

THIS IS YOUR CRISIS

What's at stake for Britain; for the Forces; for the Premier; and for all of us who pay the bill?

Four top Daily Mail names answer the questions YOU are asking as 22 nations sit down to decide the fate of Suez and Britain's future

WALTER FARR

FOREIGN EDITOR, takes the first questions

Q: What does Britain want from the conference?

A QUICK decision—in less than a week if possible. The bigger the majority the better, because we attach the greatest importance to keeping in harmony with world opinion.

How many of the 22 countries are expected to back Britain?

FOR: Twelve are regarded as certain to vote for our control plan: Britain, France (she offers to help with warships), the U.S., Australia, New Zealand (also willing to send troops), Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Italy, W. Germany, Portugal, Turkey.

Doubtful: Pakistan, Persia, Ethiopia, Japan, and Spain.

Against: Russia, India, Ceylon, and Indonesia.

What alternative plans have been put forward for consideration?

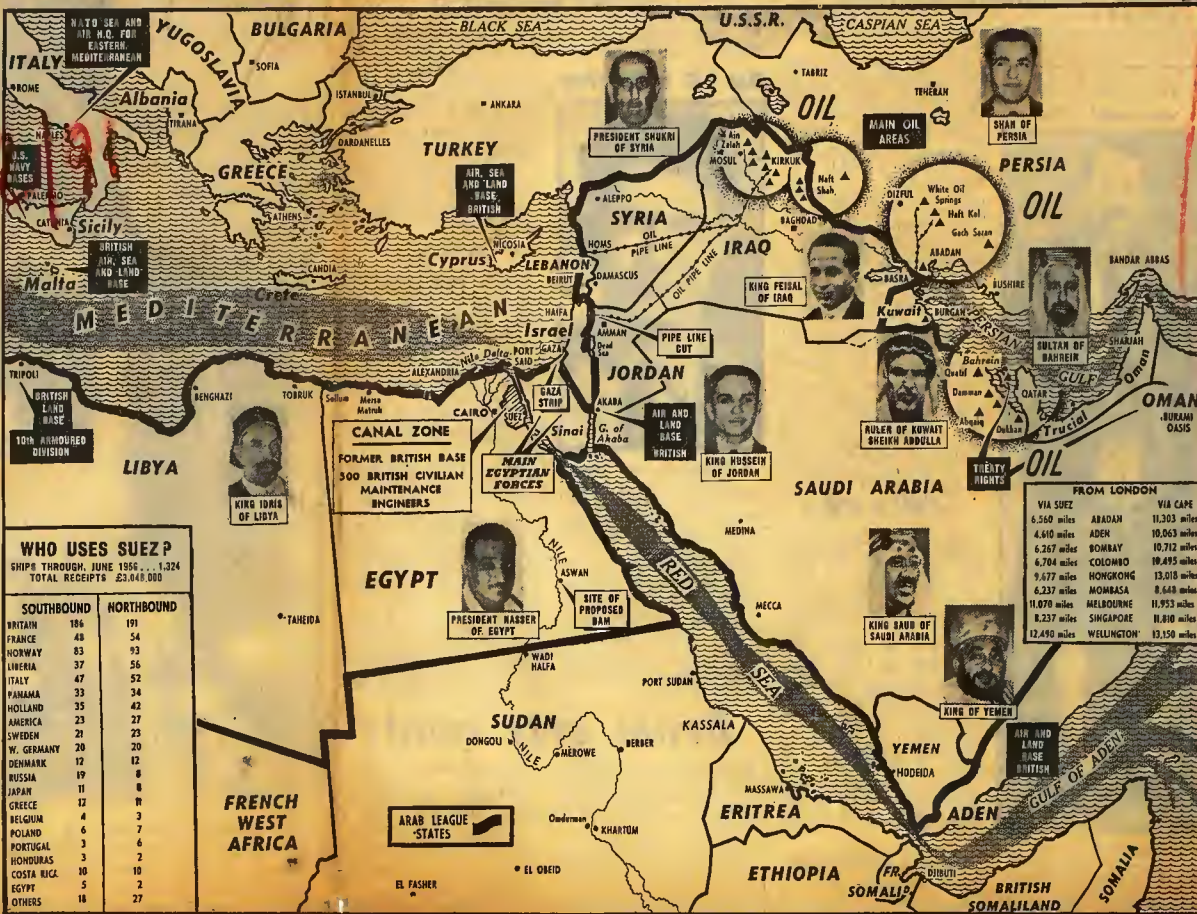
MR. DULLES, although he at first backed our international control plan, is cooking up a compromise plan which may involve giving Nasser a stronger grip on the Canal under international supervision.

We might go some way towards this. But we are determined not to yield on what we regard as the essential point: international control. Another compromise drafted by Nasser and India's Nehru would mean simply an international advisory council. We should only be able through such a council to give Nasser advice on such things as efficient and fair running of the Canal. We do not think Nasser can be relied on to take such advice.

Suppose Britain gets her majority, then what?

WE send the international control plan to Nasser at once. The Anglo-French view is that you first have to have a conference and do your best to stick to the spirit of the Charter and to give Nasser a chance to see reason.

By the end of next week this



NOEL MONKS

Military Correspondent

What is the strategy behind the movement of British forces from Britain to the Mediterranean?

PURELY precautionary. Should Britain be forced into protecting British lives and property and the free passage of our ships through the Canal by any act of Nasser's, it is essential to have forces available to counteract any Egyptian moves.

Is an airborne operation possible to protect big ammunition dumps, stores, depots, and workshops along the Canal Zone left in charge of 500 British civilians under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty?

AT this moment, no. Two-thirds of our Parachute Brigade have just returned from Cyprus for an intensive refresher training course.

Only one battalion of 600 men is ready for action in Cyprus. Any move by the Egyptians to take over these bases, however, would be resisted by every possible means.

We have a strong Commando force in Cyprus.

In the event of war, what opposition could Egypt put up?

ON paper, quite a bit. Physically, with nearly two-thirds of her regular army across the Canal, guarding the Gaza Strip, not much.

She has received considerable arms such as tanks, aircraft, and artillery from Russia. She also has about 40 British Centurion tanks.

Egypt has now probably one armoured division, about half the size of a British armoured division, plus three infantry divisions equipped with a variety of British and Czech weapons capable of making a fight of it.

There is a sizeable air force equipped with British Meteor, Vampire, and Venom jet fighters, about 50 Russian MIGs, Russian Ilvushin jet bombers, and British Halifax four-engine bombers.

But all supplies for Egypt's forces facing Israel have to be across the Canal.

It would be easy to isolate these forces and disrupt communications. There is no navy to speak of—a few old submarines and destroyers.

What can the Arab League do to help Egypt?

FROM a military sense, very little. With the exception of Jordan, which has the British raised and trained Arab Legion, none of the Arab States has a highly

trained, mechanised, well-organised, disciplined force of any consequence.

However, the Arab States could seriously embarrass us by sabotage and general uprisings.

If we occupied the Canal Zone, would we not be committed to dealing with guerrilla warfare on a large scale, even greater than two years ago when we had 80,000 troops there?

YES, but there would be a great difference in our handling of such tactics now.

Two years ago Britain pulled her punches in dealing with the Egyptian guerrillas. We hit back at them with both hands tied behind our backs.

That would not happen next time. It would be all-out warfare against guerrillas.

Why does Britain's industry need the Canal?

ABOUT a quarter of our import and export trade is carried through the Canal. Eastwards flow our manufactured goods; westwards come

Middle East oil, Malayan rubber, Australian wheat, meat, and wool, East African chrome, Indian manganese, cotton, tea, and oils, Pakistani jute and tea, and vegetable oils from Ceylon.

By cutting the high cost of carrying these commodities all the way to our factories and the factories' products back to the East, the Canal keeps down the cost of many things we use and trade in.

What would happen if the Canal were closed?

OIL would be the great and immediate problem.

Three-quarters of our crude oil, like last year's 20 million tons, comes through Suez, and our rapid rate of industrial expansion demands more and more.

The vast American, British and Dutch oil groups have plans to supply us by the same emergency methods used when Abadan was closed in 1951.

We lost 30 million tons a year then.

But the oil will be expensive and it will cost us dearly in dollars.

If Middle East oil output were cut or seriously interfered with at the same time as the Canal closed, the effect on all West European economies would be severe.

And it would entail strict rationing.

What is it all costing?

THE bill for the present troop reinforcements must be running into tens of millions of pounds by now.

But no autumn Budget is

thought of at the moment. Supplementary estimates may be put in before Christmas, but the Chancellor's advisers believe that he will wait until April before deciding on new taxes.

The big and bitterly disappointing cost is the shelving for perhaps another year of the Chancellor's cherished plan of a great tax-cutting incentive Budget next April.

That was based on cuts in Government spending, mainly defence, of up to £400,000,000 a year.

The cuts, almost all in conventional arms, were to have been announced this autumn.

Everything must wait until we see how Suez turns out.

WALTER TERRY

from Westminster

What is your estimate of Sir Anthony Eden's political position at home?

HE has worked energetically without more than a few hours' rest since Nasser's action.

He has inspired confidence, even enthusiasm, among Cabinet colleagues.

If efforts are matched by results, Sir Anthony will emerge with a reputation at its highest.

What is Sir Anthony's support inside the Conservative Party?

THIS is where the main danger to his political future lies.

There is a hard core of 60 or more M.P.s who call themselves the Suez rebels.

Today they can argue that all their predictions of doom have been justified.

Their anger is boundless now. They have clamoured for tough policies which would slap down Egypt.

They are prepared even for war if there is no other way out.

The group has power to swing the Conservative Party against him and overturn his status overnight.

Any sign of surrender to Nasser will be interpreted as an unforgivable sign of weakness.

Is the Government worried about public opinion?

I DO not think so. Public opinion is roughly shaped at present behind the Government.

Only when the conference takes a positive course will the Government know how strong the public's attitude of support remains.

In the past week bi-partisan support has partially broken down.

But Mr. Gaitskell has also warned his more impetuous back-benchers against pronouncing too quickly against the Government.

The motto of the Opposition is to wait and see.

What is the Government's feeling about this conference?

THERE is a determination to settle once and for ever the principle of Britain's rights in the Middle East.

The movement of troops into the danger area is prompt evidence that whatever the rest of the world thinks Britain is strong and sure in purpose.



PATRICK SERGEANT

from the City

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