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By THOMAS P. RONAN Special to The New York Times.
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Many Doubt Wisdom of the Step—Gaitskell Assails Eden in Angry House Session

By THOMAS P. RONAN
Special to The New York Times.

LONDON, Oct. 31 — Britain was badly divided and worried today over the wisdom of the British-French attack on Egypt.

The split was dramatized by an acrimonious debate in the House of Commons during which Prime Minister Eden defended the British-French decision as designed to prevent war and to protect the Suez Canal.

Brushing his arguments aside, Hugh Gaitskell, leader of the Labor party, said his party would not support the action the Government had taken but would oppose it by every available constitutional means.

Mr. Gaitskell said he believed the majority of Britons were deeply shocked by the Government's "aggressive policy."

The Prime Minister denounced Egypt as largely responsible for the present hostilities with Israel and said that if Britain had done nothing to check Egypt, war would have spread over the whole Middle East.

While deploring the differences with the United States, Sir Anthony said that Britain could not await United States approval before acting to protect her vital interests. Safe transit through the canal is a matter of survival for Britain and other countries, he asserted.

He cited the rapid advance of Israeli forces toward the canal as a reason why Britain and France could not wait for a satisfactory resolution by the United Nations Security Council authorizing definite action to stop the fighting.

Debate Stormiest in Years

Opening a two-day debate on his Government's action, the Prime Minister failed utterly to placate the Labor party. Virtually all observers agreed that the session was one of the stormiest in recent years.

As cheers from Sir Anthony's supporters mingled with boos and cries of "resign" from the Labor benches, the Speaker intervened to plead for order. The Prime Minister's voice showed signs of strain and he betrayed irritation once or twice, but on the whole he seemed unruffled.

Before the debate ended, the Laborites offered a resolution severely censuring the Government. A vote will be taken on it tomorrow.

The serious split in the House apparently reflected the feeling throughout the country, for editorial assessments of the Government's action vary tremendously. The press division was about the same as when the Prime Minister was being accused of saber rattling after Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal, but now even some of his newspaper supporters seem seriously worried.

Sir Anthony was excoriated by Mr. Gaitskell, who termed the Government's decision an act of disastrous folly "whose tragic consequences we shall regret for years."

"This action involved not only the abandonment but a positive assault upon the free principles which have governed British foreign policy for at any rate the last ten years—solidarity with the Commonwealth, the Anglo-American alliance and adherence to the Charter of the United Nations."

Mr. Gaitskell declared that a far greater strain was being placed on the British-United States alliance than ever before and that this was disturbing for those who felt, as he did, that it was the basis for the maintenance of peace.

The Laborite leader labeled the armed intervention of Britain and France a clear breach of the United Nations Charter. And he said that their veto of the United States resolution in the Security Council was a major act of sabotage against the world organization.

He served notice that the Labor party would oppose the Government's action by every constitutional means. And he said it felt obliged to proclaim to the world that millions of Britons were deeply shocked by the Government's aggressive policy.

The Prime Minister said that Israel had accepted the request from Britain and France for a cease-fire and a withdrawal of military forces to a distance ten miles from the canal but that Egypt had rejected it.

Britain and France had notified the two countries in an ultimatum that expired early this morning that they would occupy the key canal points of Port Said, Ismailia and Suez if they did not comply.

Explaining Britain's veto of the United States resolution, Sir Anthony said it was in effect a condemnation of Israel as the aggressor "in the events of the last few days."

Throughout recent months, especially since the seizure of the Suez Canal by Egypt, the Egyptian Government had kept up a violent campaign against Israel, against Britain and against the West, he said. Much of the present crisis had sprung from Egyptian policies, he asserted.

Sir Anthony said Britain and France hoped their military action would be short but emphasized that they sought a settlement that would prevent a situation similar to the present one from arising periodically in the future.

Philip Noel-Baker, a Labor member, intervened to ask if Sir Anthony had mentioned to the United States the British-French plan. When Sir Anthony said simply the decisions were the responsibility of the two countries, there were cries of "answer!" from the Labor benches.

He then said there had been a number of conversations between Britain and France on the situation and that since the seizure of the canal Britain had given her reasons for thinking it of overwhelming importance.

When he was interrupted again by cries of "answer!" he reiterated that Britain and France accepted responsibility for their decisions.

"Were we not bound by common obligations with the United States in respect of this matter, and did we not fail to inform the United States of what we intended to do outside the [tripartite] declaration?" Mr. Noel-Baker demanded.

Sir Anthony said the moment Britain and France reached their decision he had authorized the dispatch of a full message to the United States explaining their action. It was sometimes "the Government's duty to take decisions affecting the country," he declared amid Conservative cheers.

In an editorial appearing in tomorrow's paper, The Times of London describes the scene in the House of Commons as the worst possible setting "for the launching of a great military venture that will be pressed forward with determination but is bound to be hazardous in its political and strategic consequences."

The question now was not whether Britain and France should have committed themselves to act only at the Security Council's behest but whether their bold plan was well judged and would be speedily effective in stopping the fighting, The Times said.

The Daily Herald, Laborite organ, spoke of Britain's "lunatic aggression."

The Daily Telegraph, a stanch Government supporter, said the effectiveness of British-French action could at this stage only be a matter of judgment.

The Liberal News Chronicle said that only a miracle could save the Prime Minister now.

The Manchester Guardian said the Government's action in attacking Egypt was a disaster of the first magnitude.

The Conservative Daily Mail said the Government might prove mistaken but that its decision was based on the conviction that Britain and the the world would have suffered irreparable damage if Britain had remained quiescent.

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