Egypt's Canal Stand Upheld
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Letters to The Times

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Strengthening of Area's Defenses Seen as Result of Evacuation

To the Editor of The New York Times:

In his article of July 18 on the Suez Canal Hanson Baldwin characterizes the impending British evacuation of the Suez Canal Zone as another retreat of the thin red line of empire. Suez and Egypt, he argues, have been for many a decade a military and political cornerstone of the British Empire tradition.

That this retreat may be a step in the right direction, and is, in fact, in strict accordance with the principles of justice and the sovereign rights inherent in other nations, seems to carry no weight with Mr. Baldwin. For this reason he considers it "a profound mistake to assume that the lowering of the Union Jack at Suez represents a net gain for the West." This is a strange statement. It takes no account of the established facts already conceded by British military experts that the Suez base is no more than a pocket in the desert unless supported by Egyptian goodwill.

Indeed, one of the main reasons that prompted British military strategists to advise their Government to withdraw from Suez, according to The New York Times' London correspondent, is that "allied forces would need in any future emergency the goodwill and cooperation of the Egyptian people."

Effect of Occupation

Another argument against evacuation is that it will create a vacuum of power in an area already distinguished for its lack of power. Actually it is the presence, not the absence, of British troops which will create such a vacuum. For is it not true that a vacuum of sympathy, trust and support is much more dangerous than a vacuum of power—a power imposed against the will of the Egyptian people and in violation of their sovereignty and dignity?

Once Britain pulls out its forces from Suez, this vacuum of power will no longer exist. For, given the opportunity and the necessary assistance, Egypt can raise a strong force of one million or more to assume the defense of the canal and relieve the 80,000 British troops.

Mr. Baldwin goes on to say that Suez, the central position with the best base facilities in the Middle East, is now to be abandoned. Obviously he is not aware that such facilities count for naught unless supported by a network of other facilities and installations spread in a wide circle. This support will certainly not be available without the consent of the Egyptian people, as admitted by British Laborite leader Clement Attlee and Conservative Minister Selwyn Lloyd, when they declared that it would be militarily unsound to have troops in a country that did not want you.

Status of Colonial Power

Despite these established facts Mr. Baldwin persists in his assertion that the withdrawal of British power from Suez is a retreat under pressure, which does not breed respect. May we be permitted to ask, respect for what? Is it for colonial power as represented in the subjugation of small nations? If so, how can we be expected to share in the defense of the free world while we ourselves are not free?

Finally, in his summing up, Mr. Baldwin contends that the "solution" in Egypt may breed more problems than it solves. With the Egyptians in sole control at Suez, he says, the Israel-Arab friction may even burst the bounds of the past. The files of the United Nations and the reports of the Mixed Armistice Commissions in Palestine reveal who was really responsible for the aggression and violence in Palestine.

MOHAMMED NAGIB,
Press Officer, Egyptian Embassy.
Washington, July 20, 1954.

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