *Royalist* before the Royal Navy could spare her.

The question is, therefore, whether we are to ask Holland's permission for this use of *Royalist*. Navally speaking I feel I must back the request of CinC Mediterranean that we should do so.<sup>426</sup>

As the communiqué shows, it was evident that the CinC Mediterranean fleet remained unaware of the negotiations entered in to by France, Israel and the United Kingdom to retake the Canal and why Israel had been provided with the *Mystères*. Evidently the plan for giving assistance to Jordan in the event of attack by Israel (CORDAGE) was still regarded by the Navy as having equal priority with the plan for regaining control of the Canal (MUSKETEER).<sup>427</sup> The Royal Navy wished to retain *Royalist* for forward radar and anti-aircraft duties against Israeli jets, whereas the vessel was only of political value for MUSKETEER. What is unmistakable, is in event of attack by Israeli *Mystères*, *Royalist* would have had the duty of defending the carriers (as noted above). *Royalist* was to be the fleet's first line of defence against any Israeli attack and, as such, would become a 'priority target for them'.<sup>428</sup>

After further discussions with Monckton (Minister of Defence) Eden contacted Holland on 25 October, advising him that orders had been given to *Royalist* to sail for New Zealand via the Cape, to be home in time for Christmas.<sup>429</sup> In light of events, the order to disengage *Royalist* seems unusual, especially as Eden had just agreed to make war upon Egypt with France and Israel. The decision to release the New Zealand cruiser may have reflected:

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<sup>426</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Admiralty to Eden. See previous Chapter for notes on Israel and Jordan, 22 October, 1956. No mention was made in the communiqué about the possible repercussions for New Zealand if *Royalist* were involved in hostilities or destroyed. Central to Admiralty thinking was the role that the cruiser would play in the defence of the carrier group. The same day as Admiralty message arrived (22 October) Eden was putting the final touches on the agreement with the French and Israeli's to attack Egypt. The CinC was still considering using *Royalist* for Cordage, which would now, not eventuate.

<sup>427</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.131.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. The cruiser would have also been the main target for any Soviet intervention. The Egyptian Ambassador to Moscow, el-Kouni speculated (after discussions with Khrushchev) that the Russians might attack the British and French fleets in the Mediterranean. See M. Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, Collins, London, 1978, p.72.

<sup>429</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.131.

1. A realisation that Israel was no longer seen as an enemy (rather an ally) and operation CORDAGE would be unlikely.
2. Speculation that United Kingdom vessels would be able to cope with any Egyptian reprisals.
3. The opinion that *Royalist* had already served its political purpose.<sup>430</sup>

Four days later on 29 October, and as planned by the three accomplice States at Sevres, Israel invaded Egypt through the Sinai. In a speech on 30 October Holland recognised that: ‘conditions of tensions and bitterness have continued to prevail along the frontiers between Israel and the adjoining Arab states’ and that tensions had increased in recent weeks and ‘the implications of Israel’s action for the Middle East [were] most serious’.<sup>431</sup> Later that day Holland received a message from Eden stating, ‘as you know, for a long time now the Middle East has been simmering. Now it is boiling over’.<sup>432</sup> He argued that the United Kingdom and France had emphasised that they could not allow conflict between Egypt and Israel to block the Suez Canal, explaining ‘we and the French would feel bound if war broke out to require both countries to cease hostilities and withdraw from the Canal. In the event of refusal we would take any military action necessary to compel each party to conform’.<sup>433</sup> Eden explained both Governments were acting at once to send ‘a requirement’ to Israel and Egypt, demanding the hostilities cease and their troops withdraw from

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<sup>430</sup> What is even more surprising is that *Royalist* was still in the Mediterranean on the 29 October when the Israelis invaded the Sinai, when it had been ordered to depart the region four days earlier. If the vessel was attempting to get to New Zealand before Christmas, *Royalist* should have been at least beyond Gibraltar by 29 October. This theme will be discussed further below.

<sup>431</sup> Statement by Holland on 30 October in *External Affairs Review*. Vol.VI, No.10, October, 1956, p.2.

<sup>432</sup> PM 217 1/12. Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 30 October, 1956.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

both banks of the Canal'.<sup>434</sup> He approached Holland on 31 October with another request:

If you and your colleagues felt able again to put [*Royalist*] at our disposal and allowing her to be used in these policing operations if they prove necessary. If in fact you felt able to agree it would be of real value both because of the importance of *Royalist* in herself and a further public sign of your support.<sup>435</sup>

As noted earlier, Eden's request for use of *Royalist* was remarkable, as the vessel, according to Templeton (1994) had already been released on 25 October and should have been making her way back to New Zealand for Christmas.<sup>436</sup> One can only assume that the cruiser did not leave the central Mediterranean (Messina, Sicily) and rather remained on station for an extra six days, within easy access to the battle zone.<sup>437</sup>

Circumstances within the Mediterranean had changed markedly with the British and French bombing of Egyptian airfields on 31 October, and this was reflected in Holland's anxiety over the new appeal.<sup>438</sup> Eden needed *Royalist* to secure the war zone from possible aerial attack, and ensure that the slow moving convoy, which had departed from Malta on 30 October and contained the bulk of the sea

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid. Eden finally announced 'Your constant and friendly understanding have given us the greatest encouragement through a period of great tension and I am sure we can look forward to your continued support until we can see this through'. See PM 217 1/12. 30 October, 1956.

<sup>435</sup> PM 217 1/8. Cabinet Memorandum, 1 November, 1956.

<sup>436</sup> Templeton (1994) makes little mention of *Royalist's* disengagement on 25 October, and fails to explain why a ship that should have left the Mediterranean was six days later requested to move to a position off Port Said. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.131.

<sup>437</sup> This raises the question why *Royalist* did not sail for New Zealand, and whether Phipps was privy to information regarding operation MUSKETEER, of which the Government had no knowledge.

<sup>438</sup> The Anglo French ultimatum was presented on 30 October with attacks commencing against Egypt after Nasser's rejection the next day. See R. Macintyre, *Palestine – Israel: Conflict in the Modern Holy Land*, p.68.

borne forces, was protected<sup>439</sup>. The Prime Minister was now faced with a complicated situation whereby:

- British use of *Royalist* could lead to New Zealand being accused in the United Nations of violating the Charter.<sup>440</sup>
- New Zealand could be implicated in the British, Israeli, French collusion against Egypt.
- The United Kingdom was preparing to move into key positions along the Canal.
- The Anglo - American rift was finally being brought to the fore, and could have adverse effect on New Zealand relations.<sup>441</sup>

On 1 November Holland made a public statement supporting Eden's action against Egypt and how he had 'full confidence in the United Kingdom's intentions in moving forces into the Canal Zone'.<sup>442</sup> The New Zealand Cabinet had initiated discussions on 1 November over the latest request<sup>443</sup> for the use of *Royalist*. It was recognised that the country had made a number of 'firm declarations of support for the British' and that any 'failure on New Zealand's part to contribute to the British action' could be regarded as a breach of faith.<sup>444</sup> The Cabinet agonised over the fact that *Royalist* had already been stationed with the British Mediterranean fleet for over three months and that her inclusion in Naval planning might make it difficult 'to order her detachment'. It was realised 'if there is a state of war between the United Kingdom and Egypt and *Royalist* takes part in the activities of

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<sup>439</sup> Nutting notes 'The absence of a deep-water port in Cyprus meant that the bulk of any invasion force had to come from Malta, 1000 miles from Egypt'. See A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, p.55.

<sup>440</sup> As a small state and founding member of the United Nations, the possibility of being charged before the Security Council would have concerned the Government immensely.

<sup>441</sup> PM 217 1/8. 1 November, 1956.

<sup>442</sup> Statement by Holland, 1 November, in *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.11, November, 1956, p.2.

<sup>443</sup> Eden's message on 31 October emphasised Britain's need for political solidarity during the critical moment of the crisis, and support for its 'police operations'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.131.

<sup>444</sup> PM 217 1/8. 1 November, 1956, p.2.



the British fleet in the combat zone, then New Zealand will be at war with Egypt'.<sup>445</sup>

Incredible as it may be, Holland still maintained solidarity with the United Kingdom, even as the possibility of New Zealand being involved in the use of force increased:

Whether we like it or not, Britain is our main customer and supplier. If the U.K market goes we have no other. Presuming this is all over in three months, Britain will take stock as to how her friends and relatives behaved when she needed their help most. We have burnt our boats re where Britain goes and stands we go and stand. If we quit now we will never be trusted again.<sup>446</sup>

Cabinet discussions were characterized by considerable nervousness about the consequences of agreeing to *Royalist's* involvement, but there was an equally strong reluctance to say no.<sup>447</sup> The return message to Eden, illustrated Holland's difficulty in arriving at a decision. Again the Prime Minister emphasised his desire to stand beside the United Kingdom, but stopped short at allowing *Royalist* being used for Naval operations:

We have considered the request that our cruiser *Royalist* be available for active operations alongside the armed forces of the United Kingdom and France. There is no need for me to stress New Zealand's strong ties of blood and Empire and our traditional attitude of standing by Britain in her difficulties. I can assure you of our deepest sympathy for the United Kingdom in the situation now confronting her.

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., p.2. The Cabinet acknowledged that 'New Zealand unlike the United Kingdom and France has no great interest in the passage of shipping through the Canal. The present action, it is true, is said not be related to the Suez Canal issue but to be designed to separate the combatants and remove the risk of free passage through the Canal. It is, however, being carried out in contravention of majority feeling in the Security Council'. The memorandum also noted possible difficulties between New Zealand, the United Kingdom and members of the Commonwealth, SEATO and ANZUS.

<sup>446</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.133. Templeton also noted that 'the *Royalist* should not be moved in the meantime. If we are not asked to join in now we will be asked to join in sooner or later. If we refuse to join now but do so later a lot of the virtue of helping will have gone. We must take the greatest care to retain absolute control of all our forces'.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., p.133.

The fact that the United Kingdom and France have taken direct action without the approval of the Security Council is of special significance to New Zealand, which has always paid the utmost attention to its United Nations Charter obligations.

The prospect that New Zealand might find herself divided from other Commonwealth countries and might even be charged before the Security Council or the General Assembly in the role of aggressor if *Royalist* takes part in active operations is one we view with considerable apprehension.

We now find ourselves in the distressing predicament of wishing to stand by the United Kingdom, however great our misgiving on the wisdom of the present course of action, and of not wishing to jeopardize our relations with the United States, upon whom our security in the Pacific largely depends.

We have no desire to embarrass the United Kingdom by any precipitate decision which could be interpreted as a withdrawal of *Royalist* at a critical stage, but our present feeling is that, while she should remain in the Mediterranean for the time being, *Royalist* should not be employed in active operations.

Meanwhile to enable us to consider the matter further, we would require such detailed information as - the present whereabouts of the ship, what role she would be expected to play, some forecast of future plans, likely duration of the present phase in hostilities, and whether it is envisaged that operations will be confined to the Canal Zone.<sup>448</sup>

A general lack of consultation with Eden on the deployment of *Royalist* illustrated the vulnerability of the New Zealand's position. In effect *Royalist*'s stationing had anchored the Government to Eden's Suez Canal policy, and unwittingly it had become a symbol of New Zealand's involvement in an illegal operation.<sup>449</sup> As Eden had noted earlier, any withdrawal of the cruiser could undermine solidarity with the United Kingdom at the moment of greatest need.<sup>450</sup> Holland expressed his distress to Scoones the same day, explaining how ' the

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<sup>448</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1096. Message from Holland to Eden, 1 November 1956.; Holland's request for information on the whereabouts of the ship and what role she was expected to play was more than Eden was willing to provide. See also A. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.526.

<sup>449</sup> Any involvement by *Royalist* in active operations, against Egypt, would have been unsanctioned by the United Nations and therefore illegal. Again such action goes against traditional patterns espoused by the small state theorists, such as Henderson and Thakur (1991), see J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, pp.6 and 11.

<sup>450</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508 Message from Eden to Holland via UKHC Wellington, 18 September, 1956.

Government was now in a very difficult position.’<sup>451</sup> His main points of contention included:

- That New Zealand had not been consulted about the British ultimatum to the Egyptians and Israelis, and would have advocated that the matter be [ideally] referred to the United Nations.
- Allowing *Royalist* to take part in operations against Egypt was tantamount to New Zealand declaring war on Nasser.
- If the matter were brought before the General Assembly, France Britain and New Zealand (if *Royalist* remained on station) would be branded as aggressors.
- For New Zealand to side against America on this issue might put a strain on ANZUS.<sup>452</sup>

Both messages illustrated the immense pressure Holland was under (a) allow *Royalist* to remain with the British Fleet and risk international condemnation, or (b) withdrawal the ship while in the process letting the United Kingdom down during its time of need. The compromise of allowing *Royalist* to remain on station with the Mediterranean fleet, while not participating in any operations left McIntosh aghast. As he explained to Munro the situation was “fraught with obvious hazards”.<sup>453</sup> McIntosh realised *Royalists* presence:

1. May have indicated New Zealand willingness to support the use of force against Egypt.
2. Could lead to the cruiser being inevitably attacked or drawn into military action, regardless of the Government’s wishes.

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<sup>451</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1096. Message from UKHC Wellington to Eden, 1 November, 1956.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.; Scoones agreed that ‘it is clear that [the] subject of *Royalist* is his main trouble. His views do not appear to coincide with public opinion in New Zealand as reflected in such leaders in the more important papers I have so far seen. These support us soundly’ See PRO: PREM.11/1096. 1 November 1956.

3. Could lead to the British sacrificing the vessel in an effort to defend the carrier group (especially if the Soviets intervened).

On 2 November, McIntosh explained to Munro at the emergency session of the General Assembly:

Accordingly you should oppose any resolution condemnatory or critical of the Franco British action. If, however, British and French do not attend or withdraw before the vote, you may, according to prevailing circumstances exercise discretion to abstain.

You will of course be aware that the present situation creates special difficulties for us in the United Nations, particularly in view of statements in the Security Council expressing New Zealand's opposition to the use of force in the settlement of disputes.<sup>454</sup>

The United Nations had been the scene of intense diplomatic wrangling since 30 October when France and the United Kingdom had vetoed a United States sponsored Security Council resolution calling for an Israeli cease - fire (UNSC. 119).<sup>455</sup> The British had argued that there was no action that the Security Council could take which would contribute to the 'twin objectives of stopping the fighting and safeguarding the Canal'.<sup>456</sup> A number of amended resolutions were also vetoed within the Security Council the same day. This led to the Yugoslav representative declaring that the Council 'had been rendered powerless by the use of the veto' and that its members should consider calling an emergency session of the General Assembly under UNGA procedure 'Uniting for Peace'.<sup>457</sup> This movement from the Security Council to the General Assembly now obliged New Zealand to declare

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<sup>453</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.133. *Royalist's* presence may have indicated New Zealand willingness to support the use of force against Egypt.

<sup>454</sup> PM 217 1/12. Message from McIntosh to Munro repeated to NZHCs London, Canberra and Paris, 2 November, 1956.

<sup>455</sup> G. Tomeh, *United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict 1947-74*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1975, p. xvii.

<sup>456</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.881.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p.882.

itself.<sup>458</sup> Dulles introduced a resolution (UNGA. 997)<sup>459</sup> to an emergency session of the General Assembly on 2 November which called for an immediate cease - fire between Egypt and Israel, and a halt to 'the movement of military forces and arms into the area'. Munro, adhering to the brief provided by the Government voted against the American resolution along with the Australian, British, French and Israeli representatives (64:5:6).<sup>460</sup>

On 2 November, Webb informed McIntosh that 'pro - Government' press and media source in Britain were interpreting earlier statements by New Zealand as indicating solidarity with the United Kingdom. Holland's compliance and support for Eden over the nationalisation was now becoming public knowledge and being used as justification for the Anglo French intervention in Egypt.<sup>461</sup>

New Zealand's torrid time in the United Nations continued when Munro again followed the United Kingdom in voting against another resolution (UNGA.999) calling for a cease - fire and withdrawal of forces on 4 November (59:5:12).<sup>462</sup> The same day also saw Munro reluctantly abstain from supporting a United Nations emergency force for the region (57:0:19).<sup>463</sup>

On 4 November Scoones met with Holland and Macdonald where he was presented with the political difficulties associated with

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<sup>458</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.107. New Zealand's stance within the United Nations clearly indicated how Holland's compliant stance and the provision of the *Royalist* had locked the nation into British policy. In an effort to maintain solidarity with the United Kingdom, New Zealand was forced to vote in favour of unsanctioned international aggression, thus compromising its morality and commitment to the notion of collective security. This behaviour again runs counter to the traditional patterns of small state behaviour espoused by Henderson (1991). See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6; David Vital's (1967) notion of 'nonforcible pressure' seems plainly evident during this phase of the crisis as New Zealand felt obliged (and was bound by *Royalist*) to support its larger ally. See D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p.122.

<sup>459</sup> J. Tomeh, *United Nations Resolutions*, p. xii.

<sup>460</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, p.933.

<sup>461</sup> PM 217 1/12. Message from NZHC London to McIntosh, 2 November, 1956. On 1 November Eden noted in the House of Commons that 'The Prime Minister of New Zealand has also spoken in a similar sense of support...he said that while admitting that several features of the situation were disturbing...he had full confidence in Britain's intentions'. See *External Affairs Review*, Vol.VI, No.11, November, p.37.

<sup>462</sup> J. Tomeh, *United Nations Resolutions*, p.xii.

the deployment of *Royalist*. Holland pointed out that the United Kingdom's original objective of threatening to use force against Egypt when Nasser seized the Canal and the avowed objective of the present use of force was too thin to impress world opinion. He emphasized that he had not found it easy to come out in support of the United Kingdom's action and that he was being pressed by the Labour opposition to recall Parliament to discuss the situation.<sup>464</sup> Again the Prime Minister complained at the lack of information and consultation on *Royalist*, and especially with regard to its location and use.<sup>465</sup> Scoones reminded Holland that Eden had mentioned in his telegram on 31 October, the 'use' of *Royalist* was entirely up to the New Zealand Government. After the meeting the High Commissioner informed Eden:

It became clear that Mr. Holland did not want to be put in the position of saying no. He suggested to me that it would be of the utmost help to him if the United Kingdom would send him a telegram on the lines that they had reassessed the situation and found that they could do without *Royalist*, which could continue on her voyage.

I think Mr. Holland is genuinely up against it politically over *Royalist*.<sup>466</sup>

The next day, 5 November, Eden finally allayed Holland's fears, after the convoy from Malta had 'safely' reached the combat zone, off Port Said:

Events have moved fast since my message of 30 October and it now seems that the state of affairs in which the *Royalist* would have been of the greatest possible value to use—namely, in

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<sup>463</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.111.; See J.Tomeh, *United Nations Resolutions*, p.33.

<sup>464</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1096. Message to Eden from UKHC Wellington, 4 November 1956.; Holland feared that the Labour party would scrutinize the Government's handling of the crisis and ask questions about the operational status of *Royalist* for which he would be unable to provide adequate answers.

<sup>465</sup> As noted earlier, *Royalist* should have begun its departure from the Mediterranean on 25 October 1956. It seems however, that Phipp's had remained in the 'Central to Eastern' Mediterranean without the authority of the New Zealand Government.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

dealing with heavy air attacks on our ships - will now not materialize.

I suggest, therefore, that *Royalist* should forthwith be sailed for New Zealand via the Cape. If I have your agreement at once to this course, sailing orders could be given in time to afford her a good prospect of reaching New Zealand by Christmas.

I need hardly repeat how valuable *Royalist* has been and how much we appreciated having her available all this time.<sup>467</sup>

On 6 November an unnamed External Affairs document, possibly written by McIntosh, asserted that although New Zealand had been kept informed during the crisis they had not been consulted. The writer correctly surmised the impediment *Royalist* had been to the formulation of foreign policy:

New Zealand's situation has been complicated by the presence of our ship in the Mediterranean. We did not want to withdraw it, but equally we did not want to put ourselves in the position of taking part in an operation, which ran counter to our United Nations obligations.<sup>468</sup>

In the next Chapter we focus on the *Royalist* during the outbreak of hostilities and examine two important questions:

- (a) Did *Royalist* cross the military threshold, and involve New Zealand as a fellow aggressor state with Britain and France.
- (b) Violate international law with the seizure, boarding and search of a fleeing dhow.

What were the implications of (a) and (b) for New Zealand foreign policy during and after the Suez crisis.

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<sup>467</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508. Message from Eden to Holland 4 November 1956, forwarded by UKHC Wellington 5 November 1956.

<sup>468</sup> PM 217 1/12. Middle East crisis, 6 November, 1956. On 12 November McIntosh noted to Corner: 'I am not at all convinced that *Royalist* was not for some days part of the invasion fleet'. See I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.213.

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## *Chapter Five.*

### *Royalist and the Crossing of the Military Threshold.*

#### *Meat in the sandwich.*

We have seen that the *Royalist* served as a major obstacle to New Zealand policy during the unfolding Suez crisis. While it attested to New Zealand's solidarity with Great Britain, it denied the Government the flexibility to devise different policy options in the midst of the call by the United Nations Security Council to desist from further conflict and attempts by the United General Assembly to diffuse the crisis. In short, the *Royalist* might best be described as an 'anchor' around the neck of the Government holding it firmly to the policies of the United Kingdom, while being dragged deeper into the conflict with Nasser and potentially the Soviet Union. So pivotal was *Royalist* to understanding the difficulties associated with New Zealand's policy over Suez that it is necessary to examine in more detail the circumstances associated with the procurement of *Royalist* and the nature of its deployment with the British fleet leading up to, and during the Suez crisis. Templeton (1994) argues that *Royalist* avoided active involvement in Naval military operations by 'a hair's breadth'<sup>469</sup> and this conclusion has been adopted by previous Governments since 1956. Subsequently, the crew of the *Royalist*, have been denied recognition as having served in a warzone. We believe that the evidence needs to be redressed, and that those serving on *Royalist* during this critical period be given the recognition which they truly deserve.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.138.

<sup>470</sup> 'Recognition' has thus been denied to the crew of *HMNZS Royalist*, and over the years this has led to considerable correspondence between personnel and Government. However, Government still rigidly holds to the view that *Royalist* was not involved in military operations during the Suez crisis, see M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.136.



### *Perspective on HMNZS Royalist.*

The *Royalist's* was launched on 25 August 1943 and was primarily designed as an escort for North Atlantic shipping during the Second World War. The improved Dido class cruiser had a displacement of over 5700 tons and a crew of between 535 - 551 (see photograph in appendices).<sup>471</sup>

The New Zealand Government had expressed interest to the United Kingdom in the purchase of new frigates in 1955 to replace its ageing Navy and in particular the country's only cruiser *HMNZS Bellona*. After consultation with the Royal Navy, Prime Minister Sidney Holland abandoned the notion of two frigates in favour of another Dido class cruiser, the *Royalist*.<sup>472</sup> The Admiralty argued that another large ship was necessary as 'a result of New Zealand's long coastline' and importance in terms of 'sea communication'.<sup>473</sup> It was also announced that only another cruiser would provide the 'gunpower to deal with raiders in event of trouble' and support for aircraft carriers that could be operating within the Pacific.<sup>474</sup> In retrospect the need for *Royalist* was based on World War Two strategic perspectives, following the fall of Singapore (1942).

The British Admiralty had spent £3 million on *Royalist's* new refit, which included new air warning radar and armament guidance systems, though there was speculation that no further modification of the other Dido class cruisers would occur due to the excessive costs:

The Prime Minister asked...whether it was the only one that was being reconditioned and whether, therefore, it might be an orphan. The United Kingdom representatives were all most

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<sup>471</sup> Janes Information Group, *Janes Fighting Ships of World War II*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Butler and Tanner Ltd, London, 1989, p.40.

<sup>472</sup> Statement by Holland in *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.305, 22 March-6 May, 1955, p.22.

<sup>473</sup> It was argued that the purchase of another cruiser would be cheaper than the option of two frigates. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.123.

<sup>474</sup> I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.188.

emphatic that this was not the case. It had been modified ...for service in the Royal Navy and the only reason they had not modernized the other four cruisers of the class was the fact that they did not have the cash to do it.<sup>475</sup>

Criticism and misgivings of the purchase was forthcoming from certain External Affairs officials. Corner believed that the vessel was entirely unsuited to New Zealand's purposes and that the Navy would 'have to think not in terms of what should be done but in terms of what can be done with this ship'. It was explained that *Royalist's* main armament, the 5.25 inch gun was designed for anti - aircraft purposes, a point that should not be over looked during the Suez crisis, but she 'had neither the range nor the 6 - inch guns which would have made her suitable, as the British had put to Holland, for dealing with surface ships'.<sup>476</sup> Corner also suggested to McIntosh:

- That the vessel was an embarrassment to the Admiralty.
- That the vessel could not even get to Tahiti without refueling.
- That *Royalist* was the only ship in the Navy that takes 5.25 inch ammunition (six or four inch is the usual); and the ammunition can only be made in the United Kingdom.
- That the vessel was crammed with 'new type equipment little of which will be useful for the sort of work New Zealand would have to do'.
- That the vessel's living conditions were 'cramped' and 'foul aired'.<sup>477</sup>

Comments from the 1956 crew of *Royalist* seemed to indicate that the conditions onboard 'were no better than that of the *Bellona*',<sup>478</sup> though attempts had been made 'to improve habitability' such as the

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p.187. The reconditioned vessel was to cost the New Zealand Government £4 million. See *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.305, 22 March-6May, 1955, p.24.

<sup>476</sup> I. McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p.186.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>478</sup> Statement by Able Seaman (sonar operator) D. Stephens, July 1999, p.1.

provision of a ship's company recreation space.<sup>479</sup> Regardless of the living conditions the cruiser had been rigged with a state of the art and 'impressive radar fit', which included the following systems:<sup>480</sup>

- Long range air warning – '960', range 250 kilometers.
- Height finding and surveillance – '277Q', range 200 kilometers.
- Surface/low - angle air search and target indication – '293Q', range 50 Kilometers.
- Control to main anti aircraft armament and surface engagements in *Royalist*, '275'.<sup>481</sup>

The vessel that was finally offered to the New Zealand Government, was in the words of Herlihy (1999):

A World War Two built Dido class cruiser, which except for a new bridge structure and mast system retained the remainder of its original hull and upper deck structure. The new bridge structure provided for open and enclosed navigational bridge, and operational nerve center.

The ship was rigged for [operation] in a nuclear fallout environment and had a very good Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defense (NBCD) Headquarters, in addition *Royalist* had a very good air conditioning and air recirculating system and upper deck prewetting system to cater for nuclear fallout.<sup>482</sup>

Obviously the Ministry of External Affairs and personnel who served aboard *Royalist* viewed the new cruiser in a differing light. Vennell (1999) noted the new outfit, while providing state of the art equipment and technology did so at the expense of living conditions and space, though this was nothing new to *RNZN* personnel.<sup>483</sup> The outmoded

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<sup>479</sup> Correspondence from Commander Kit Vennell *RNZN* (Rtd), to Commander Richard Jackson RAN Staff College, 18 August 1997, p.10.

<sup>480</sup> R. Miles, *Surviving the Tide: The Case for a Corvette Navy*, Robert F.F. Miles, Timaru, 1998, p.19.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.

<sup>482</sup> Statement from Commander D.B Herlihy (Rtd) *RNZN*, 23 July 1999.

<sup>483</sup> Comments from the crew of *Royalist* tend to indicate a satisfaction with the modernisation of the vessel. However all were well aware of the cruiser's vintage; Commander Kit Vennell wrote 'For the junior ratings things had not changed otherwise. Men still slept in steel tunnels-Broadside messing still prevailed'.

cruiser *Bellona* sailed for the United Kingdom on 14 October 1955 where it reverted back to the Royal Navy before being scrapped in 1959.<sup>484</sup> Once there the crew was transferred to the new cruiser to begin their training and 'work up' with the British Mediterranean fleet. Holland was present at the 'hand - over' ceremony in July 1956, which coincided with the Prime Ministers Conference in London. Vennell (1999) recalls that *Royalist's* Captain Peter Phipps finally appeared to endorse the new purchase in his speech, stating that he had been wrong in opposing the purchase of a new cruiser.<sup>485</sup>

*Royalist* sailed from Plymouth at noon on 16 July, reaching Gibraltar on 19 July 1956. She entered the Mediterranean on 21 July reaching Malta to undertake exercises with the British fleet, a mere two days before Nasser's expropriation of the Canal.<sup>486</sup>

#### ***Naval Operations and the Work Up***<sup>487</sup>

On Monday 30 July the New Zealand cruiser began her work up with the British fleet which continued unabated for the next three weeks.<sup>488</sup> The exercises covered every conceivable aspect of Naval warfare including atomic, biological and nuclear contingencies, engineering and general seamanship.<sup>489</sup> The *RNZN* had never had a ship with such a sophisticated Action Information Organisation and every opportunity was taken during the work - up by the ship's company to build on their training, previously undertaken in England. Exercises included control of carrier borne combat air patrol fighters which were

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<sup>484</sup> M. Burgess, *The Royal New Zealand Navy*, Allied Press Ltd., Dunedin, 1981, p.32.

<sup>485</sup> Correspondence from Kit Vennell, p.10. Vennell states that Phipps was an advocate of the newer generation frigates; Phipps rose to become the Chief of Defence Staff, Military adviser, New Zealand's representative at SEATO and member of the Naval Board (1957).

<sup>486</sup> Statements from Commander D.B. Herlihy.

<sup>487</sup> This section shall primarily focus upon correspondence and notes provided by Commander D.B Herlihy (Rtd.), *RNZN*. I wish to acknowledge Commander Herlihy's assistance and help in the recreation of *Royalist's* work up and stationing within the Mediterranean.

<sup>488</sup> *Royalist* had entered the Mediterranean within a day of Holland declaring his 'unconditional support' to the United Kingdom. It was not noted whether the Prime Minister was aware of the cruiser's location, and of course implications of its deployment with the British fleet, when he made his declaration.

<sup>489</sup> Article by Commander D.B Herlihy (Rtd.), *RNZN*, *Suez Canal Crisis: HMNZS Royalist involvement*.

directed against attacking RAF aircraft, bombardment and firing against battle practice targets, including night shoots, AA firings against winged targets and anti 'E' Boat firings against radio controlled targets (see photograph in appendices).<sup>490</sup>

By the middle of August and as a result of the increasing tensions in the Canal Zone, the focus of the cruiser's exercises shifted to specific duties. In the words of Commander T.C.M. Raven (1999):

During August it became apparent that we could be delayed in our home coming to New Zealand due to the Suez escalation. It became apparent when the Royal Navy Staff began later to take far more interest in the ship as an operational unit and part of the Mediterranean Fleet.<sup>491</sup>

The cruiser's recent 'refit' and modernisation led to *Royalist's* designation as 'picket ship' for the British aircraft carriers and 'in keeping with this, aircraft direction training was given priority with gunnery in all its forms running a close second'.<sup>492</sup> With the training successfully completed by 21 August, a series of major fleet exercises were undertaken with numerous Royal Navy vessels including the *HMS Jamaica*. *Royalist* was designated as a control ship for anti - aircraft co-ordination exercises, followed later by air defence training, 'E' boat screening and bombardment. Upon rendezvousing with the British aircraft carriers *HMS Eagle* and *HMS Bulwark* (see photographs in appendices) '*Royalist* commenced her first radar picket exercise' which involved the cruiser being stationed thirty miles inshore of *Eagle* as an aircraft defence picket.<sup>493</sup> The drills included mock strikes against the carrier group operating out of Malta and reply

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Statements by Commander T.C.M. Raven MBE, RNZN (Rtd.), 29 July 1999, ex Royal Navy Petty Officer and Radar Instructor, In charge of all radar plotters in ship Action Information Organisation.

<sup>492</sup> Commander D.B. Herlihy.

<sup>493</sup> Gorst and Lucas include *Royalist* as part of the British Mediterranean fleet in July 1956, 'The British Mediterranean fleet comprised only one carrier group, built around the *HMS Eagle*, supported by the *HMNZS Royalist* and eight destroyers, including three of the new *Daring* class'. A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, *Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process*, p.397.

retaliatory attacks from *Eagle*. *Royalist's* role was the detection of incoming attacks on its 'long range and low flyer warning radar' and compiling and reporting their 'air picture to the fleet'.<sup>494</sup> In addition, the cruiser maintained control of a combat air patrol, which it attempted to direct towards the attacking aircraft.<sup>495</sup> The following week it participated in harbour plotting, bombardment and communication exercises and was again instructed in 'E' boat threats. In short, such exercises might have well been a rehearsal for operation MUSKETEER, to force Nasser to disgorge the Canal.<sup>496</sup>

*Royalist* was provided with a Royal Artillery advisor as the Naval gunfire liaison officer, to assist in the perceived bombardment role. Further trials followed, which included live firing at a radio controlled 'E' Boat target, AA firings and bombardment. A similar exercise was carried out the next day with attacks by aircraft, followed by night attacks by Destroyers providing 'E' boat profiles. On this occasion the French ship *Georges Leygues* took part in the exercises.<sup>497</sup> These exercises continued until 15 September when the *Royalist* sailed on a limited Mediterranean cruise, visiting a number of Mediterranean ports including Marseilles and Naples before returning to Malta on 2 October.

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<sup>494</sup> D.B. Herlihy; Comments made Commanders Herlihy and Raven are further reinforced by the views of Able Seaman D.A Stephens (Rtd.) who also served aboard *Royalist*. Stephens also had the sub - qualification of underwater control second class (sonar), and was stationed in the Asdic (sonar) compartment. Stephen's states that *Royalist* conducted 'extensive bombardment, escorting duties and air direction training'. See statements by Able Seaman sonar operator David Stephens 5 August 1999.

<sup>495</sup> Commander Raven agrees stating 'A particular role practiced during work-up and later with the fleet [was] to control Combat Air Patrols (C.A.Ps) assigned from the carriers in the interception of incoming enemy air raids'. See Statements by Commander Raven.

<sup>496</sup> Lloyd notes on 10 August 1956 the 'Egypt Committee had accepted the Chiefs of Staff's advice that the best plan of attack upon Egypt was a full scale assault on Alexandria...this plan was called Musketeer.' See S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account*, p.134; It would have been extremely unlikely that the New Zealand Government would have realised that *Royalist* was training for possible operations against Egypt.

<sup>497</sup> D.B. Herlihy; It was obvious that E boats were a threat to *Royal Navy* and *Royal New Zealand Navy* vessels in the Mediterranean. A question was presented to Selwyn Lloyd on 25 April 1956 asking whether he was aware 'that the Government of Egypt [had] received 19 motor-torpedo boats, 200 MiG fighters, 100 tanks and six submarines?'. See *Official Report Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons 1955-6, Vol.551, April 10- April 27, London Her Majesty Statistics, 1956, p.1757*. On 18 September 1956, the Mediterranean

The third major fleet exercise commenced on 4 October and was 'designed to rehearse the landing of an assault force against air, surface and submarine opposition'. The fleet was again subjected to low flying attacks by jet aircraft, though this time 'the whole gambit of procedures associated with an air defence picket showed great improvement on the previous exercises',<sup>498</sup> the evenings saw further training in submarine attacks. On the completion of the exercise Herlihy (1999) noted how the flotilla returned to Grand Harbour in Malta, to train the ship's boarding parties, prize crews and landing parties. A group of four officers and fifty - eight ratings from *Royalist* were sent to the Royal Marine Training Centre.<sup>499</sup>

On 13 October Phipps attended a senior officers meeting where he learnt more exercises were going to be undertaken, followed by a down - sizing of the fleet. Two days later the CinC informed Phipps that on completion of the training he would recommend the cruiser's release from the fleet and return back to New Zealand. On 19 October the directive was reversed, the CinC informing Phipps that his previous order for *Royalist* to sail to Gibraltar could not be approved<sup>500</sup> as a large - scale communications exercise had been planned for next week in the vicinity of Cyprus. The exercise, known as operation BOATHOOK provided the United Kingdom with an excuse for assembling the fleet in preparation for operation MUSKETEER (REVISE). The CinC of the Mediterranean fleet was instructed to have his fleet on 72 hours notice for either operation CORDAGE (defence of Jordan against any attack from Israel) or MUSKETEER (REVISE), which was an attack on Egypt to regain control of the Suez Canal. MUSKETEER and MUSKETEER (REVISE) had been formulated by the United Kingdom a number of

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CinC, a Vice Admiral and Commodore visited *Royalist* to address the company. See Commander D.B. Herlihy.

<sup>498</sup> D.B. Herlihy also explained that air direction functions of *Royalist* had 'shown spectacular improvement'.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> It is debatable who Phipps was taking his commands from, the CinC Mediterranean or New Zealand Government.

months earlier with the goal of removing Egyptian control from the Suez Canal area.

*Royalist* received orders on 29 October 1956 to sail from Messina (Sicily) and rendezvous with the fleet replenishment groups and destroyers in preparation for the commencement of operation BOATHOOK.<sup>501</sup> Phipps was informed that the exercise would take place off the coast of Cyprus. This coincided with the Israeli incursion into the Sinai.

### ***30 October–6 November***

During *Royalist*'s passage to Cyprus further gunnery and radar trials were undertaken and on 30 October, the cruiser joined the *RFA Olna* to begin refueling and to wait for the other vessels involved in BOATHOOK to arrive.<sup>502</sup> The British vessels *Eagle*, *Bulwark*, *Albion* and *Jamaica* along with a number of destroyer escorts, in addition to the French aircraft carriers *Arromanches* and *Lafayette* inevitably joined *Royalist* off the coast of Cyprus. Major Bardell, the Royal Navy gunfire support liaison officer was again transferred to the New Zealand cruiser by helicopter,<sup>503</sup> the same day Phipps received a signal from the CinC Mediterranean fleet 'postponing Exercise BOATHOOK'.<sup>504</sup> Phipps was further instructed to open 'sealed orders' pertaining to the occupation of the Suez Canal by force, and in a matter of hours *Royalist* was brought up to a full stage of preparation with defence systems covering air, surface and submarine attack instigated.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Commander Kit Vennell also notes the movement of *Royalist* to the new position south of Cyprus to join the carrier group. *Royalist*'s presence in Messina and movement back towards the central Mediterranean appears to be at variance with orders to leave for New Zealand on 25 October 1956, as noted by M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.131.

<sup>502</sup> See appendices for map.

<sup>503</sup> Both Vennell and Herlihy noted the arrival of Bardell to *Royalist*.

<sup>504</sup> Statements by Commander D.B. Herlihy. BOATHOOK was merely a ruse to assemble Naval forces in preparation for Operation MUSKETEER.

<sup>505</sup> Templeton also notes these series of events. '30 October, Rendezvous made at 1000 with Mediterranean fleet. Exercises cancelled and orders received to open sealed envelope containing operation orders for occupation of the Canal. Accordingly, ship brought to war preparedness, W/T silence imposed and censorship of mail introduced. First degree of A/S (anti submarine) readiness assumed and ship darkened at 2300. Fleet steaming eastward'. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.137.



Radio silence was observed in accordance with the new orders, as was mail censorship. Life jackets and respirators were issued to personnel on board, with crew in exposed positions of the ship provided with 'anti flash gear'.<sup>506</sup> Damage control parties stationed various equipment and hoses at strategic points, medical crews also positioned supplies at 'section bases' and prepared the wardroom and sickbay as operating and casualty stations.<sup>507</sup> Vennell (1999) noted that 'the Medical Officer, Surgeon Lt. Cdr. D.J (David) Stephen, gave refresher talks on first aid, and under strict accounting, issued morphine to the officers in case of necessity'.<sup>508</sup>

The New Zealanders were detailed on air defence picket duty, with *HMS Alamién* on 31 October, 60 miles to the north of Port Said but according to one version of events and due to the absence of a decision by Holland, *Royalist* remained with the carrier group.<sup>509</sup> At 2230 on 31 October the crew noted the first of the RAF and French bombers leaving to conduct operations against Egypt.<sup>510</sup> In the words of Herlihy (1999) 'there were eleven British aircraft sorties that night...operating from Cyprus and Malta (in addition to French sorties) against five different Egyptian airfields. All these raids were detected, tracked and reported to the fleet by *Royalist*'.<sup>511</sup>

The next evening while escorting the *RFA Olna* and waiting for instructions from the New Zealand Government, *Royalist* was involved in a now much debated event. Herlihy (1999) provides a vivid account of the evening of 1 November:

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid. Both Herlihy and Vennell noted the advanced state of preparation in late October when *Royalist* moved south of Cyprus.

<sup>507</sup> Statement by D.B. Herlihy.

<sup>508</sup> Correspondence by Kit Vennell. Vennell also noted how by mid August the crew believed that the Russians were siding with the Egyptians, and that the Suez crisis might possibly be a prelude to World War Three.

<sup>509</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p137.; See appendices for map.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Statements by D.B. Herlihy. Miles also notes that *Royalist* was left in a position to monitor the air war and communicate and direct British fighter-bombers. He also states, 'As McIntosh, the Head of the New Zealand Diplomatic service suspected, New Zealand's ship was for a time part of the invasion force and never turned off its radar, communications, electronic warfare and voice channels'. See R. Miles, *Surviving the Tide*, p.21.

The ship was in defence watches, which required key elements of the armament and operation systems and the NCBD Organisation to be closed up, while undertaking the escort of RFA *Olna*. In the early evening prior to sunset, which was at about 1655 hours, the after Gunnery Directors crew consisting of the Director Officer Commissioned Boson Harold Richard's Royal Navy, Director Layer Petty Officer Frederick Hockenhull and the Director Trainer Able Seaman Carl Cain, were carrying out a standard visual sweep of the sea out to horizon using their high powered binoculars. During a sweep Petty Officer Hockenhull observed two low lying vessels on the crest of a swell turning towards *Royalist* and RFA *Olna* and showing very large bow waves that indicated they were travelling at speed. Petty Officer Hockenhull estimated that the vessels were at a range of about 8 NM, were proceeding at about 30 knots, which he estimated, on the size of the vessels bow wave. The sightings were confirmed by both the Director Officer Boson Richard's and the Trainer Able Seaman Cain as the vessels continued to head towards *Royalist* and *Olna*.

At this point the ship's armament was split into two and the aft director was being controlled by the aft Gunnery Transmitting Station (T.S). When this visual contact was made, the after Director Officer reported the contact to the T.S Officer, Lieutenant G.W. Glyde RNZN, and the GDR. This report was in turn passed to the Command, Captain Peter Phipps RNZN, and the Operations Room where it was plotted on the Local Operations Plot. On receiving this report the Command ordered action stations and the defence watch team in the aft TS continued to track the vessel from the aft directors intermittent type 275 radar contact ...By this time it was getting dark and with the ship at action stations it was turned towards the targets but the forward gunnery T.S system 'G' Rate Unit (GRU) toppled its top line of sight Gyro and when this occurred all gun turrets were switched across to the aft T.S control and a target solution was obtained on the vessels. This solution was made possible when the targets turned away from *Royalist* and they provided a good radar profile, which in turn permitted type 275 radar to obtain a radar lock on them.

When the ship went to action stations, the sonar operators, Able Seaman David Stephen's and Athol Mitchell, closed up the Sonar Control Room in the bowels of the ship, were under the control of the ship's Torpedo and Anti Submarine instructor Petty Officer George Speary. Both Petty Officer Speary and Able Seaman Stephens have since stated that High Hydrophone Effect (HE) on type 149 sonar was detected during their HE sweeps and it is reasonable to accept that in this open sea environment that this high HE could only come from high speed

vessels and could not be attributed to the slow speed (steam turbinised?) engine RFA *Olna*.

With the ship closed up at action stations and it now being dark, the Command ordered that the targets be illuminated with star shell and this was done by using the 5.25 - inch main gunnery armament. The star shell illumination was fired by both B and X turrets in two groups of three star shells. The first group of star shells illuminated the targets clearly in the DAB Sights of both the action (forward) and aft director layer and trainer who at this time were Petty Officer Hockenhuil and Able Seaman Terrence Cosgrove respectively... Able Seaman Cain recalls that after the illumination had taken place the director layer reported on Armament Broadcast that they had observed the vessels and passed enemy inclination and assessed speed to the aft TS Officer. *HMNZS Royalist* continued towards the target, that had turned away at high speed, and continued to increase speed to 28 knots while in pursuit. As the ship's speed increased this degraded the HE that the sonar operators were holding on the targets and eventually the ships hull noise was so great that the HE effect was lost.<sup>512</sup>

On 2 November *Royalist* also received a report suggesting a submarine had been detected within the region which resulted in Phipps withdrawing cruiser to the South East with the tanker *Olna*.<sup>513</sup>

The next day the CinC Mediterranean acknowledged that *Royalist* was not taking part in any active operations, and if permission had not been received from the New Zealand Government, *Royalist* would be ordered to sail for the Cape by 6 November and replaced with *HMS Ceylon*. The British Admiralty agreed with the

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<sup>512</sup> D.B. Herlihy. Herlihy stated that he had put together an account of the incident based on his knowledge plus that of other personnel on *Royalist* at the time. Able Seaman Stephens (sub qualification of underwater control Second class *sonar*) concurs that he was in the sonar compartment with Mitchell and Speary and that the cruiser did detect HE effect on the passive sonar set, reporting it as high speed surface vessels. Stephens admits however that at 'one time we did report the HE as torpedoes' but noted that 'Flamingos do not give off HE'. Vennell also mentions that a fast approaching target was made on radar ...but that *Royalist* fired only a single star shell after a 1½ hour chase. Raven also believed 'there was enough information on *Royalist* detection system to indicate that the contacts were not a "flock of migrating flamingos", but were small fast moving vessels; Able Seaman M.T. Lauer explained that 'the flamingoes were quite large – about the size of a motor torpedo boat. They produced a solid regular blip on radar and when first contacted were on a collision course and initial sonar reports suggested possible approach of a torpedo'. Statement by Able Seaman/ Radar Plot Operator/ Shallow Water Diver. M.T Lauer, December 1999.

<sup>513</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.137.

CinC and announced that “*Royalist* should now be detached to Malta”.<sup>514</sup>

In a final act that evening, and while in the company of *HMS Undine*, *Royalist* picked up small radar contact 10 miles away.<sup>515</sup> After the E boat incident on the evening of 1 November, the crew had no reason to suspect this new contact was anything less than an enemy craft. By 2300 it had pulled alongside a small Cypriot vessel, with Egyptian crew, *Warda*, which Phipps ordered searched. This action may have constituted an act of ‘aggression’ as *Royalist* was operating against the will of the Security Council, by interfering with the free passage of shipping in international waters.<sup>516</sup> Major F.E. Bardell R.A led the boarding party, where it was learnt that the vessel had fled Port Said during the bombing, of 1 November. The inspection highlighted the poor condition of the vessel and lack of provisions on board. Inevitably Phipps decided that *Royalist* should take the vessel under tow as the cruiser made for Famagusta ‘At 0700 on 5 November, in sight of Greco Light *Warda* was generously provisioned and the tow slipped’.<sup>517</sup>

#### ***Debate over a flock of Flamingos***

Contrary to what a number of *Royalist* personnel say the ‘official version’ of events on 1 November 1956, was that the crew of the cruiser were mistaken in their identification and engagement of hostile E boats.<sup>518</sup> Rather it is argued even today (December 1999) that *Royalist* ‘picked up’ a flock of migrating flamingos. Comments made by Captain Peter Phipps to Malcolm Templeton in 1988, nearly thirty

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid. Even though *Royalist* was not officially taking part in operations against Nasser, any Egyptian attack may not have distinguished between a New Zealand vessel and the British fleet. Besides *Royalist* would have been a fair target because of its escort of a Royal Navy vessel.

<sup>515</sup> RY.0103/242. *HMNZS Royalist* Report of Collision, 11 December 1956.

<sup>516</sup> Technically the boarding of *Warda*, constituted an act of piracy in international waters, as *Royalist* was participating in unsanctioned hostilities against Egypt. Though the issue of *Warda* appeared to be down played within New Zealand Naval reports, the situation could have been entirely different if the boarding party had found weapons, or *Warda* had attempted to evade *Royalist*.

<sup>517</sup> RY.0103/242. *HMNZS Royalist* Report of Collision, 11 December 1956.

- one years after the Suez crisis appear to provide the basis of both Templeton's and the former National Government's argument.<sup>519</sup> While Phipps may have thought that *Royalist* disturbed a flight of migratory birds, no concrete evidence in terms of letters of proceedings/firing orders or ships log appear to have 'survived' to substantiate these claims. This of course creates difficulties in proving the E boat incident actually occurred, which may have been the Government's intention all along. Researchers are therefore left to argue on 'the balance of probability'. If it were proven categorically that *Royalist* contacted and fired upon an Egyptian E Boat, the implications for New Zealand would have been far more severe. For example:

- New Zealand may have been tarnished as a fellow aggressor (with the United Kingdom, France, and Israel) in a post 'Suez world'.
- As a small state, and founding signatory of the United Nations Charter, New Zealand could have found itself charged with aggression before the Security Council.
- Trade and defence links between the United States (via ANZUS), the coloured Commonwealth and New Zealand may have suffered.
- Within the Third World, New Zealand's image would have been tarnished as a supporter of 'neo Colonial' aggression.

Holland's response to the crisis and provision of military support, was evident and this would have created an 'embarrassing' situation, which the nation would have had to endure for years to come. However if the crew had inadvertently identified a flock of flamingos

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<sup>518</sup> PM 217 1/8. New Zealand Navy Secretary to Minister of Defence 'Royalist obtained no radar contacts which were confirmed as motor torpedo boats' 20 February 1957.

<sup>519</sup> See Introduction and note regarding correspondence from Graeme Eskrigge 30 April 1999.

and had not entered a war Zone, it would be difficult to accuse New Zealand of participating in active operations with the United Kingdom against Egypt.

When assessed on a 'scale of probability' claims made by personnel from *Royalist* appear to be substantiated by the following evidence:

1. *Royalist* was in the company of *HMS Olna* on the evening of 1 November 1956.<sup>520</sup>
2. On 1 November personnel on *Royalist* tracked a small fast moving contact which provided strong Hydrophone Effect which was classed as an E Boat. Radar operators on board *Royalist* had been trained in the identification of such craft.
3. The attack was perceived to be real, evasive action was taken and illuminating shells were fired.<sup>521</sup>
4. *Royalist* had been outfitted with accurate 'state of the art' radar and sonar equipment, for the time and this was precisely the reason Eden had argued for her use.<sup>522</sup>
5. That the crew of *Royalist* had spent a number of months conducting variety exercises ('working up') with the British Mediterranean fleet and might have been expected to know the differences between fast moving E boats and flamingos.<sup>523</sup>
6. That Egypt had purchased 19 new motor torpedo boats (E boats) during 1956.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> ADM 219/610. *Table 1. Ships Included in TG.345.4.1. Royalist* 30 October-2 November HMNZS covered tanker *Olna* p.167. See appendices for Command of Allied Naval forces, task force 345.

<sup>521</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.137.

<sup>522</sup> PRO: PREM.11/1508 Admiralty to Eden.

<sup>523</sup> M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p136.

<sup>524</sup> *ORPDHC 1955-56*, Vol.551, April 10-27 1956, p.1757; N. Safran, *From War to War: The Arab-Israeli Confrontation 1948-1967*, Pegasus, New York, 1969, p.210, notes 'The [Egyptian] navy had begun to gather strength. It included some 3000 to 4000 men and the following warships: four destroyers, two ex-Soviet "Skoryi" type and two ex-British "Z" class; five ex-British frigates; two ex-British corvettes; four ex-Soviet minesweepers; and 30 motor torpedo boats (12 from Italy and Britain and the rest from Russia and Yugoslavia).

7. That *Royalist's* radar and surveillance systems was not in question, as it had successfully picked up a small Egyptian dhow, on the night of 3 November (2200 hours) at a range of 10 miles.<sup>525</sup>
8. When the contact was made, visibility was 15miles (The crew argue that the E boats/MTBs were sighted at 8NM on the evening of 1 November 1956).<sup>526</sup>
9. Egyptian motor torpedo boats were still operational in the Eastern Mediterranean as late as 5 November, when carrier launched Sea Hawks attacked three, (destroying two) between Alexandria and Port Said.<sup>527</sup>

### ***The Flamingos Argument.***

Dr Jim Briskie of the Canterbury University Zoology Department notes a number of interesting points in the migratory patterns of birds.<sup>528</sup> He recognizes that the greater flamingo does in fact migrate through the region during the months of November and December,<sup>529</sup> and that such birds do in fact navigate either by the use of the sun or stars. It was also noted (based upon the size and weight of the bird) that flamingo could in fact reach speeds of 65 - 70km per hour - putting the creatures well within the speed of the alleged E boat. The greater flamingo's movement, migration / partial migration and dispersion are 'erratic at some times' and that the birds themselves are 'highly intolerant of human disturbance or close approach' (including low flying aircraft).<sup>530</sup> It has also been noted that birds had been recovered in Cyprus and Persian Gulf States.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> RY.103/242. 11 December 1956, p.1.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>527</sup> PM 217 1/8. Commonwealth Relations Memorandum via UKHC Wellington, 5 November, 1956.

<sup>528</sup> Interview conducted with Dr Jim Briskie 21 September 1999. Briskie provides a caveat, noting that birds like humans are prone to unpredictability, at that at best researchers can only argue typical patterns and probability of actions.

<sup>529</sup> S. Cramp (ed.), *Handbook of the Birds of Europe and the Middle East, and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, p.362. Cramp notes that 1 November appears to be at the absolute outside of these migratory times.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., pp.360-1.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., pp.360-1. The recovery of flamingos in these regions was first recorded in 1975. The fact that the birds are highly intolerant of low flying aircraft, and human disturbance

However Briskie explains that the ‘usual flight patterns’ of migratory birds take them over land for reasons of safety, fresh water and food, as opposed to that of sea. Flamingos ‘wintering in East Mediterranean, chiefly Turkey, Cyprus, Libya and lower Egypt [are] presumably [of] Asiatic origin’ and these ‘migrants pass through [the] Levant’. If fighting had caused the birds to ignore passage through the Sinai to the Nile Delta, it might be argued on the weight of considerable evidence that the birds rather than risk a flight over water where aircraft and shelling was originating, would simply fly to the south and approach Egypt over the Red Sea/Gulf of Aqaba region.<sup>532</sup>

Confusion between a flock of a birds and a surface Naval vessel also seems unusual as birds tend to travel at altitudes of between 300 - 1200 meters over long distances, dropping to lower levels only at landing and take off.<sup>533</sup> Briskie noted the difficulty in identifying birds from a distance and was surprised how the ‘flock’ could be recognised with such certainty as flamingos. This seems all the more remarkable if *Royalist* had been required to fire a star shell to illuminate the area as a result of the winter dusk (est. 1830 hours 1/11/56).<sup>534</sup>

Professor Peter Gough of the University of Canterbury Electrical Engineering Department also raises doubts over the flamingo explanation, by stating that it would be ‘extremely unlikely to impossible’ for migratory birds to give off a detectable Hydrophone Effect, let alone describe it as strong.<sup>535</sup>

These ornithological and engineering facts when held against personnel statements and archival documentation appear to raise very

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could explain why they had abandoned their land route for that of the sea, but does little to explain why they would head in the direction of Naval vessels, which would also create disturbance.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid. It is acknowledged that there is limited migration through the Gulf of Aqaba through November.

<sup>533</sup> In an interview on 23 September 1999 Professor Peter Gough, Electrical Engineering Department University of Canterbury noted that the most migratory birds travel at a height of between 300-1200 meters.

<sup>534</sup> See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.137.

<sup>535</sup> Interview with Professor Peter Gough.



serious doubts over the accuracy of Captain Phipp's explanation. Without concrete evidence such as the cruiser's log all we can do is argue on the basis of probability.<sup>536</sup>

While it is pertinent to question the motivation of Royalist's personnel in arguing their claim that they encountered hostile motor torpedo boats, so too it is pertinent to question why Government spokesman advocate they did not. The answers are obvious and have been mentioned earlier: if the cruiser had engaged an Egyptian motor torpedo boat on the evening of 1 November, New Zealand would have crossed the threshold into war and would have been left wide open for international condemnation, criticism and embarrassment. At the time of the incident Holland was anxiously seeking a way to extricate the cruiser from the Mediterranean. Policy had changed from 31 July 1956 when Holland had declared his unconditional support for Eden. Now the last thing the Government needed was an incident to tie Royalist to British aggression against Egypt.<sup>537</sup>

As we have seen the deployment of the *HMNZS Royalist* to the Eastern Mediterranean seriously impeded the development of an independent and flexible foreign policy by New Zealand during the Suez crisis.<sup>538</sup> The vessel locked Holland to British policy against Nasser and hampered the adoption of alternative diplomatic options. While the cruiser remained with the British fleet Eden maintained a powerful hold over New Zealand. He manipulated Holland's sense of loyalty and passive / compliant policies by emphasising how the warship's presence within the region created a stabilising effect. In his eagerness to comply with and support the United Kingdom, Holland effectively becoming a pawn in the game of great powers by totally renouncing control of *Royalist* during the Suez crisis. Holland's decision to leave *Royalist* in the battle zone after Cabinet discussions

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<sup>536</sup> It does seem unusual that Templeton (1994) accepted Phipp's explanation without any serious comment or further analysis. See M. Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire*, p.137.

<sup>537</sup> As mentioned earlier, Holland advocated support of the United Kingdom to the bitter end, though by this time wiser councils appeared to be recognised.

<sup>538</sup> See appendices for 'Suez clock.'

on 1 November illustrates the actions of a compliant Government without the will to extricate its own Naval vessel from a war zone. This decision to allow the ship to remain with the fleet came at a cost with *Royalist's* engagement of hostile E boats on the evening of 1 November and the illegal seizure and search of *Warda* in international waters on 3 November.<sup>539</sup>

The flock of flamingo's explanation offered by Phipps and acknowledged by Templeton (1994) is patently thin and raises more questions than it answers. The weight of evidence does seem to indicate at 1655 hours on 1 November 1956 *Royalist* encountered hostile craft. Strangely, this explanation does not appear to satisfy Templeton who bases his conclusions on the weight of a single testimony, without the ship's log or concrete documents. Templeton's views have become the official explanation surrounding the deployment of *Royalist*. The flamingo theory, though highly implausible and indeed we must say absurd, may have offered the Holland Government a degree of respite against any charge of aggression, which would have had serious implications for New Zealand's relations with America and the United Nations.

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<sup>539</sup> Ironically enough New Zealand had advocated the rights of free passage in the United Nations Security Council debates in January 1955, when Egypt had searched and seized the *Bat Galim* in September 1954. See R. Macintyre, *Australia, New Zealand and the Suez crisis*, p.3. This behaviour also ran counter to the accepted notion that small states have a high level of support for international norms and conventions. See J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

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## *Retrospect and Prospect*

New Zealand's reaction to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was characterised by Sidney Holland's declaration of unconditional support to the United Kingdom, though this support crossed party lines with Walter Nash also criticising Nasser's act within Parliament. Holland was effectively supporting an outmoded notion of British 'gunboat' diplomacy and Colonialism in a changing world. The decision to allow the *HMNZS Royalist* to remain with the Mediterranean fleet indicated how the Prime Minister desired to support the United Kingdom in a more 'practical manner'. Holland's act, while not exactly mirroring the deployment of the *Pukaki* and *Tutira* to Korean waters in 1950, certainly bore some startling similarities.

Even during this early phase of the crisis New Zealand officials such as McIntosh and Munro could see potential difficulties with Holland's over commitment and ultimate compliance with the policies of the United Kingdom. Both realised that in supporting any aggression against Nasser the country could find itself in violation of the United Nations Charter and at odds with the United States. Even though levels of consultation with the United Kingdom were inadequate McIntosh had garnered enough information to suspect the British were considering the use of force against Nasser.

New Zealand's position at the first London Conference focused primarily on supporting and maintaining political solidarity with the United Kingdom. Holland believed that by backing Britain's hawkish stance Nasser would capitulate and relinquish control of the Canal. Though the London Conference and subsequent Menzies failed to produce 'satisfactory results' for the United Kingdom, Holland still remained supportive of Eden through patriotic statements and willingness to allow *Royalist* to remain with the United Kingdom fleet during a period of increasing tension. It

seemed that Holland wished to maintain political solidarity, in the hope that the United Kingdom would not have to resort to the use of force against Nasser, which could possibly include *Royalist*. Holland's position, was, however steadily eroding other diplomatic alternatives that New Zealand might adopt if the crisis escalated. The formulation of foreign policy was now restricted by:

1. Holland's enthusiastic declaration of 'unconditional support'.
2. The deployment of *Royalist* to the British Mediterranean fleet.

As we have seen, New Zealand's foreign policy was driven by Holland's declaration of unconditional support for the Eighteen Power Proposals between August and October 1956. The second London Conference (SCUA) illustrated the developing gap that was opening up between the United Kingdom and United States. Increasingly it was realised by External Affairs officials that New Zealand would be unable to reconcile both positions within its foreign policy, and therefore opted for continued unconditional support for the United Kingdom. But this had serious shortcomings as it created a position of dependency for New Zealand as Government officials strove to obtain information and consultation regarding a resolution to the crisis from the United Kingdom. It was evident that Eden desired the support and not the consultation of the Commonwealth and while the British Prime Minister was prepared to send Holland the odd message of thanks and encouragement (scraps thrown from the table), his true intentions remained hidden. Webb's optimism with the progress of United Nations negotiations on 19 October illustrated the lack of consultation from Eden, who had already covertly met with the French to discuss Nasser's overthrow by force. Holland's compliant acceptance of the lack of information emanating from London further illustrated New Zealand's passive behaviour.

The deployment of *Royalist* with the British Mediterranean fleet severely hampered New Zealand's policy and decision - making as the Suez crisis reached its climax in the first weeks of November. The deployment impeded the adoption of diplomatic alternatives, and illustrated an inflexible 'compliant' foreign policy that had been adopted by Holland. Effectively *Royalist* locked the Government into British policy against Nasser, which eventually dragged New Zealand into Naval hostilities against Egypt. In effect, without the knowledge of the New Zealand Government, *Royalist* crossed the military threshold into a warlike situation in support of Anglo/French Naval strategy. This was a most serious turn of events, which could have ended disastrously for New Zealand.

Eden manipulated Holland's sense of loyalty by suggesting any withdrawal of *Royalist* would be seen as a lack of support on New Zealand's part for British policy. Eden argued that the cruiser provided a strong stabilising effect within the region, though in effect *Royalist* was providing protection for the aircraft carriers that would eventually cripple Egypt's military capabilities. In his eagerness to comply, Holland seems to have eventually renounced control over *Royalist's* deployment with the Mediterranean fleet. The lack of consultation and information from Eden illustrated the strength of the British position and weakness of New Zealand's in relation to the stationing. The British Prime Minister knew Holland had announced he would support the United Kingdom unconditionally and Eden was merely taking him at his word.

The decision on 1 November to leave *Royalist* in the Mediterranean illustrated a Government unable to make independent decisions about its own Suez policy. Inevitably, Holland's decision to leave *Royalist* in the company of the British Mediterranean fleet led to the ship's involvement in hostilities on the evening of 1 November, when assessed on a balance of probability.

### *Royalist's involvement in hostilities*

Malcolm Templeton (1994) notes that the United Kingdom released *Royalist* before it was involved in hostilities against Egypt, and suggests correctly that the Government at no time gave permission for the vessel to participate in active operations, against Egypt. While it is agreed that Holland did not give permission for the vessel to participate in operations it seems that *Royalist* was involved in aggression against Egypt without the knowledge of Government. The seizure and boarding of the dhow on 3 November, in the face of international disapproval for Anglo French operations in the Mediterranean, appears to have constituted a breach or violation of international law. *Royalist's* pursuit and hunt for raiding E boats on 1 November also constituted a participation in active operations and hostilities against Egypt.

Malcolm Templeton's conclusion that *Royalist* encountered a flock of migrating flamingos on the evening of 1 November in *Ties of Blood and Empire* casts doubt on an otherwise well researched and compiled book. His argument that *Royalist* was within a hairs breadth of being involved in military operations seems seriously flawed in the face of statements from ship's personnel and ornithological and engineering specialists. The former National Government (December 1999) adopted Templeton's conclusions with respect to *Royalist* and used them as the basis of 'historical fact' and policy. In a letter to Lieutenant F.D.S. Huckenhull (Rtd.) on 3 February 1998, Prime Minister Jenny Shipley noted 'the facts surrounding HMNZS *Royalist's* involvement in the Suez crisis are quite clear: the ship did not participate in operations against Egypt'. The Prime Minister also explained how 'a full account of the events of that time is given in Chapter 8 of Malcolm Templeton's book'.<sup>540</sup> From a reconstruction of events it is clear that *Royalist* was stationed within a warzone from 30

October - 6 November 1956, from where allied air sorties were being launched, hostile Egyptian ships like the *Abraham al-Awwal*, *Nasser*, submarines and E boats were operational. That *Royalist* was detailed to escort and protect the *RFA Olna* raises little mention by Templeton, even though a tanker could have been a prime target for Egyptian retaliation. The importance of *Royalist's* escort duty is clearly recognised by Admiralty files.<sup>541</sup>

The retention of *Royalist* by the fleet command until 5 November also raises questions as to whether the vessel was being held in case the slow moving convoy from Malta was attacked by Egyptian or Soviet heavy aircraft. If the Soviet Union had decided to attack the fleet, *Royalist* would have been at the forefront of the carrier group's defence, in a similar position envisaged for Operation CORDAGE.

New Zealand's policy at Suez was committed to achieving maximum political solidarity with the United Kingdom. It was a sheer quirk of fate that *Royalist* was deployed for training with the United Kingdom fleet and it was more than likely that Holland was unaware of *Royalist's* deployment, when he committed New Zealand politically to British Suez policy. As the crisis intensified, New Zealand found it increasingly difficult to withdraw *Royalist* from the fleet because of political reasons and the British view that it was valuable acquisition to operations. It is worth speculating what action Holland might have taken had *Royalist* not been stationed in the Mediterranean at the start of the crisis. Evidence seems to indicate that the National Government would still have come out in support of Eden, as Holland had always stressed the importance of Britain in New Zealand's External Affairs. Though policy would have been symptomatic of compliant or passive behaviour, it would have been extremely unlikely for the Prime Minister to agree to supply a Naval

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<sup>540</sup> Letter from Prime Minister Jenny Shipley to Lieutenant F.D.S Hockenhull, 3 February, 1998.

<sup>541</sup> See appendices.

vessel for military purposes. Government and External Affairs officials would have recognised the folly in deploying a warship in the region without gaining consensus within the Commonwealth and United States.

*Royalist's* presence with the Mediterranean fleet compounded any retreat to the safety of the United Nations, as so often is the recourse of small states during a period of international crisis. Furthermore, 'if' *Royalist* had attacked an Egyptian Naval vessel and we have shown that it most probably did, the country would have also found itself in violation of the Charter, which New Zealand, as a founding signatory, still adhered to.

This thesis has tried to show that New Zealand was governed by an increasingly 'compliant or passive' foreign policy during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis.<sup>542</sup> The adoption of this policy had important ramifications for the nation as it strove to maintain its independence and control of events during the crisis. Holland's initial inflexible declaration of support for the United Kingdom significantly reduced diplomatic maneuverability as the crisis intensified and led to a reduction in substantive consultation between Wellington and London.

New Zealand's policy evolution during the Suez crisis illustrates a number of significant behavioural characteristics, as advocated by East (1978) and Henderson (1991) (see Table. 1). New Zealand's behaviour increasingly reflected a move to 'compliant' and 'passive' policies as the crisis intensified and the Government sought to maintain political solidarity with the United Kingdom. This solidarity when associated with the deployment of *HMNZS Royalist* to the Eastern Mediterranean steadily usurped the New Zealand's independent decision - making.

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<sup>542</sup> See appendices for 'Suez clock'.



**Table 1. Checklist of New Zealand's Foreign Policy During the Suez Crisis in Terms of Small State Theory.**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Characteristic or behaviour.</b>
	<b>x</b>	<b>Low level of participation in world affairs as a result of limited material and human resources.</b>
	<b>x</b>	<b>Narrow scope of foreign policy focusing on regional issues.</b>
<b>✓</b>		<b>Economic focus in foreign policy execution</b>
<b>✓</b>		<b>Emphasis on internationalism, involving participation in regional and international organisations as a means of compensating for limited resources.</b>
	<b>x</b>	<b>Moral emphasis, high level of support for international norms.</b>
<b>✓</b>		<b>Compliant foreign policy.</b>

Source: J. Henderson, *Beyond New Zealand II*, p.6.

A number of traditional patterns of small state behaviour were overshadowed by the policies adopted by Holland during the crisis. New Zealand's foreign policy was clearly operating beyond the 'regional bounds' of the Pacific and South East Asia, with the decision to extend *Royalist's* deployment to the British Mediterranean fleet beyond its original training period. The 1950s had seen a shifting focus towards the Pacific and regional issues, at the expense of defence commitments to the Middle East and Europe. However due to previous World War commitments, and a realisation of how important the oil fields and Canal were to British wellbeing, New Zealand still remained drawn to and interested in, Middle Eastern developments, and politics. This interest was especially

reflected in the concern that the nationalisation could effect the United Kingdom and therefore New Zealand economically. The deployment of *Royalist* hampered any movement by the Government towards the traditional small state sanctuary of the United Nations, as the ship was a symbol of New Zealand's solidarity towards the United Kingdom's hawkish policies against Nasser. (See Table 1.)

The somewhat erratic behaviour of the Government may have reflected the influence of Holland (New Zealand's Executive) in decision - making as noted by Henderson (1991) and Salmore and Salmore (1978). Vital (1967) also recognises that the character of the political Executive sometimes predetermines foreign policy options. Clearly this case study of Suez has illustrated how a small state's foreign policy can be constrained by an Executive's declaration of unconditional support for a larger ally. Subsequent rhetoric from Holland further influenced and directed foreign policy, thus reducing room for diplomatic posturing as the crisis deteriorated.

This research has illustrated how the stationing of the *HMNZS Royalist* with the British Mediterranean fleet hampered the development of diplomatic alternatives unacceptable to the United Kingdom. *Royalist's* deployment likewise reinforced Holland's compliant stance, as any attempt to withdraw the ship would have been seen as a loss of solidarity with the policies of the British Government. As we have seen the cruiser's presence with the Mediterranean fleet created serious difficulties in the modification of policy, especially during the first week of November, as the Government remained bound to British Naval planning.

As the 1 November Cabinet memorandum noted, statements of support had been made to the United Kingdom, and *Royalist* had been stationed with the British Mediterranean fleet for over three months. The deployment of *Royalist* was initially viewed as a means of supporting Eden's efforts, via 'gunboat diplomacy to secure the adoption of the Eighteen Power Proposals to return the Suez Canal

to international administration. The objective of removing Nasser by force remained hidden from New Zealand and as the crisis developed through September and October, Eden continued to manipulate an already 'compliant' Holland to retain control of *Royalist*, by claiming that withdrawal would seriously weaken the capabilities of the fleet. Vital (1967) recognises this action as an example of the vulnerability of small states to 'non forcible' pressure by friendly powers, acknowledging that such influence may be many times greater than that from unfriendly powers.

Henderson (1991) and Thakur (1991) concede while small states are no less crisis prone, they are less likely to pursue military responses. Holland's deployment of *Royalist* again seems to illustrate a divergence from this traditional pattern of small state behaviour, especially when assessed against the probable E boat contact on 1 November. New Zealand's 'compliant/passive' demeanour prevented a disengagement of *Royalist* from the British fleet, and while the cruiser remained in the East Mediterranean until the United Nations sponsored cease - fire on 7 November, New Zealand policy stayed anchored to the United Kingdom.

### ***Lessons From Suez***

New Zealand's involvement in the Suez crisis illustrates a number of important considerations in the future formulation of foreign policy. Firstly, this case study has demonstrated the importance for small states to maintain control in their foreign policy, and achieve adequate levels of consultation during international crises. As has been explained the adoption of a 'compliant' position within small state foreign policy can result in an over commitment and hence vulnerability to the dictates of larger states.

New Zealand's posture during the Suez crisis also demonstrates the importance of gaining consensus amongst allies (such as Australia, United Kingdom and United States) before committing forces to international crises. Operation through international

organisations, such as the United Nations also ensures an element of diplomatic protection and is recognised as the traditional framework within which small states may be expected to manoeuvre. Participation within an international forum usually entails a measure of security and adherence to legal conventions, which also protects the interests of the small state.

New Zealand's involvement during Suez provides a compelling argument for small states to ensure they have information and total control over military units working with other foreign forces. Te Kaha's deployment for policing duties against Iraqi sanctions with the United Nations Multinational Interception Force is a current example of a small state stationing military units, while retaining control within international consensus.

Clearly the example of *Royalist* has indicated the pitfalls for small states in committing forces during times of international crisis, without adequately considering the implications of such deployments.

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*Appendix I*

*1888 Constantinople Convention*

Convention between Great Britain, Germany, Austria - Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia, and Turkey, respecting the free navigation of the Suez Maritime Canal <sup>1</sup>

Signed at Constantinople, 29 October 1888

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India; His Majesty the Emperor of Germany, King of Prussia; His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, King of Bohemia, etc., and Apostolic King of Hungary; His Majesty the King of Spain, and in His name the Queen Regent of the Kingdom; the President of the French Republic; His Majesty the King of Italy; His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, etc.; His Majesty the Emperor of the Russians; and His Majesty the Emperor of the Ottomans;

Wishing to establish, by a Conventional Act, a definitive system of destined to guarantee at all times and for all the Powers, the free use of the Suez Maritime Canal, and thus to complete the system under which navigation of this canal has been placed by the Firman of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1866, (2 Zilkade, 1282) and sanctioning the Concessions of Highness the Khedive,

Have named as their plenipotentiaries

.....  
.....  
.....

Who, have communicated to each other their respective full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed upon the following Articles:

#### Article I

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

Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace.

The Canal shall never be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade

#### Article II

The High Contracting Parties, recognising that the Fresh - Water Canal is indispensable to the Maritime Canal, take note of the engagements of His Highness the khedive towards the Universal Suez Canal Company as regards the fresh water canal; which engagements are stipulated in a Convention bearing the date of the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1863, containing an *expose* and four Articles.

They undertake not to interfere in any way with the security of that Canal and its branches, the working of which shall not be exposed to any attempt at obstruction.

#### Article III

The High Contracting Parties likewise undertake to respect the plant, establishments buildings, and works of the Maritime Canal and the Fresh - Water Canal.

#### Article IV

The Maritime canal remaining open in time of war as a free passage, even to the ships of war belligerents, according to the terms of Article I of the present Treaty, the High Contracting Parties agree that no right of war, no act of hostility, nor any act having for its object to obstruct the free navigation of the Canal shall be committed in the Canal and its ports of

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<sup>1</sup> Commercial No2 (1889) (Suez Canal) ,C.5623.

access, as well as within a radius of three marine miles from those ports, even though the Ottoman Empire should be one of the belligerent Powers . Vessels of war of belligerents shall not revictual or take in stores in the Canal and its ports of access, except in so far as may be strictly necessary. The transit of the aforesaid vessels through the canal shall be effected with the least possible delay, in accordance with the Regulations in force, and without any other intermission than that resulting of the necessities of the service.

Their stay in Port Said and in the roadstead of Suez shall not exceed twenty-four hours, except in cases of distress. In such case they shall be bound to leave as soon as possible. An interval of twenty - four hours shall always elapse between the sailing of a belligerent ship from one of the ports of access and the departure of a ship belonging to the hostile Power.

#### Article V

In time of war belligerent Powers shall not disembark nor embark within the Canal and its ports of access either troops munitions, or materials of war. But in case of accidental hindrance in the Canal, men may be embarked or disembarked at the ports of access by detachments not exceeding 1,000 men, with a corresponding amount of war material.

#### Article VI

Prizes shall be subjected, in all respects, to the same rules as the vessels of war belligerents.

#### Article VII

The Powers shall not keep any vessel of war in the waters of the Canal (including Lake Timash and the Bitter Lakes). Nevertheless, they may station vessels of war in the ports of access of Port Said and Suez, the number of which shall not exceed two for each Power. This right shall not be exercised by belligerents.

### Article VIII

The Agents in Egypt of the Signatory Powers of the present Treaty shall be charged to watch over its execution .In case of any event threatening the security or the free passage of the Canal, they shall meet on the summons of three of their number under the presidency of their Doyen, in order to proceed to the necessary verifications. They shall inform the Khedivial Government of the danger which they may have perceived, in order that that Government may take proper steps to insure the protection and the free use of the Canal. Under any circumstances, they shall meet once a year to take note of the due execution of the Treaty.

The last - mentioned meetings shall take place under the presidency of a Special Commissioner nominated for that purpose by the Imperial Ottoman Government. A Commissioner of the Khedive may also take part in the meeting, and may preside over it in the absence of the Ottoman Commissioner.

They shall especially demand the suppression of any work or the dispersion of any assemblage on either bank of the Canal; the object or effect of which might be to interfere with the liberty and the entire security of the navigation

### Article IX

The Egyptian Government shall, within the limits of its powers resulting from the Firmans, and under the conditions provided for in the present Treaty, take the necessary measures for insuring the execution of the said Treaty.

In case the Egyptian Government shall not have sufficient means at its disposal, it shall call upon the Imperial Ottoman Government, which shall take the necessary measures to respond to such appeal; shall give notice thereof to the Signatory Powers of the Declaration of London of the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1885; and shall, if necessary, concert with them on the subject. The provisions of Articles IV, V, VII and VIII shall not interfere with the measures, which shall be taken in virtue of the present Article.



#### Article X

Similarly, the provisions of Articles IV, V, VII, and VIII shall not interfere with the measures which His Majesty the Sultan and His Highness the Khedive, in the name of His Imperial Majesty, and within the limits of the Firmans granted, might find it necessary to take for securing by their own forces the defence of Egypt and maintenance of public order.

In case His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, or his Highness the Khedive, should find it necessary to avail themselves of the exception for which this Article provides, the Signatory Powers of the Declaration of London shall be notified thereof by the Imperial Ottoman Government.

It is likewise understood that the provisions of the four Articles aforesaid shall in no case occasion any obstacle to the measures which the Imperial Ottoman Government may think it necessary to take in order to insure by its own forces the defence of its other possessions situated on the eastern coast of the Red Sea.

#### Article XI

The measures which shall be taken in the cases provided for by Articles IX and X of the present Treaty shall not interfere with the free use of the Canal. In the same cases, the erection of permanent fortifications contrary to the provisions of Article VIII is prohibited

#### Article XII

The High Contracting Parties, by application of the principle of equality as regards the free use of the Canal, a principle which forms the bases of the present Treaty, agree that none of them shall endeavour to obtain with respect to the Canal territorial or commercial advantages or privileges in any international arrangements which may be concluded. Moreover, the rights of Turkey as the territorial power are reserved.

#### Article XIII

With the exception of the obligations expressly provided by the clauses of the present Treaty, the sovereign rights of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and the rights and immunities of His Highness the Khedive, resulting from the Firmans, are in no way affected.

#### Article XIV

The High Contracting Parties agree that the engagements resulting from the present Treaty shall not be limited by the duration of the Acts of Concession of the Universal Suez Canal Company.

#### Article XV

The stipulations of the present Treaty shall not interfere with the sanitary measures in force in Egypt.

#### Article XVI

The High Contracting Parties undertake to bring the present Treaty to the knowledge of the States which have not signed it, inviting them to accede to it.

#### Article XVII

The present Treaty shall be ratified, and the ratification shall be exchanged at Constantinople within the space of one month or sooner if possible. In faith of which the representative Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Treaty, and have affixed to it the seal of their arms.

Done at Constantinople  
the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the month  
of October in the year 1888.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> D.C. Watt, *Documents on the Suez Crisis 26 July to 6 November 1956*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1957 pp.34-39.

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## *Appendix II*

### *Indian Five Point Proposal*

- That the Constantinople Convention of 1888 governing the operation of the Suez Canal be reviewed to reaffirm its principles and to make such revisions as were necessary today and more particularly incorporating provisions in regards to just and equitable tolls charges and maintenance of the Canal. The Canal should be available to all nations without discrimination. The Canal should be maintained on the basis of tolls and charges being just and equitable and the facilities of the Canal being available to all nations without discrimination. The Canal should be maintained at all times in proper condition and in accordance with modern technical requirements relating to navigation
- That all steps, not excluding a Conference of representatives of the signatories and representatives of the 1888 Convention and all user nations of the Canal for the purpose mentioned in proposal (1) be considered
- That consideration should be given, without prejudice to Egyptian ownership and operation, to association between international interests using the Canal and the “Egyptian Corporation for the Suez Canal”
- That a consultative body of user interests be formed on the basis of geographical representation and interests charged with advisory, consultative and liaison functions.
- That the Government of Egypt transmit to the United Nations the annual report of the “Egyptian Corporation for the Suez Canal”.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> PM 217 1/6. India’s five point plan on Suez, 20 August 1956.

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## *Appendix III*

### *Dulles Proposal*

The Governments approving this statement, being participants in the London Conference on the Suez Canal ...Join in this expression of their views:

1. They affirm that, as stated in the preamble of the Convention of 1888, there should be established “a definite system destined to guarantee at all times, and for all the powers, the free use of the Suez Maritime Canal”
2. Should assure:
  - Efficient and dependable operation, maintenance and development of the Canal as a free, open and secure international waterway in accordance with the principles of the Convention of 1888.
  - Insulation of the operation of the canal from the politics of any nation. Respect for the sovereignty of Egypt.
  - A return to Egypt for the use of the Suez Canal which will be fair and equitable and increasing with enlargements of its capacity and greater use.
  - Canal tolls as low as consistent with the foregoing requirements and, except for c above. No profit.

- Payment to the Universal Suez Canal Company of such sums as may be found its due by way of fair compensation.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> J Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Editorial note 110, p.251.

*Table 2. New Zealand Trade Figures*<sup>546</sup>

Percentage of Total  
Exports taken by  
Nations trading with  
New Zealand

Country	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
United Kingdom	66.44	57.57	65.33	67.21	66.98	65.59	64.47
India	0.42	0.39	0.63	0.41	0.52	0.74	0.55
Pakistan	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.19	0.02	0.01	
Canada	1.94	3.5	2.18	1.26	1.23	1.64	1.45
Australia	2.61	2.07	1.64	1.98	2.64	2.59	3.04
Other Commonwealth countries	1.19	1.38	2.19	2.25	2.42	2.24	2.31
Total Commonwealth countries	72.71	64.97	72.05	73.3	73.81	72.81	71.82

<sup>546</sup> *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1958, 63<sup>rd</sup> Issue, pp.320.344*

*Table 3. New Zealand Trade Figures.*

Percentage of Total Imports  
Taken by New Zealand from  
Primary Trading Nations

Country	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
United Kingdom	60.06	53.59	54.91	56.45	56.63	54.99	53.73
Bahrain	1.07	1	1.17	1.77	1.14	1.14	1.36
Ceylon	1.26	1.84	0.59	1.19	1.24	1	0.95
India	1.41	3.21	1.02	1.1	1.28	1.29	1.47
Pakistan	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04
Malaya and Singapore	0.93	1.97	0.78	1.87	2.26	1.77	1.35
South Africa	0.62	0.83	0.55	0.66	0.58	0.38	0.43
Canada	2.26	2.98	3.52	1.4	2.06	3.34	2.67
Australia	12.05	10.29	10.62	14.45	12.9	12.16	14.19
Fiji	0.71	0.54	1.02	0.84	0.86	0.69	0.62
Other Commonwealth countries	2.21	2.03	1.96	1.62	1.59	1.93	1.99
Total Commonwealth countries	82.6	78.32	76.15	81.37	80.56	78.71	78.8

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*Appendix IV**Tripartite Talks**London, 2-4 August 1956**Statement*<sup>547</sup>

The Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States join in the following statement:

1. They have taken note of the recent action of the Government of Egypt whereby it attempts to nationalise and take over the assets and the responsibilities of the Universal Suez Canal Company. This Company was organised in Egypt in 1856 under a franchise to build the Suez Canal and to operate it until 1968. The Universal Suez Canal Company has always had an international character in terms of its shareholders, directors and operating personnel in terms of its responsibility to assure the efficient functioning as an international waterway of the Suez Canal. In 1888 all the great powers then principally concerned with the international character of the Canal and its free, open and secure use without discrimination joined in the treaty and convention of Constantinople. This provided for the benefit of all the world that the international character of the Canal would be perpetuated for all time, irrespective of the expiration of the concession of the Universal Suez Canal Company. Egypt as recently as October 1954, recognised that the Suez Canal is 'a waterway economically, commercially and strategically of international importance,' and renewed its determination to uphold the Convention of 1888.



2. They do not question the right of Egypt to enjoy and exercise all the powers of a fully sovereign and independent nation, including the generally recognised right, under appropriate conditions, to nationalise assets, not impressed with an international interest, which are subject to its political authority. But the present action involved far more than a simple act of nationalisation. It involves the arbitrary and unilateral seizure by one nation of an international agency which has the responsibility to maintain and to operate the Suez Canal so that all the signatories to, and beneficiaries of, the Treaty of 1888 can effectively enjoy the use of an international waterway upon which the economy, commerce and security of much of the world depends. This seizure is the more serious in its implications because it avowedly was made for the purpose of enabling the Government of Egypt to make the Canal serve the purely national purposes of the Egyptian Government, rather than the international purpose established by the convention of 1888. Furthermore, they deplore the fact that as an incident to its seizure the Egyptian Government has had recourse to what amounts to a denial of fundamental human rights by compelling employees of the Suez Canal Company to continue to work under threat of imprisonment.
3. They consider that the action taken by the Government of Egypt, having regard to all the attendant circumstances threatens the freedom and security of the Canal as guaranteed by the Convention of 1888. This makes it necessary that steps be taken to assure that the parties to

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<sup>547</sup> D.C. Watt, *Documents on the Suez Canal*, pp.50.-5.

the Convention and all other nations entitled to enjoy its benefits shall, in fact, be assured of such benefits.

4. They consider that steps should be taken to establish operating arrangements under an international system designed to assure the continuity of operation of the Canal as guaranteed by the Convention of 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1888, consistently with legitimate Egyptian interests.
  
5. To this end they propose that a Conference should promptly be held of parties to the Convention and other nations largely concerned with the use of the Canal. The invitations to such a Conference, to be held in London, on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1956, will be extended by the Government of the United Kingdom to the Governments named in the Annex to this statement. The Governments of France and the United States are ready to take part in the Conference.

[Annex omitted]

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*Appendix V**Declaration Issued by the Second Suez Canal Conference**At London, 21 September 1956*

1. The members of the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA) shall be those nations which have participated in the second London Suez Conference and which subscribe to the present Declaration, and any other adhering nations which conform to criteria to be laid down hereafter by the Association.
  
2. SCUA shall have the following purposes:
  - (1) To facilitate any steps which may lead to a final or provisional solution of the Suez Canal problem and to assist the members in the exercise of their rights as users of the Suez Canal in consonance with the 1888 Convention, with due regard for the rights of Egypt;
  - (2) To promote safe, orderly, efficient and economical transit of the Canal by vessels of any member nation desiring to avail themselves of the facilities of SCUA and to seek the cooperation of the competent Egyptian authorities for this purpose;
  - (3) To extend its facilities to vessels of non - member nations which desire to use them ;
  - (4) To receive, hold and disburse the revenues accruing from dues and other sums which any user of the Canal may pay to SCUA, without prejudice to existing rights pending a final settlement;
  - (5) To consider and report to members regarding any significant developments affecting the use or non - use of the Canal;
  - (6) To assist in dealing with any practical problems arising from the failure of the Suez Canal adequately to serve its customary and intended purpose and to study forthwith means that may render it feasible to reduce dependence on the Canal;

- (7) To facilitate the execution of any provisional solution of the Suez problem that may be adopted by the United Nations.
3. To carry out the above mentioned purposes:
    - (1) The members shall consult together in a Council on which each member will be represented;
    - (2) The Council shall establish an Executive Group to which it may delegate such power as it deems appropriate;
    - (3) An Administrator, who shall, inter alia, make the necessary arrangements with shipping interests, will be appointed to serve under the direction of the Council through the Executive Group.
  4. Membership may at any time be terminated by giving 60 days' notice.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> J. Noring, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp.557-558.

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## *Appendix VI*

### *Anglo - French Ultimatum to the Governments of Egypt and Israel, 30 October 1956.*

‘The text of the version issued to Egypt follows, with words addressed to Egypt alone distinguished by Italics and the variants for the version issued to Israel in square brackets.’

The Governments of the United Kingdom and France have taken note of hostilities between Israel and Egypt. This event threatens to disrupt the freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal on which the economic life of many nations depend. The Governments of the United Kingdom and France are resolved to do all in their power to bring about the early cessation of hostilities and to safeguard the free passage of the Canal. They accordingly request the Government of *Egypt* [Israel]:

- (a) To stop all warlike action on land, sea and air forthwith;
- (b) To withdraw all *Egyptian* [Israel] military forces to a distance of ten miles *from* [east of] the Canal; *and*
- (c) *In order to guarantee freedom of transit through the Canal by the ships of all nations and in order to separate the belligerents, to accept the temporary occupation by the Anglo - French forces of key positions at Port Said, Ismailiya and Suez.*

[A communication has been addressed to the Government of Egypt requesting them to cease hostilities and to withdraw their forces from the neighbourhood of the Canal, and to accept the temporary occupation by Anglo French forces of key positions at Port Said, Ismailiya and Suez.]

The United Kingdom and French Government request an answer to this communication within twelve hours. If at the expiration of that time one or both Governments have not undertaken to comply with the above requirements, United Kingdom and French forces will

intervene in whatever strength may be necessary to secure compliance.

A similar communication has been sent to the Government of Israel.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> K. Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, p.464.

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## Appendix VII

### *MUSKETEER (REVISE) and CORDAGE*

As early as 31 July 1956 the British Joint Planning Staff had realised that an immediate strike against Nasser was not possible due to the deficiencies of the military in the wake of the Second World War. The J.P.S. had considered an attempt to unseat Nasser by bombing alone, but concluded, “there would be a danger of not achieving the aim, and of a hiatus occurring before [other] forces could be brought to bear against Egypt”.<sup>550</sup> Any ‘follow up’ invasion of Egypt from the sea was further complicated by the lack of landing craft, for both infantry and armor and an ‘airborne assault was precluded by a shortage of transport aircraft and a lack of training for paratroop battalions’.<sup>551</sup> The J.P.S. therefore proposed:

A concept based on posing a ring of forces within striking range of Egypt. When this is sufficiently far advanced, an ultimatum will be issued failing acceptance of which a maritime blockade and air action will be instituted and - and if this is still necessary - and assault will be made on northern end of the canal and a threat posed to Alexandria.<sup>552</sup>

The Chief of Staff noted, even at this early stage of the crisis that ‘it would greatly assist our plans if Israel could be persuaded to arrange a practice of mobilisation a few days before the operation was planned to commence’.<sup>553</sup> General Stockwell acknowledged that the success of the plan, which was named MUSKETEER, rested on a number of factors:

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<sup>550</sup> A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, *Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process*, p.403.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid. MUSKETEER would involve the deployment of Canberra and Valiant bombers to Malta, Cyprus, Libya, Aden and Bahrain. Army units from the United Kingdom would be deployed in the Middle East, freeing Parachute Brigades and Royal Marine Commandos in Cyprus for eventual assault on Port Said. The Mediterranean Fleet would be reinforced with units from the Home Fleet and sufficient landing craft would be organised for an amphibious assault by two commando battalions (1100 men). See A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, *Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process*, p.404.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p.404.; By 2 August the British had agreed to ‘limited joint planning’ with the French. See A. Gorst, and S. Lucas, *Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process*.

- The invasion could not afford to lose or suffer any setbacks.
- Destruction of the Egyptian airforce was a prerequisite for the protection of sea convoys and landings.
- The port and harbor would have to be taken by direct assault supported by Naval gunfire.
- The causeway leading across Lake Maryut to the airfield would have to be secured by airborne forces.
- There must be a quick link up between sea borne and airborne forces.
- The follow forces must embark rapidly to destroy the Egyptian army.
- Invasion must be ready by 15 September.
- The force should not enter Cairo.<sup>554</sup>

By the end of August it had become apparent that any military action against Nasser would be unlikely. As a result of the Menzies mission to Cairo, the J.P.S decided to extend the deadline for initiating MUSKETEER and invasion to 6 October. On 7 September the British Chief of Staff issued a memorandum recommending the operation be altered so as to land at Port Said as opposed to Alexandria. Their reasons for revising MUSKETEER included:

- The beaches off Alexandria were being mined (which suggested a security leak)
- The problems of securing a crossing over the Nile
- Supply concerns
- The close proximity of Port Said to Suez
- The lack of defensive preparations at Suez

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<sup>554</sup> J.A. Sellers, 'Military lessons: The British Perspective', in S.I. Troen, and M. Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai crisis 1956: Retrospective and Appraisal*, Frank Cass and Company, London, 1990, p.25.



- The opportunity of using the canal to supply the invading forces.<sup>555</sup>

Again the operation (now named MUSKETEER REVISE) was pushed further back into October as the United States, France and Britain haggled over the creation of the Users Association, and as the question of Suez was presented to the United Nations. MUSKETEER (REVISE) had three phases:

- Neutralisation of the Egyptian Airforce.
- An Aero - psychological campaign lasting 10 days or more.
- An unopposed landing.

As the deadline for the invasion was prolonged, the question of winter weather conditions in the Mediterranean was raised. Keightley wrote to Eden illustrating the fact that the weather was “somewhat unpredictable in the Mediterranean at this time of the year”.<sup>556</sup>

Eden had kept the British task force commanders in the dark almost to the eve of the attack. ‘In a signal as late as 20 October, Sir Guy Grantham showed that among the services in the Mediterranean there was still uncertainty about whether they were going to fight the Arabs or Jews or possibly both’.<sup>557</sup> To the fleet the possibility of attacking Israel must have seemed remarkably real as tensions between the Jewish State and Jordan increased markedly. As Kyle (1991) suggests ‘The British Joint Planners and the Chief of Staff Committee to which they reported devoted a surprising amount of time in 1954-1956 to the prospect of war between Britain and Israel’.<sup>558</sup> The planned defence of Jordan against Israeli aggression

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., pp.33-36.

<sup>556</sup> K. Kyle, *Suez*, p.234. Keightley also noted that there was a possibility of storms over Cyprus.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid., p.309.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., p.92.

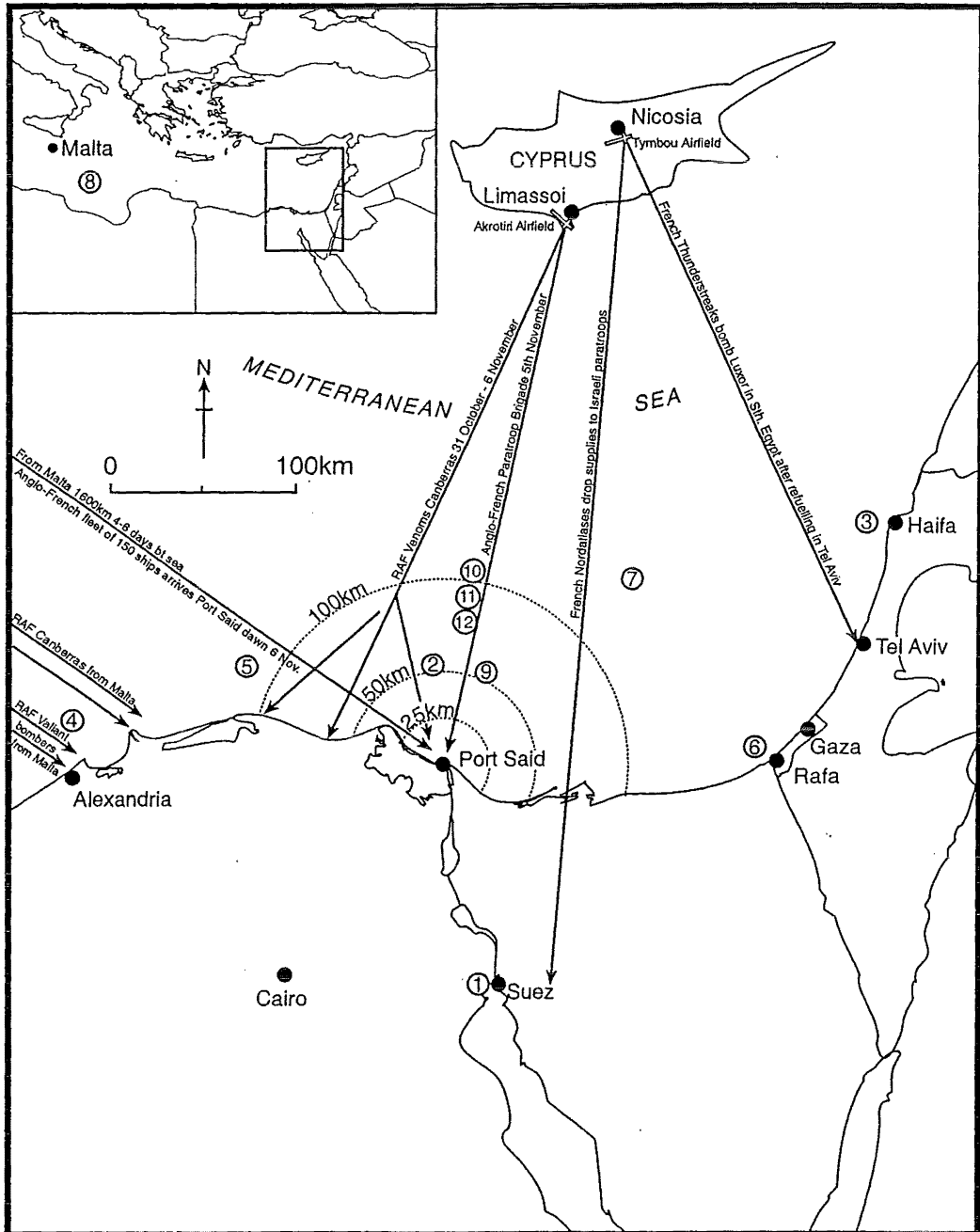
under the Anglo/Jordanian treaty was known as CORDAGE. The United Kingdom planned to answer an attack on Jordan by:

- Neutralising Israeli airfields.
- Imposing a Naval blockade.
- Punishment of Israeli ground forces from the air.
- Commando raids at various points along the Israeli coast.
- An intensive attack by carrier based plans.
- Attacks on Israeli airfields by Canberras based in Cyprus.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Ibid., p.92.

Table 4. Map of HMNZS *Royalist's* Involvement in *MUSKETEER*



- ① Oct 31: Frigate *Damietta*.
- ② Nov. 3: Torpedo boat Squadron No. 227/220 sailed from Alexandria eastern port to attack enemy concentrations (made up of an aircraft carrier, cruiser and destroyers), North of Said.
- ③ Oct 30: Frigate *Ibrahim al Awal* dispatched to attack oil refineries off Haifa. Reached Haifa 03.40, range 6 miles fired 160 shells, 0720 Frigate surrendered to Israeli Navy.
- ④ Nov. 2: Skory Class Destroyer (Egyptian) - *Nasser* 0615, set on fire by French aircraft off Alexandria.
- ⑤ Nov. 5: 3 Egyptian torpedo boats attacked by Sea Hawks between Alexandria and Port Said, 2 destroyed.
- ⑥ Nov. 1: French cruiser *Georges Leygues* bombardment of Rafa.
- ⑦ *Royalist* collision with Egyptian dhow 33°33'N 32°50'E
- ⑧ Oct 30: *Royalist* replenishment Olna 33°40'N 17°10'E
- ⑨ *Royalist* picketed 40-50nm from fleet to control CAP.
- ⑩ *Royalist* 80-150km offshore (in company of tankers and aircraft carriers).
- ⑪ *Royalist* instructed to move 60 miles north Port Said (not dispatched however).
- ⑫ *Royalist* 50 miles north Port Said.

*Table 5. Phases of Suez Crisis as per New Zealand involvement with the United Kingdom.*

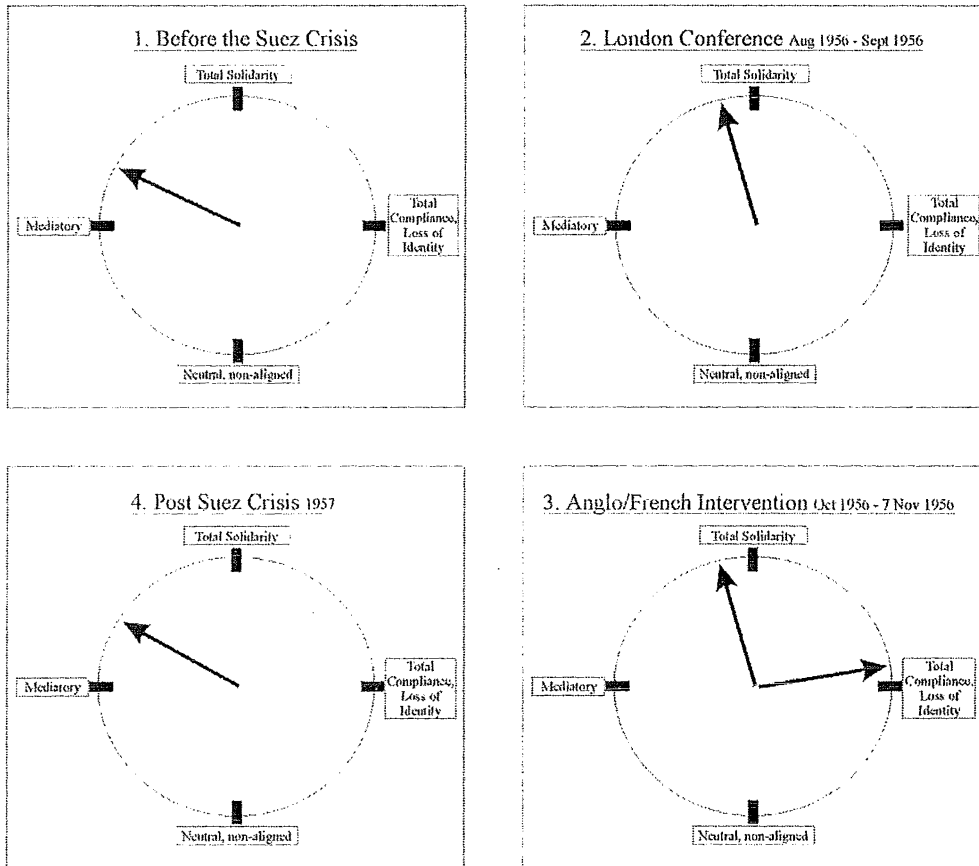
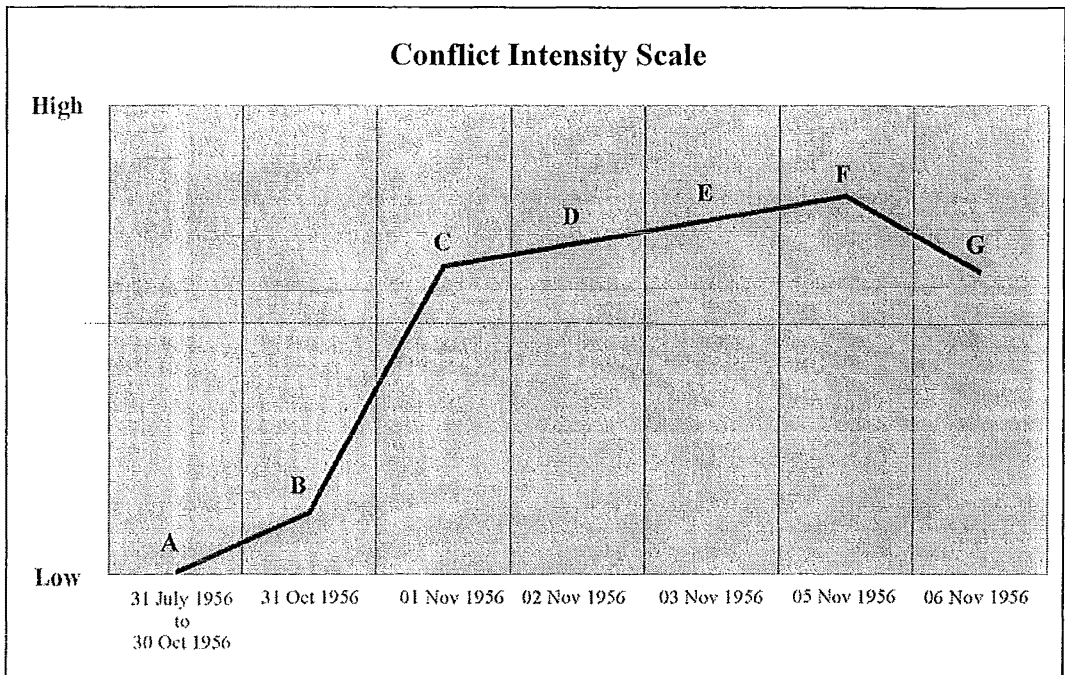


Table 6. Conflict Intensity.



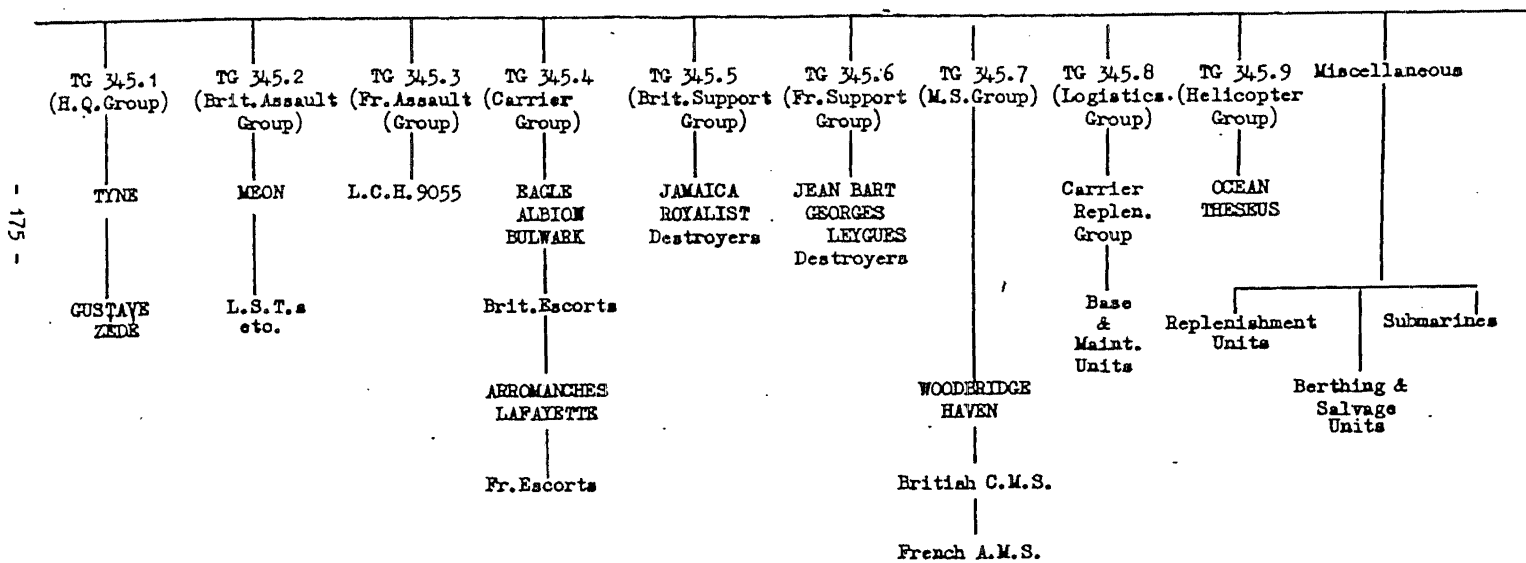
<b>A</b>	Diplomatic pressures. Deployment of <i>Royalist</i> off Malta. Anglo - French ultimatum. Failure to secure objectives.
<b>B</b>	Anglo - French hostilities (operation MUSKETEER) <i>Royalist</i> presence with carriers/ cancellation of operation BOOTHOOK Deployment north of Port Said with carriers
<b>C</b>	E boat contact Tanker escort Egyptian vessels still within vicinity
<b>D</b>	Tanker escort Possible submarine contact New Zealand votes against UN resolution calling for cease fire
<b>E</b>	<i>Royalist</i> detached from fleet journey to Cyprus
<b>F</b>	Anglo French Airborne invasion of Egypt
<b>G</b>	Journey to Cyprus and departure from war zone Collision with Warda

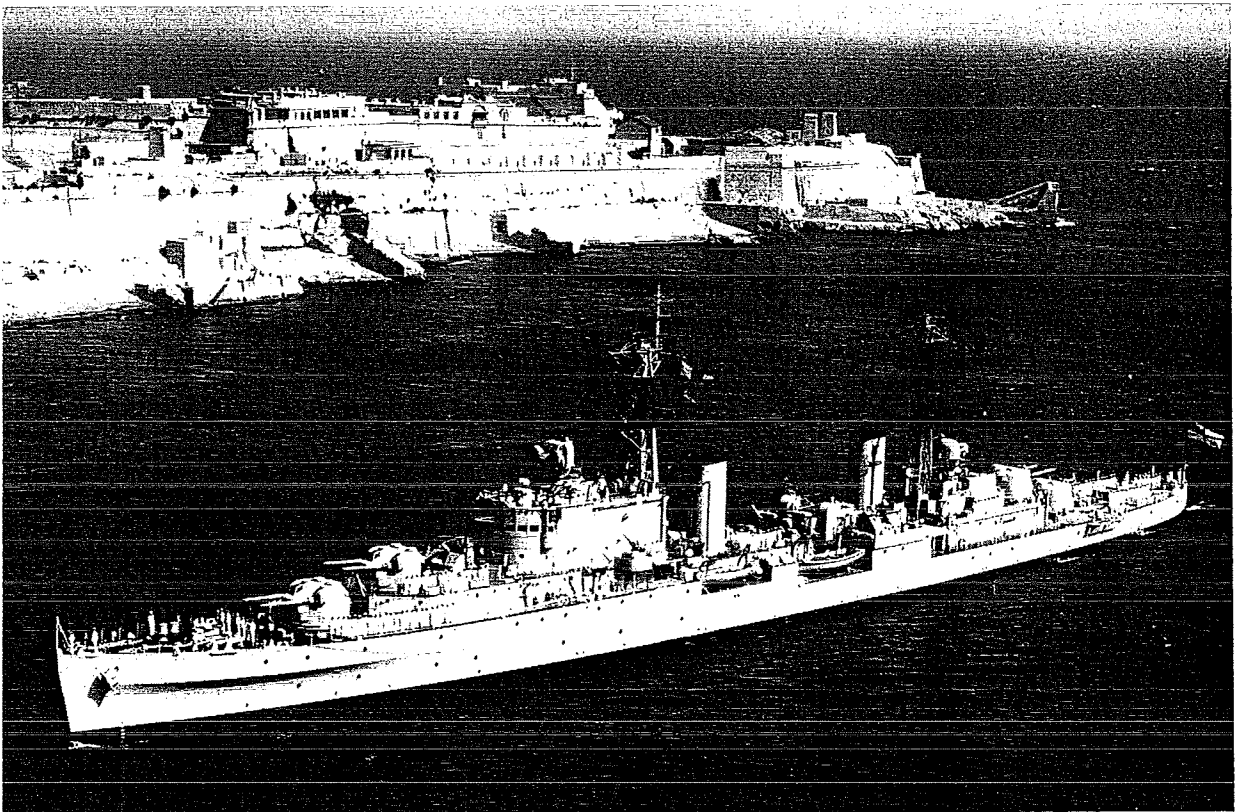
Table 7. Command of Allied Naval Forces.  
Task Force 345.

Table 2  
Appendix 1

COMMAND OF ALLIED NAVAL FORCES

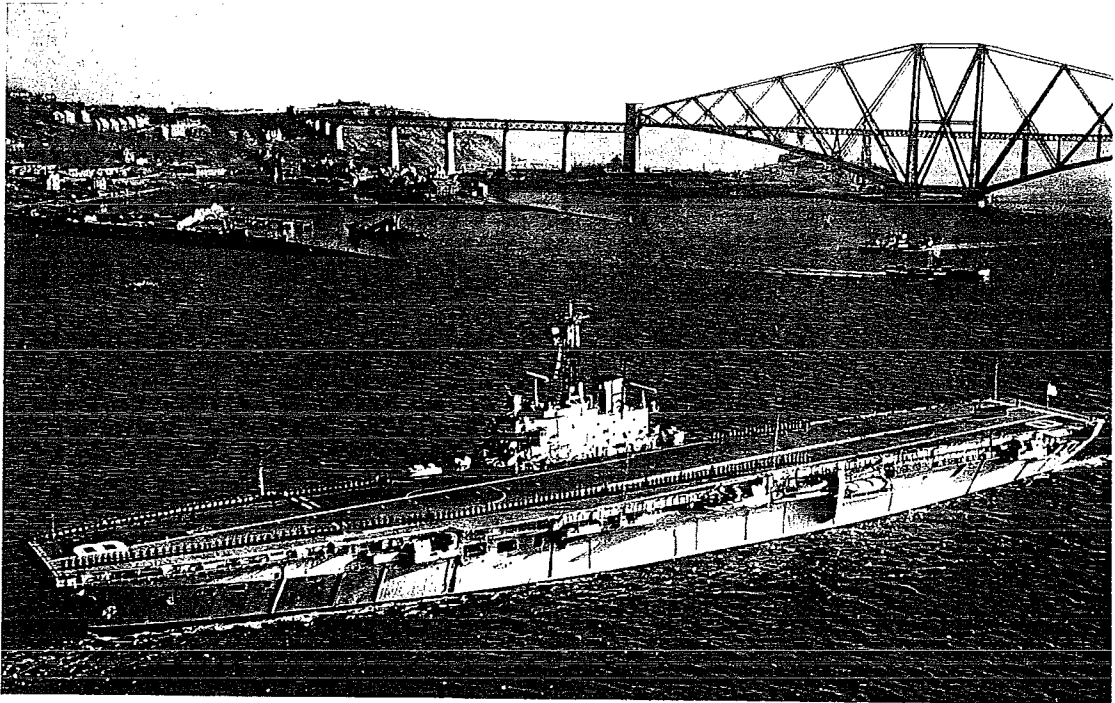
COMMANDER. TASK FORCE 345





*Royalist entering harbour at Malta, 25 July 1956. In the background is Fort St Elmo. Photo: Courtesy Royal Navy.*

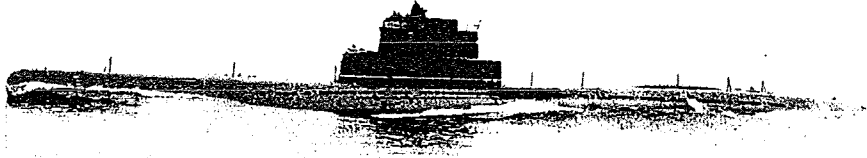
**Photograph 1. 'HMNZS Royalist'** Taken from M. Burgess, *The Royal New Zealand Navy*, Allied Press Ltd, Dunedin, 1981 p.37.



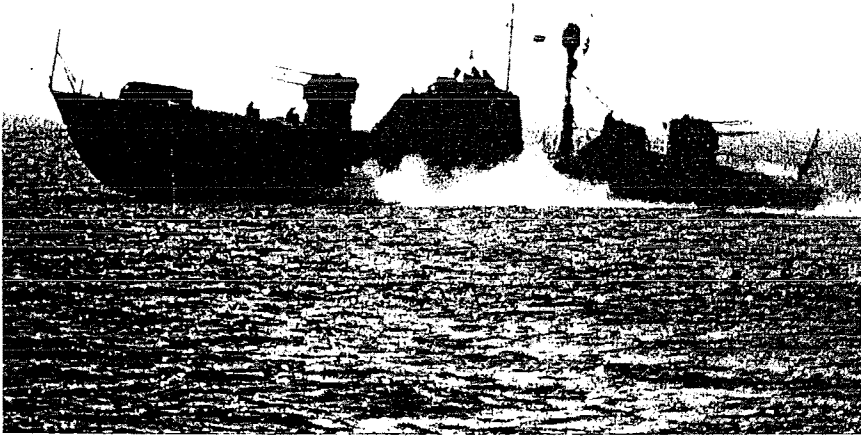
H.M.S. BULWARK, APPROACHING ROSYTH ANCHORAGE

Photograph 2. 'HMS Bulwark' Taken from H.G. Thursfield (ed.), *Brassey's Annual: the Armed Forces Year - Book*, 78th ed., Clowes and Sons Ltd., London, 1957, p.76.



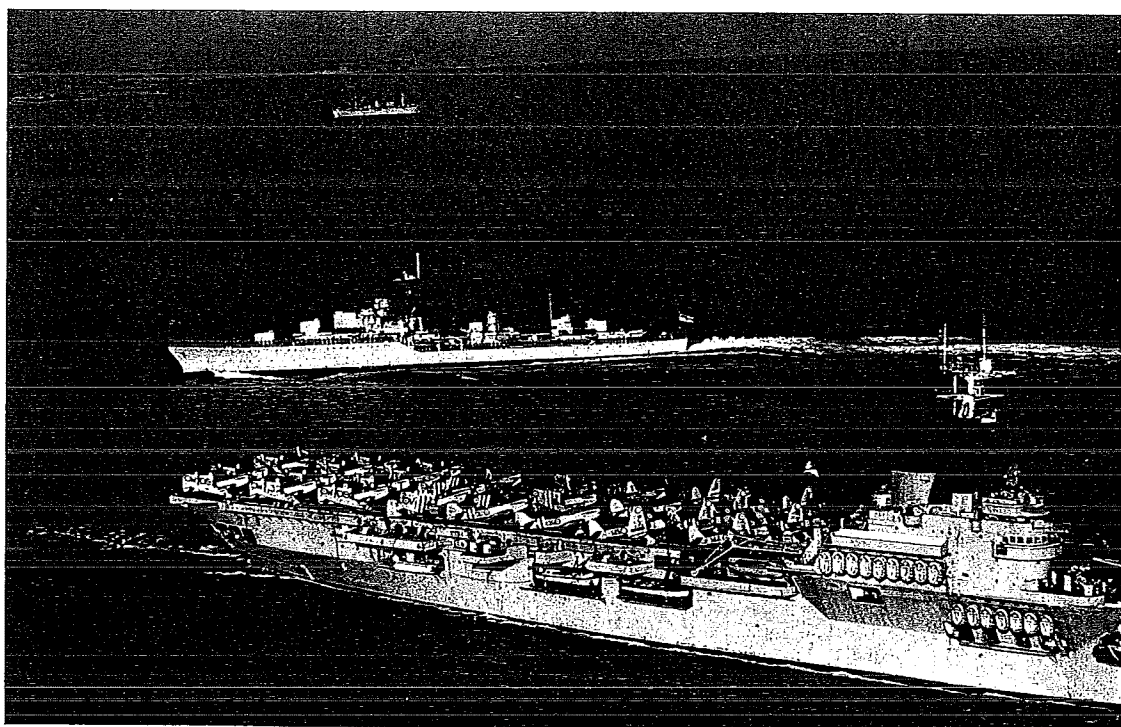


RUSSIAN SUBMARINE, WA CLASS



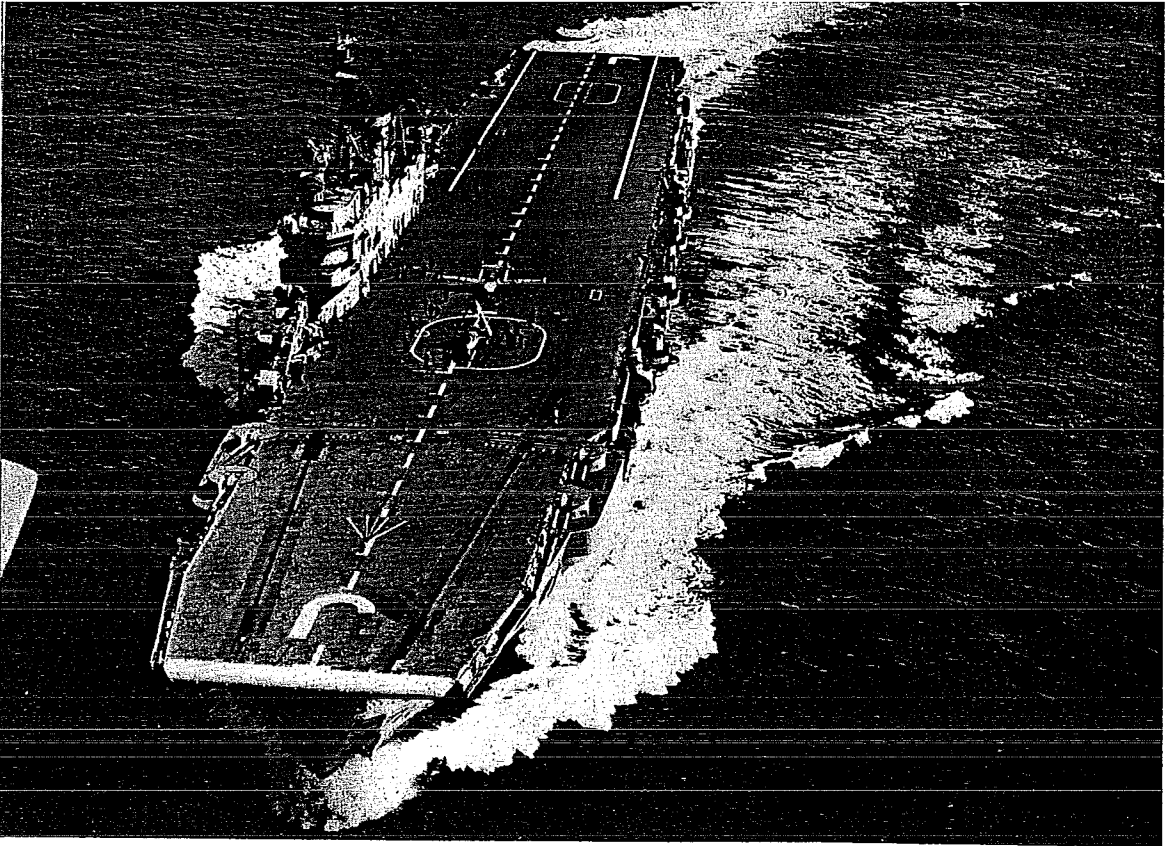
RUSSIAN TORPEDO BOAT, PA CLASS, CONVERTED TO GUNBOAT

**Photograph 3. Russian Torpedo Boat and Submarine Taken from H.G. Thursfield, *Brassey's*, 1957, p.177.**



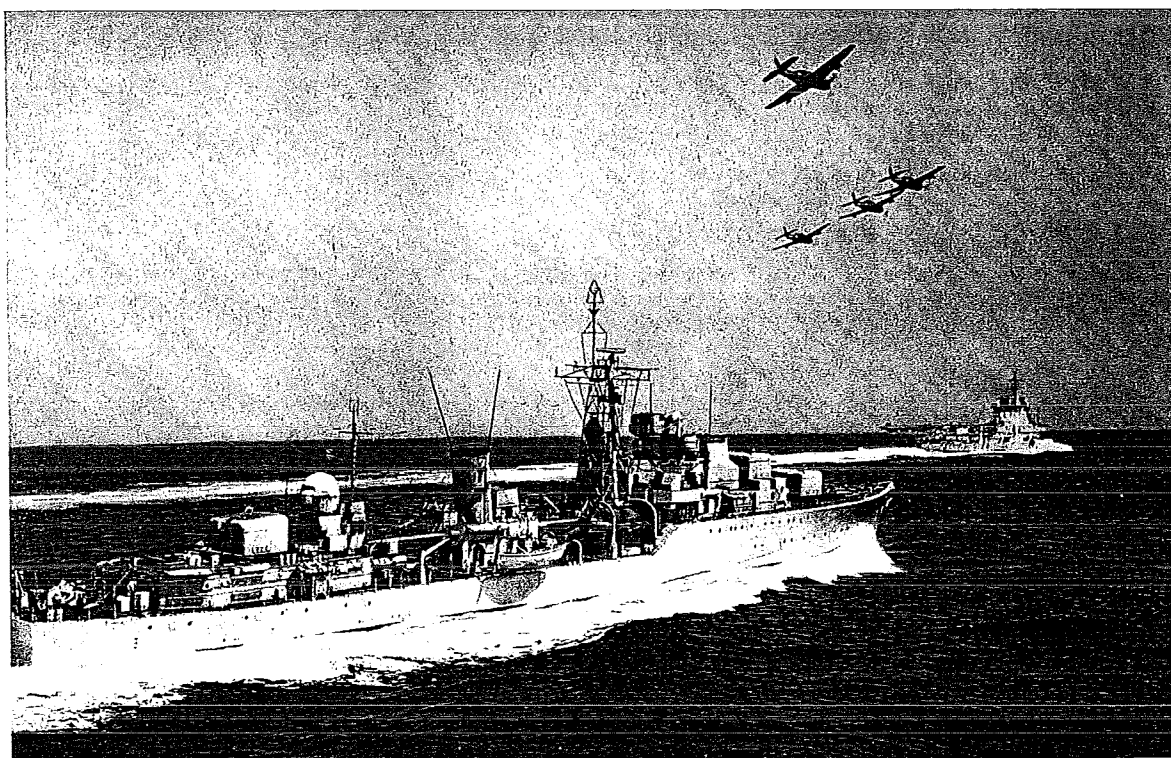
Mediterranean Fleet. H.M.S. Daring saluting H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh embarked in H.M.S. Theseus *(Official Photograph)*

Photograph 4. Mediterranean fleet '*HMS Daring*' H.G. Thursfield, *Brassey's*, 1953, p.177.



The Royal Navy's largest Aircraft Carrier, H.M.S. Eagle. A Sea Hawk and a Sea Venom on the flight deck

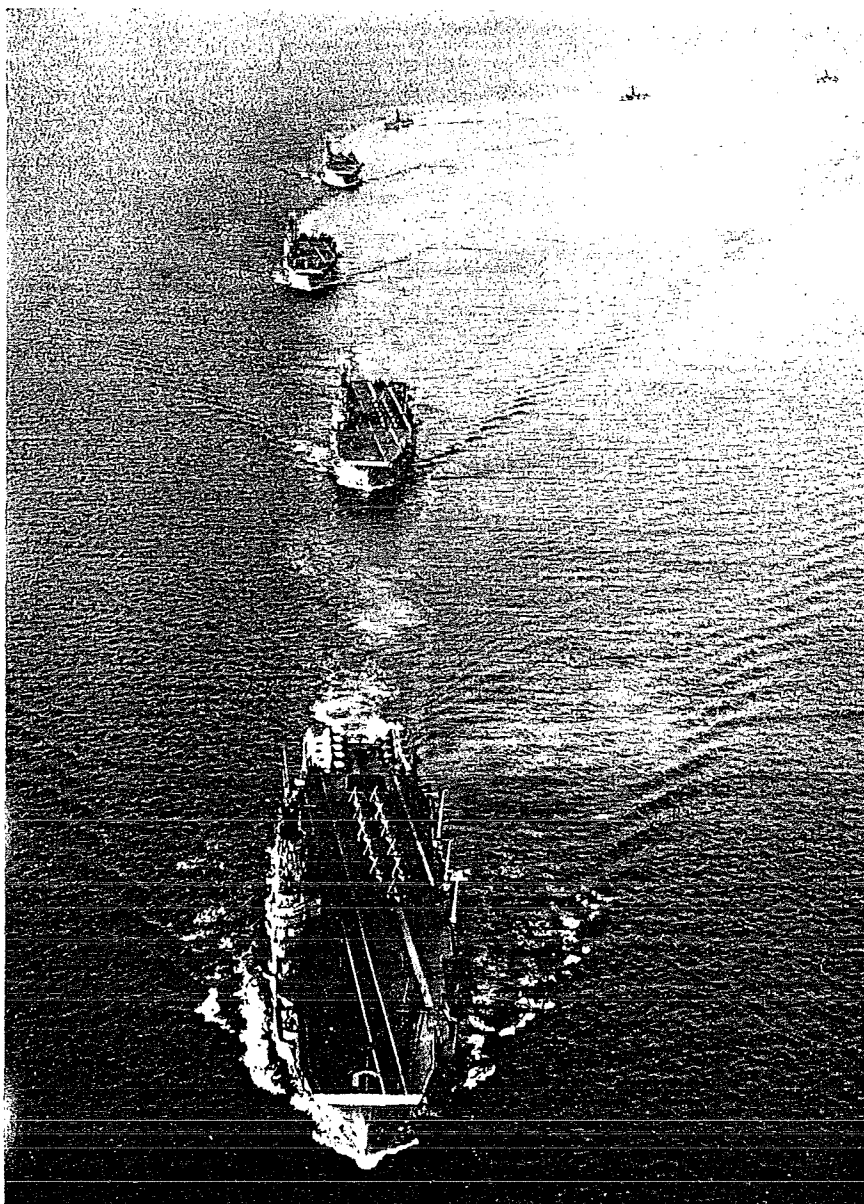
Photograph 5. *'HMS Eagle'* H.G. Thursfield, *Brassey's*, 1954, p.318.



*(Official Admiralty Photograph)*

H.M.S. Daring, H.M.S. Eagle, and four Avengers of the Fleet Air Arm

**Photograph 6. 'HMS Daring' and 'HMS Eagle' H.G. Thursfield, *Brassey's*, 1955, p.74.**



*(Official Admiralty photograph)*

#### A CARRIER SQUADRON

H.M. Ships Eagle, Centaur, Albion and Bulwark, attended by destroyers,  
H.M. Ships Decoy, Chieftain and Charity

**Photograph 7. Carriers 'HMS Eagle' 'HMS Albion' and 'HMS Bulwark' H.G.  
Thursfield, *Brassey's*, 1956, p.193.**

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