Naval War College Review

Volume 44
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 20

1991

Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes

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cially in the Marine Corps and the Army. Steven Ross's lecture of 1965, "Napoleon and Maneuver Warfare," notes that Napoleon's strategy in the campaigns before 1807 was an exemplary case of maneuver warfare on a large scale. Indeed, Ross does a nice comparison of some of Napoleon's maxims and the 1984 edition of AFM 1-1 and FM 100-5. Perhaps combined arms operations, bold attacks and flexible methods have always been in the armory of good generals. Now and again we may need to rediscover those basics.

Philip Crowl's lecture "The Strategist's Short Catechism: Six Questions Without Answers" could serve as a primer for the strategy and policy curriculum at the Naval War College. His key strategic questions are: What is the war about and what purpose is served by it? Is the strategy tailored to meet the national political objectives? What are the limits of military power in the situation? (Appropriate to this, Sir Bernard Montgomery once said that the first principle of war is "not to try to walk to Moscow.") What are the alternatives to the war and to the strategy should it not prevail? Will the home front support the war? Finally, What have I overlooked in my enthusiasm for the grand plan? Taken all together, this is not a bad list of questions to address before starting a war. One might suggest that they be engraved in the JCS tank.

In publishing these lectures, the Office of Air Force History has done a truly commendable service for military historians— both professional and avocational—and the military strategists, uniformed and civilian.

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Heikal, Mohamed H. *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes*. New York: Arbor House, 1987. 242pp. $18.95

Egyptian journalist, Mohamed Heikal's personal account of the events leading up to and during the Suez crisis of 1956 has tried, in *Cutting the Lion's Tail*, to "recapture the spirit of the time as we experienced it . . . fill in the background, drawing on evidence not always publicly available." As one of President Nasser's inner circle, he offers an Egyptian appreciation of the crisis which has been largely unavailable to Western commentators.

Cutting the Lion's Tail is certainly subjective. On that basis, it could be dismissed for suffering from too specific biases, as a piece of special pleading. It should not be. It is the nature of memoirs to be subjective, often in the extreme. There are a number of scholars who would, on that account, dismiss all the information contained in it. To do so would be an error, and a repetition of an old-fashioned historical ethos which has long since been discredited. Some of the most valuable evidence available to historians are those memoirs written by the actors in the play, in on daily events, privy to their

background and consequences. Certainly such accounts have their drawbacks, but in this case, it is wise to note that Mr. Heikal is a reputable journalist, avows his reliance on records kept at the time, and is writing thirty years after the event.

In this work, Mr. Heikal is determined to do his part in putting the Egyptian record straight, and insists on reclaiming the right to interpret his own country's history without the European filter. He has done so honestly. By choosing to use a standard historiographical method in his writing he has made his story considerably more accessible to the reasonably-knowledgeable reader than if he had relied on more recondite methods. Whatever the faults of this kind of history, Mr. Heikal has made a very useful, journalistically-balanced attempt to represent accurately (and occasionally amusingly) a matter in which he holds special knowledge. It would be a mistake to assume that his judgment is irreparably tainted because he has not made his subject dull.

Precisely what went on in Egypt, between President Nasser and his advisors, with the French, the Israelis, the British, the Soviets and the Americans was tangled, and at the time obviously misinterpreted as a result of communications lapses, personal egotism, and technological insufficiency. Heikal suggests that the Egyptian government reacted to Great Power provocation as the result of the decision by John Foster Dulles not to request U.S. Congressional funding for the Aswan Dam, as well as to the longstanding acrimony directed against Egypt by imperial Britain and colonial France. For the first we have had records and much evidence—for the second too there is every reason to suppose that Egyptian irritation at being at the mercy of Europe's imperial policies had reached its limits by the summer of 1956.

What we did not have was the systematic, blow-by-blow account of the internal reactions of the Egyptian government as they began removing themselves from their previously supine position in European politics. Heikal has thus provided a useful corrective to the exaggerations which have come to determine our perceptions of Suez and its consequences to current Middle Eastern events.

Heikal makes especially good use of his recollections of the behavior of the American intelligence agents roaming the area. Particularly in dealing with Kermit Roosevelt's portfolio (much of which Mr. Roosevelt himself has recently described) Heikal shows us the peculiarities of this time not so long ago—the simple fact that in the mid-1950s, the United States was eager to assume the imperial burden under the misapprehension that it had a future.

The belief that imperialism could be remade in the image of the United States was widely received. If the confrontations which resulted were ever understood it was only much later, and as Heikal points out, only after military confrontation and loss.

This policy of trying to mold old empires into new ones was peculiarly inappropriate for Egypt. These overarching assumptions, combined with the political inadequacy and responses by the old empires, particularly those of Anthony Eden (whom Heikal asserts believed Nasser to be a personal enemy), and the sophistication of the Third World leaders (chiefly Arab and Indian) were a prescription for the disaster which did in fact result.

One of the most poignant, perhaps unintentional, elements of Heikal's story are the similarities in political behavior on the part of both Israel and Egypt when faced with the strains of nation building. Egypt under Nasser responded in ways which were not admirable. In the attempt to extricate itself from the colonial grip, Israel, facing problems of the same nature, with the same political ambitions for internal and external security, and the same European and great power hostility, chose a course remarkably similar to Egypt's. With this in mind, it is wise to remember that of all the countries of the Middle East which abandoned or were abandoned by Europeans, Israel and Egypt are two with great political and emotional communality of experience. Heikal's perspective on Suez provides us with an understanding of why this should be so.

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Ostreng, Willy. *The Soviet Union in Arctic Waters: Security Implications for the Northern Flank of NATO.* Translated by Eric Hansen. Honolulu, Hawaii: The Law of the Sea Institute, Univ. of Hawaii. (Occasional paper No. 36, 1987.)

The Arctic above Europe is one of the world's most important maritime theaters. Its waters are the operating area of the large Soviet Northern Fleet. It is there that 35 of the Soviet's SSBNs are deployed. Also, the Northern Fleet currently deploys about 32 cruise and 90 torpedo-attack submarines. In addition, over 40 major surface combatants, including two *Kiev*-class VTOL aircraft carriers are assigned to that fleet. Should war come, many expect U.S. attack submarines and carrier-based aircraft to be employed in the Arctic.

Mr. Ostreng's work is one of the few studies in the West that deal with the Arctic theater and its naval dimensions. It was originally published as *Sovietinordlige Farvann: Atmostrategien, Nordflaten og norsk sikherhet* in Oslo, 1982. His views on the Soviet presence in the Arctic are almost exclusively from the Scandinavian or Western perspective. From 121 notes accompanying the text, only two are from Soviet open sources. So, it appears that the author made almost no attempt to provide Soviet views on the subject.

It is a short book that contains only 77 pages of text, including 11 maps. It has neither introduction nor conclusion. It's focus is on the possible scenarios for the employment of the Soviet Northern Fleet and how