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CANAL CRISIS DEVELOPS:

As long as the Suez crisis continues, anything can happen - so for the Army, it has to be maximum readiness. Just off the Newport-Cardiff road, armoured vehicles are drawn up ready to move off in convoy to the docks, for shipment to Mediterranean bases. Most vital of these bases is Cyprus, and at Southampton, troops leave to reinforce the island - men of the Suffolk Regiment, and the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Families watch from the quayside as they sail away.

Meanwhile, at a Cairo press conference, Nasser gets applause from Arab journalists - and silence from others - as he states his case. "We did not grab the Suez Canal" he declares, "We just nationalised the Company", That is our right". His cabinet ministers show their support, and encourage recruiting by doing a couple of hours rifle drill daily. Nor are the men the only ones - Cairo schoolteachers, both men and women join in.

At London Airport, delegates are arriving for the 22-nation Suez Conference. India's Krishna Menon is reluctant to answer questions - his motto is, "Wait and see". Not so New Zealand's Mr. Macdonald, who strongly condemns Nasser's action. Another arrival is Mr. Dulles, for the United States, which supports Britain and France but is cautious about talk of military action. Russia, represented by Mr. Shepilov and Mr. Malik, also says "No war" - but declares Nasser was right.

Not a delegate, but certainly a careful observer, is Egypt's "Dancing Major" - former Minister of National Guidance, Major Salem, now a newspaper editor. He is quite ready to talk. "War or peace depends on you, not us" he tells British journalists, defending Nasser's attitude:

MAJOR S.

"All that Colonel Nasser has done is nationalised the Company, which is an Egyptian Company, nothing more. No relation at all with the Convention of 1888, and the navigation in the Canal. It is completely different. The problem of navigation is completely different, and away from the problem of nationalisation!

REPORTER:

"You were reported the other day of saying that if we moved troops in the Canal Zone, you would be prepared to blow up the Canal, is that true?"

MAJOR S.

"That's the intention of all Egyptians"

REPORTER.

"And that will be done if what happens?"

MAJOR S.

"If any sort of invasion happens against Egypt, of course the Canal will vanish to be a Canal"..

Be that as it may, the preparations go on for any emergency. At Hurn airport, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Berkshires, with the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, take off in Britannia airliners for a secret destination.

They do not know what await them, or how long it will be before they can return home - but they're in good spirits.

A word now from a soldier who knows the Near East well - Ghubb Paaha, whom the Arabs call, as an honourable title, The Chinless One - in recognition of his war wounds:

"Colonel Nasser has based his claim to nationalise the Suez Canal on the precedence of many other nations having nationalised their services. Now the basic reason why some countries have nationalised their public utilities is to prevent capitalist groups from owning these essential services, and thereby being in a position to hold up their compatriots to ransom. In other words, public utilities should be owned by their users. The people of Egypt, however, are not the users of the Suez Canal. It's users are the maritime nations of the world.

In claiming the Canal as Egyptian property, Colonel Nasser is trying to become a capitalist monopolist who can hold up its users to ransom. In fact, just the kind of monopolist which nationalisation is intended to do away with. The Suez Canal should in accordance with the basic principles of nationalisation, be controlled by its users, the maritime nations of the world".....