

Information on the Suez crisis, 1956

Tension in the Middle East continued after 1949 and the partition of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel.

Gamal Abdul Nasser became President of Egypt in 1954. He gained the agreement of the British to withdraw from the canal zone by 1956. Having decided to build the Aswan dam, to better use the Nile water, after he failed to gain finance for the project from the USA or USSR, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal Company, 1956.

Britain unsuccessfully tried to gain Egypt's agreement to international control of the canal.

Britain and France, their strategic and commercial interests threatened, devised a plan to regain control of the canal, in combined action with Israel. The plan was finalised at a secret meeting in Paris, 23 October 1956.

From 25 October, Israeli, British and French forces were prepared.

On 29 October Israeli forces with French air and sea support attacked Egypt. Britain and France pretended that they were in no way involved and professed their anxiety to

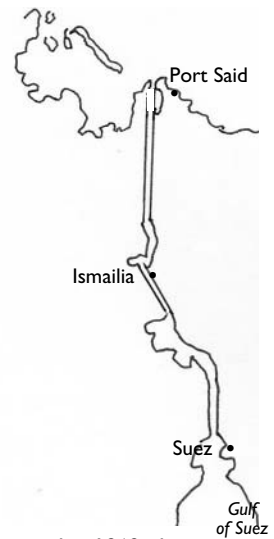
maintain peace in the Middle East.

On 30 October they issued a joint ultimatum to both Egypt and Israel calling on them to withdraw their forces to ten miles either side of the Suez Canal and allow a temporary Anglo-French occupation of Suez to separate the combatants. Egypt rejected the ultimatum.

For their plan to succeed, Britain and France needed a swift and skilful military operation but it was not until 5 November, after the Egyptians and Israelis had stopped fighting, that paratroops landed in Egypt.

World opinion, financial pressure from the USA, threat of rocket attack from the USSR and domestic political divisions led Britain to decide, on 6 November, to withdraw. France followed the British lead.

Consequences. British and French influence with Arab states was diminished and, in effect, the Middle East became a side show in the Cold War. Nasser became a cult figure among Arab nationalists while, for Anthony Eden, who had been an MP for 30 years and the British Prime Minister since 1955, it hastened the end of his political career and his resignation in 1957. Many see the



Opened in 1869, the time ships took to travel from Europe to the East was greatly reduced by the 106 mile canal. Britain gained the major share of the Suez Canal Company in 1875.

analysis also indicate that Tom has a secure knowledge base that he is able to refer to in order to illustrate his arguments. He has not made the mistake of describing events at length which would make it difficult to address the analytical aspects of this question in the available time. The conclusion is clearly linked back to the question and draws out a valid analysis of the situation.

Tom has certainly responded correctly in ensuring that he focuses his attention on the possible impact of the Suez crisis. Even where a question asks 'how far', the main focus still needs to be the specific event that is referred to in the question. However, Tom could have improved upon this response had he considered, even briefly and perhaps in a penultimate paragraph, the existence of an alternative turning point as being the 'key' one referred to in the title. His writing is succinct, almost to the point of being too brief. In places there is a tendency towards assertion because the development of the argument is so terse. Tom might have improved on this answer and made it more securely Level 3

by removing one of the five paragraphs dealing with aspects of the impact of the Suez crisis and devoting just a little more time to exploring and developing the remaining four paragraphs.

Tom has clearly understood the material and the concepts that he has been studying in this unit and he has tackled the question sensibly. His problems appear to arise in part from the restricted time that is available. He has not quite fully thought out the most effective strategy to deal with this constraint; in spite of this, he has written a sound answer that appears in all probability to have been completed within about 25 minutes so that he has left himself with sufficient time to plan, read the sources and write the higher scoring second part of the examination paper. Candidates should beware the temptation to spend too long on part (a) as it is only worth one-third of the final mark on this paper.

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