

RESOLVING SUEZ CRISIS

USE OF FORCE NOT JUSTIFIED

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—If the Government seriously mean to use military force over Suez, other than in self-defence, or in pursuance of our international obligations and the United Nations Charter, they will do so in defiance of very large sections of opinion in this country. The critical decisions now facing us must really be taken with a calm understanding of the realities, and not in a mood of impatience or anger.

What are the realities? In nationalizing the canal company Colonel Nasser has acted in an exceedingly ill-judged, high-handed, and untrustworthy fashion. But so far, as your Special Correspondent in the article "Company and Canal" on August 2 points out, he has not "violated the terms of any international treaty." It is true that the offer of compensation so far made appears grossly unconvincing. But this is an issue to be settled in the cool atmosphere of the 1950s, before the appropriate international forum. By no conceivable argument can it justify the use of force by one party.

Secondly, Colonel Nasser's whole conduct is certainly a threat to the far more important principle of the security and freedom of the canal, accepted by all the main Powers in the 1930s Convention. If he were to violate this, force would be justified; and we might well say so. But he has not yet done this (except in the sense of blockading the Israel tankers, which as your Special Correspondent again points out, it does not follow that, because he has nationalized the company, he has closed or threatened to close the canal).

We were, therefore, shocked by your leading article of August 1, which says that "quibbling over" the legal issues "will delight the finicky and comfort the faint-hearted," and goes on to urge, apparently with no reference to our international obligations, that we should "be ready from the start to use force if Nasser answers" a proposal for control "with a refusal."

These matters are not "quibbles" in the eyes of most civilized nations. Such language could be used, with at least equal plausibility, by China to excuse an invasion of North Korea, Formosa, S. Viet Nam, or Hongkong, or by Russia to justify an attack on Finland or Persia. Action on these lines by Britain, not clearly in conformity with the U.N. Charter, would largely destroy in a day the moral and political force built up painfully since 1945 behind international law and order, for which we all fought in Korea, which has been the basis of United Kingdom foreign policy for 11 years, and which is the common greatest single defence of Britain in a world which we can no longer dominate by military power. It would also array against us in the United Nations (where, do let us remember in good time, we as well as others can be arraigned as aggressors) not merely the Arab and Iron Curtain countries, but most of the East, and several Commonwealth members, and many small nations.

Such a unilateral act of force would be a stupendous folly—unless and until Colonel Nasser resorts to force himself. If, therefore, he rejects the plan for international control which emerges from the coming conference, the nations concerned should forthwith apply all effective economic and diplomatic sanctions. Should, on the other hand, Colonel Nasser accept, the way would be open for new talks on economic development.

If we thus keep right scrupulously on our side, and act resolutely, we shall have far the best chance of vindicating the essential principles at stake.

Yours faithfully,
DENIS HEALEY.
DOUGLAS JAY.

House of Commons, Aug. 5.

Sir,—It seems as if Egypt's action may prove a blessing in disguise. For one thing, it has drawn public attention to the fact that, for several years and in defiance of the Security Council, Egypt has been interfering with the passage through the canal of ships bound for Israel. Hitherto our attitude to this illegality has been unpleasantly reminiscent of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's comment on Hitler's rape of Czechoslovakia—that it was a small far-away country of which we knew little. It was therefore left to its fate.

The second place it has compelled the British, French, and American Governments to recognize at last that a waterway in which many nations are vitally interested should be under international, not national, control. It is to be hoped that the same principle will now be accepted in the case, not only of waterways, but also of other works and installations on which the life of many nations depends.

Yours faithfully,
W. L. ROSEVEARE.

The Orchard House, Hutton, Weston-super-Mare, Aug. 3.

Sir,—As an Egyptian lawyer, visiting this country for the University Summer Course for foreign lawyers at Cambridge, and deeply concerned for the future of good relations between Egypt and the Commonwealth, I am permitted to say a few words on the present friction between our respective countries? Especially I would like to draw attention to the Egyptian case, which in my opinion has not been adequately presented in the British Press.

To begin with Egypt is being blamed for nationalizing the Suez Canal Company and a campaign is being whipped up for the taking of economic if not of military measures against her. But one may well ask if this is a realistic approach to the problem. Politics is the art of the possible and the science of the probable and in the context of recent Middle East politics the nationalization of the canal must have appeared to all but the politically myopic as not only possible but indeed probable.

FOSSILS OF TO-MORROW

AMERICAN NATURALIST DESCRIBES HIS QUEST FOR RARE ANIMALS

By Lee Merriam Talbot

"You're an ecologist looking for rare animals? What kind of rare animal is an ecologist?" That is the first question I am usually asked when people hear of my assignment with the I.U.C.N.

The International Union for Conservation—of Nature and Natural Resources—is a Unesco-sponsored, international organization. It is dedicated to the preservation and wise use of the riches of the earth, including its renewable natural resources. The I.U.C.N.'s present membership is composed of eight Governments and over 200 national organizations and public services from 50 countries.

I work out of the Secretariat offices in Brussels, Belgium. But I am usually travelling, as my main assignment is with the Survival Service. This is concerned with the continued survival of animals, plants, and birds that are threatened with extinction.

A great many species of wild animals and birds can exist with, or in spite of, man's activities. Others cannot. A disturbingly large number of these have become extinct. Many others are on the verge of extinction, and it is these "fossils of to-morrow" that are the concern of the Survival Service.

ON THE WAY OUT

My assignment has been to survey the present status of some of the world's rarest animals, with the object not only to find out where they live and how many are left but also, where possible, to see what is causing their extermination and to try to see what can be done to conserve them.

The animals I was given as primary targets were from the list of the world's most threatened species. They included, among others, the three Asiatic rhinoceroses, the Arabian oryx, the Burmese brown-antlered deer, and the Indian lion.

To get the greatest value from my necessarily short visits to the animals' actual habitats, I spent about five months in Europe and the United States gathering background information and preparing contacts. Then in April, 1955, I started the field part of the mission. The six-month assignment took me some 42,000 miles through 30 countries of North Africa, the Middle East, and south and south-east Asia. With the cooperation of the Governments involved, I made small expeditions to the remote homes of the different animals. Checking back over my notes on these, I found that I used 37 different forms of field transport on these expeditions. They ranged from elephants and camels to dug-out canoes and rafts. The animals ranged from the burning, barren deserts of Arabia and North Africa to the snows of the Himalayas and the jungle-clad islands of Indonesia.

KINDS OF RHINOCEROS

The rhinoceros, in prehistoric times, was one of the most widely spread of all land animals. To-day there are only five kinds left, two in Africa and three in Asia. A few centuries ago the Asiatic rhinoceros ranges covered much of south-east Asia, extending from the Khyber Pass eastwards to the Pacific Coast of Indo-China and, southward, through Java and Sumatra. At present there are only a few hundred individuals of all three species known to survive, and they are mostly confined to small, carefully protected areas.

This rapid reduction in range and numbers was, largely, caused by two factors. First was the expansion of cultivation into the home ranges of the "rhino." Secondly, and most important to-day, is the fantastic trade in rhino horns. There are widespread oriental beliefs that a rhino horn cup will render poison harmless; that rhino horn taken internally or externally will rejuvenate lost youth and will cure all manner of bodily or spiritual complaints; and that powdered rhino horn is the most powerful aphrodisiac. These beliefs extend to all parts and products of the unfortunate beasts' bodies. They are so strong that I saw individual merchants offer prices as high as \$2,500 for one horn. In Sumatra, one Chinese merchant was offering a new American automobile in trade for a whole rhinoceros. A high Burmese official was reported to have killed one rhino recently to obtain the blood as medicine for his wife. And in the Kingdom of Nepal a freshly killed beast is considered necessary in religious ceremonies honouring ancestors.

Less well known is the fact that some of these beliefs were once widely held in Europe. Rhinoceros horn cups, for instance, were recorded as being used by various kings and popes to protect

them from suspected poisonings. Rhino horn as a highly valued internal medicine was used here through and beyond the Middle Ages. With the price that they carry on their heads, the wonder is not that rhinos are rare to-day but that they still exist at all.

Smallest of the world's rhinoceroses is the Sumatran two-horned variety. The little fellow stands 4½ feet at the shoulder and weighs only about a ton. The few individuals surviving are scattered through several south-east Asian countries. They exist as separated individuals or family groups, protected only by the extreme inaccessibility of their jungle-clad mountains. Slightly larger is the one-horned Javan rhinoceros. Only two or three dozen remain, very carefully protected by the Indonesian Government in the Udjun Kulon reserve on the western tip of Java.

Over 14 feet long and above six feet at the shoulder, the Great Indian Rhinoceros is largest of the Asiatic rhinos. An unknown number still survive in a remote valley in Nepal, and three to four hundred are protected in eight small reserves in north-east India.

REAL UNICORN

In the Kaziranga Reserve in Assam I was observing the rhinos from elephant back when my elephant was charged by a rather unfriendly mother rhino. Apparently not realizing the friendly purpose of my visit, she chased us for some distance through the 15-foot high elephant grass, then caught up to us and with a toss of her head opened a foot and a half long cut in the elephant's side. She did this with a long lower tooth, instead of her more obvious weapon, the horn. Unfortunately, I was somewhat distracted at the time and did not even get a picture.

The Arabian oryx is a large, white desert antelope found only in Saudi Arabia. Its long horns are so straight that, seen from the side, they sometimes appear as one. Because of this the oryx is believed to be one origin of the unicorn myth. Because of the animal's speed and wariness, a successful oryx hunter was a celebrated man in his tribe.

The belief has remained unaltered, but the hunting tools have changed. Sweeping the desert with fast cars and modern rifles and shotguns, the Arabs have depleted much of the desert wildlife. Wealthy Arab princes take periodical hunts in the desert. Over 200 gazelle a day have been run down and killed on these hunts. One oryx hunt consisted of 300 cars and trucks. In the face of this onslaught, the oryx has been virtually exterminated.

"Lion," like "rhino," to most people means Africa. Yet, long ago, lions were found all the way from what is now Turkey eastward into India and southward into Arabia. They were so much a part of life that they appeared over 100 times in the Scriptures. Partly because of its bravery in the face of modern weapons, by the end of the nineteenth century the Asiatic lion was virtually extinct. The only real population of the lions survived on the Gujerat peninsula of north-west India. And this population was estimated at less than a dozen!

Given total protection, the original handful of lions has increased in 50 years to between 200 and 300. Their home has been a hilly patch of teak forest and thorn scrub called the Forest of Gir. Here they lived in relative peace for some years, existing mostly on the resident wild animals. But in recent decades the forest has been used as grazing ground for startlingly large numbers of cattle and water buffalo. The damage caused by these animals' overgrazing is severe.

LIONS' KILL

As a result of this and other factors, during the time that the lion population has increased so spectacularly, the forest area has decreased almost as spectacularly. From over 1,000 square miles in extent in the late 1800s the forest has shrunk to the equivalent of an irregular patch of 16 by 30 miles. The wild animals are almost gone, so the lions must resort to domestic stock for dinner, and their kill is reported to be about 10 animals a day.

One of the first questions Mr. Nehru asked me was about the status of the lions. The Indian Government is proud to have the last survivors of the famous race, and they are seeking a way to manage the area of the Gir forest for the best interests of all concerned. The problems they face with their lions are largely parallel to those faced by wild life conservationists all over the world.

TRAINED IN SAIL

allot this amount of time in a 40-week course.