

and the Arab countries in approximate balance, unwilling to assume a leading role as a regional arms supplier. This became much harder in April 1956, when Dulles asked Pearson to supply Israel with jet fighters in order to offset increased Soviet aid to Egypt. (Document 33) Pearson was sympathetic, but unwilling to act except as part of a collective Western decision to provide Israel with defensive weapons. (Documents 47-48) Working out this policy with the Western allies proved exceptionally complicated, and became even more so when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser abruptly nationalized the Suez Canal in July 1956.

This volume does not attempt to cover the detailed international negotiations in London, Cairo and New York that followed Nasser's action. Distressed by the apparent Anglo-French determination to seek a confrontation with Egypt, Ottawa was happy to adopt a slightly detached posture. Pearson was relieved that Canada was not invited to attend the London Conference in early August (Document 82), and later declined an Indian invitation to join New Delhi in seeking a solution. (Documents 101-04) Yet Canadian reservations about the use of force to decide the Canal's future were clearly and repeatedly expressed in Whitehall. Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's formal (and informal) messages to Eden were blunt, verging on the un-diplomatic: "I am sure that you appreciate that the use of force in present circumstances – even as a last resort – will be surrounded by risks and difficulties, one of which might be the submission of the matter to the United Nations by the wrong party." (Document 78) Though France and Britain eventually asked the Security Council to rule on their dispute with Nasser, Canadian misgivings persisted. "Far from seeking a solution," observed R.A. MacKay, Canada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, "France and the U.K., but particularly the latter, seem bent on humiliating Nasser." (Document 99)

MacKay was right. Shortly after the Israeli assault on Egypt, Britain and France demanded a cease-fire; when the fighting continued, they started to bomb Egyptian airfields, ostensibly to protect the Suez Canal. Like Dulles, who turned to Pearson for help deciphering British intentions (Document 106), Canadian officials were "given no inkling" of London's plans and "not the slightest intimation that anything extraordinary was planned." (Document 107) Surprise and the rapid pace of subsequent developments explain why documentation on the first few days of the crisis is relatively sparse. Ottawa's "bewilderment and dismay" at Britain's behaviour (Document 108) are fully documented in the Cabinet records reprinted here (Documents 112 and 117) and in St. Laurent's angry exchanges with Eden. (Documents 110 and 113) Pearson's diplomacy in New York, where he arrived on November 1 to attend the special session of the UN General Assembly on the crisis, is often less completely documented. Reports were sometimes intended to supplement newspaper accounts (Document 119) or were sent several days after the events described. (Document 130) In one instance, a record of several important discussions on November 2-6 between Pearson and Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Secretary General, was not actually prepared until early December. (Document 192)

Despite these peculiarities in the documentary record, careful readers will be able to follow Pearson's efforts at the United Nations, where the dramatic debate on an American motion calling for a cease-fire and an immediate withdrawal opened in the afternoon of November 1. Before leaving Ottawa that morning, Pearson had asked Canada's experienced High Commissioner in London, Norman Robertson, to seek