

PAN SPECIAL Illustrated



SECRETS OF SUEZ

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I would like to say how much I felt the strength of the *entente cordiale* through the joint military operations that were mounted, and that had it not been for a considerable strengthening of this really deep-rooted friendship the stresses and strains to which we were subjected might well have caused a complete breakdown. It gave me an opportunity for a much closer military understanding than has been possible since the War and will, I am sure, lead to very deep and firm friendship, certainly in the military field, in the future.

HUGH STOCKWELL
Lieutenant-General

SECRETS OF SUEZ
MERRY and SERGE BROMBERGER

Translated from the French by
JAMES CAMERON
and revised by the Authors

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The publishers believe that in this edition they have provided a translation of the French text completely faithful to the original, and that therefore no information given in the book can be construed as a betrayal of official secrets.

They would also like to point out that whilst they cannot substantiate the truth of every statement attributed to members of Her Majesty's Government or Forces, nevertheless they have every reason to suppose that the authors have stated the truth to the best of their knowledge.

Finally, the publishers would like to add that they do not necessarily agree with statements made by the authors about the capabilities, characteristics and actions of various persons mentioned in the book.

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ILLUSTRATIONS IN PHOTOGRAVURE

(between pages 96 and 97)

Sir Anthony Eden and M. Guy Mollet at the Hôtel Matignon, the French Premier's residence (Keystone)

Crowds acclaim Nasser after his announcement that he had 'taken over' the Suez Canal Company (Keystone)

Israel's Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion (AP)

The British and French commanders (PA-Reuter)

Moshe Dayan, the Israeli C-in-C, inspects his men after the capture of a fort at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula (Keystone)

Troops and helicopters gather on the deck of one of the first Royal Navy vessels to enter Port Said (PA-Reuter)

British troops comb Port Said for snipers who ignored the Cease Fire (AP)

Norwegian troops of the UN force rest shortly after their arrival, but meanwhile a British 'Tommy' stands guard (Keystone)

THE COVER, an aerial view of Port Said and the Suez Canal approaches, is an Associated Press photograph

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I HAVE translated this extraordinary book with immense personal interest, and increasing consternation. It is a terrible book, in the most exact sense of the word: it inspires fear—of what did happen, of what can happen.

In my way, too, I was associated with the events it so searchingly examines, watching from the Cyprus base with a dismay as painful as that of the authors, though very differently caused.

I have a huge respect for the skill and industry with which this grim story has been assembled by the Brombergers, much as I flinch from the conclusions they have drawn, and the emotions they invoke. The haste with which this kind of topical essay has to be put into print is possibly evident in the text; both the Brombergers and I would, perhaps, have liked more time. Their attitudes are nevertheless clear. The authors are aghast at the scandalous errors committed last year in the name of Britain and France—so am I; but the errors we deplore are not the same. They hold the Suez Expedition to have been a worthy operation shamefully mismanaged to an untimely halt; I hold it to have been a shameful operation providentially interrupted not a moment too soon. Among the many values of such a book as this is its demonstration of how identical sets of facts can inspire such violently opposed interpretations.

“War is a pretty simple matter,” says one of the officers in this book, abruptly deprived of his battle. “It only becomes complicated when the politicians take a hand.”

And that is the moral of the Bromberger's sincerely-felt analysis—every one of whose arguments proves, at least to me, the tremendous truth of their compatriot Clemenceau's remark that war is indeed far too serious a thing to be left to the soldiers.

What we know of the Suez Episode is buried in the files; it should never be allowed to moulder there forgotten. What we did *not* know is in this book, and that is plenty. The authors have filled in the record of what we agree—they for their reasons, I for mine—is one of the most dramatic and disreputable chapters in the history of our time.

JAMES CAMERON

FOREWORD

WHEN this book was published in France, it aroused some interest in England and even gave rise to controversy and commentaries, many of them contradictory.

Some newspapers presented it as 'The French Version' of the expedition to Egypt, something like a White Paper; which it is not. Other newspapers insisted that the book was written at the instigation of M. Bourgés-Maunoury, French Minister of National Defence, with his full help, which is not true either. After that, official denials poured out in England and France . . . 'highest fantasy . . . irresponsible and ill-informed journalists . . . account of all diplomatic events absolutely untrue . . . completely imaginary report of the military events . . .'

Mr Gaitskell asked for an official enquiry. Mr Head, Defence Minister at the time of the expedition, wrote that it is an easy and attractive course for a journalist to write an imaginative and highly inaccurate account, and to cover it with the rider that the narrative will obviously be denied for governmental and state reasons. To which the answer could be made that denials without explanation are, perhaps, more comfortable than anything else.

Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, former Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, wrote more kindly that, "I should certainly not be able to reconstruct either the many conversations which took place between French and British generals, or the intricate diplomatic negotiations—which took place at such a speed that I doubt whether any single individual could have followed them."

If we may venture a point here, it would be that there were two of us.

However, we were rather hurt by the short note in a newspaper:

Everything not having gone as they had hoped, the French are now doing the usual trick of blaming the British. We are the bad boys. They are lily-white.

So we have to explain in a few words conceived and written.

Oddly enough both of us old roving reporters—journalists, one for 30 years and the other for 24 years—happened to be in Port Said together, for the first time covering the same story. We were surrounded by question marks. Everything in that expedition seemed a mystery. We were curious to know what had happened behind the scenes. It would have been difficult for one man to crack the wall of silence in a few months. We decided to work together, and with the help of some other newspapermen.

We did not need anyone in the French Government to suggest the idea to us, and we did not try to get any official seal of approval. Our purpose was not to act as prosecuting counsel against anyone, least of all against allies of France. We are only reporters. But we thought that, at the end of the game, as the score was not what the team had expected, it would be perfectly normal among friends honestly to seek the reasons, to analyse the play.

Public opinion has a right to know what the captain of the team intended to do; how the outside right and the outside left played; and why the game was abandoned. Such analysis is not meant to incriminate or to wound any player.

For four months we interviewed hundreds of people in military, political and diplomatic circles, interrogating everyone connected with the expedition we thought could either give us information or check information we already had. We were warned that there might be denials for political reasons. We understood perfectly well that statesmen are bound by considerations of state.

We did not pretend to be writing the Gospel. There are certainly many gaps in our account. Nothing complete can be written on such a secret matter before Sir Anthony Eden, M. Guy Mollet, Mr John Foster Dulles, and many, many others have published their full memoirs. But we tried to recount events as exactly, objectively, and as fairly as possible.

"You charge the British," we were told many times. We do not charge anyone with anything. But, as the leadership of the operation was British at every stage, an analysis of the events must deal with British and not with Guatemalans. On the other hand, after a game which has not ended in a complete victory, every partner who did not share the full

responsibilities of the chief can believe that his views, had they been followed, might have had better results.

Nowhere in our book can be found a single word written in hostility or bitterness toward our British allies. We were partners before and during the expedition; we are still partners now. So for us there are no bad boys, no lily-whites. The only questions for us, as for public opinion, were: What happened? What could have happened? Who made it happen? *How* did they?

We did what we could. Some day we shall read a British account far better than our own, and certainly as fair. The French will read it with intense interest.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

