Episode 2.20: Americans & Soviets examines the involvement of the Cold War’s primary protagonists in the Suez Crisis. At long last, we bring the events in Hungary full circle with events in Egypt, and assess whether Anthony Eden’s crimes doomed Hungary after all. In short, we bring everything full circle in 1956. What the events of this year demonstrated, between the Soviet aggressions in Hungary and the Anglo-French adventures in Egypt, was that a strong United Nations was critical for the sake of the peace of the world. ‘I agree with you’, said Eden, ‘and that was why I acted as I did in the first place!’ While the Prime Minister was in full-blown deception mode, his political rivals in the Commons were far from satisfied. Their curiosity was piqued, rather than satiated, and they latched onto the inconsistencies in Eden’s version of events like dogs latched onto a bone. In the end, their suspicious persistence would prove correct, though even they would be startled by just how far Eden had gone.

To a great many British citizens and statesmen, it was easier to believe the narrative parroted by the Government. To suppose that the Government could have acted so rashly and aggressively was the antithesis of Conservative governance, and of a sensible foreign policy which the Tory ideology was meant to stand for. Not only that, but the version of events Eden parroted – that Britain had saved the peace by compelling the UN to offer up a peacekeeping force – enabled many Britons to feel proud of their country’s contribution to peace. They would have had good cause to feel proud, had there been any shred of truth to what the PM had said. It was clear to him by the end of 7th November that his choices had had consequences. Not only Egypt, but the relationship with the Americans, the powers of the Soviets and the nature of the Cold War itself had all been affected. It was at this moment, that Eden decided it was time for a holiday…

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Hello and welcome history friends patrons all to 1956 episode 2.20. We’ve come a long way since we first introduced the French struggles in Algeria twenty episodes ago. In the last episode we effectively brought Eden’s story full circle, as he finally announced the ceasefire in the teeth of a Parliament that had spent the last two hours lambasting his policy. Eden, as we saw, had not only announced peace, he had also presented British policy in a different, and brand new light, to that which had originally been intended.

The Suez Crisis had not been forcibly escalated, and the British and French had not intervened in the midst of an international outcry, because they wished to exert their old rights over the Egyptian government and control again the Suez waterway. Oh no – Eden’s recasting of the British action depicted a Britain which had acted to prevent further conflict from spreading across the ME, to pull the two belligerents in Israel and Egypt apart, and to convince the UN to dedicate some proper force to managing a lasting peace in the region. Wasn’t Britain good? Wasn’t its Government good? Wasn’t its PM good? If Eden hoped to successfully recast Britain’s role in the fiasco though, he was to be disappointed. Those in the political opposition would not let go of the numerous inconsistencies in Eden’s story. Worse, there was no indication that the Americans or Soviets were willing to rest easy either. In this episode then, we do our best to trace these interconnected issues. We will start as ever in the House of Commons, where I will take you on 7th November 1956…

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The PM was not out of the woods yet. While the news of a ceasefire had blunted the desperate anxiety of the opposition, it had not cured their curiosity. Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour leader, would certainly want to know more about what the situation was in Egypt, what the timeline for the establishment of an EF from the UN would be, and exactly what was going down in the UN at this time. It was the PM’s to inform the Commons of these issues, and to detail the procession of events which had led to this point. Indeed, Eden had committed the previous evening of 6th November to accomplish this very task.

When he stood up before the Commons at just after 4PM on 7th November though, Eden displayed his acumen for dodging. The transcript of the afternoon session in the Commons on this day would stretch to over 40k words, yet a very small portion would consist of Eden’s pronouncements, and even then, Eden managed to say very little. What he did say was telling, because he made clear where British policy stood. When asked about the nature of the ceasefire, Eden maintained that he was sure the French were following it, but that Egyptian acquiescence could not be wholly guaranteed. When asked about the composition of the UN EF, and whether Britain would take part in this force, Eden claimed he did not know, since this would be up to the UN. When asked about the schedule of the UN GA and the result of its debates, Eden claimed that Selwyn Lloyd knew of these issues, and the FS had not yet returned from the US. By pleading ignorance, in other words, Eden aimed to drag out the proceedings for another day, and to refrain from saying anything concrete about the political and military catastrophe which had taken place in Egypt. On one issue in particular though, the PM was very clear, when he said:

If there is a position which would give us information which I felt would be of service to the House then, of course, I will do so, but we are trying to conduct, about this very international force, rather elaborate negotiations—because they do concern a large number of countries, with widely different views as to what shall be done. I think that there is more than one Resolution before the Assembly. Whether I shall be able to tell the House more about that later this afternoon I simply cannot say until I know what the outcome of the discussions is…The position of Her Majesty's Government is as I stated it yesterday. There is no question whatever in our mind of withdrawal by the United Kingdom and her allies, unless and until there is a United Nations force to take over from us.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Yet, it should be noted that Eden’s avoidance of the issue of the UN had far more to do with the unflattering way which the British continued to carry themselves in the UN GA – the British delegate would abstain in two of the three votes on important resolutions put forward in the UN GA on 7th November – than with a lack of information being supplied to the PM. Selwyn Lloyd, as was his custom, never ceased to remain in regular contact with his political mentor and friend Anthony Eden. For the PM to then claim that he couldn’t speak of the UN matters until Lloyd was home then reeks of the kind of delaying tactic he would continue to make use of over the next month, as Eden attempted to avoid talking much about the UN at all, unless he could say something which would paint the British in a positive light.[[2]](#footnote-2)

With the gauntlet thrown down to the UN to create an EF, the buck was passed to the Canadians, and to others who had worked in the UN to craft some kind of police force. Only with this police force, it was believed, could matters settle down in the ME and the British and French be removed. It shouldn’t surprise us to learn that this task was a monumental one for Lester Pearson, the Canadian FM, to bear. What may be a bit more surprising though was the uncertain nature of the Canadian government, as well as the Canadian people. A quick survey of Canadian opinion reflected a by no means absolute degree of support for the establishment of an EF, not to mention the fact that a latent respect and reverence for the British mother country still retained a degree of influence when it came to how Canadians viewed their place in the world. One historian attempted to gauge public feeling in Canada by assessing the varied letters to Canadian newspapers, and he noted an interesting trend among those that supported Eden’s line, saying:

In the letters supporting Britain a variety of arguments may be discerned, a by no means uncommon opinion being that Canada should stand by the Mother Country right or wrong. More often it was asserted that, however contrary to appearances, Britain was not wrong. How could Sir Anthony Eden, at the pinnacle of so long and honourable a career, make a serious blunder in a field of which he was an acknowledged master? Many letters echoed Eden's own diagnosis. Nasser was a bully and a thug, a megalomaniac dictator, a "Middle East Hitler." History has taught nothing if not that such men bring war and ruin in their tracks and must be stopped, by force if need be, before it is too late.[[3]](#footnote-3)

If it seems insane that many were willing in countries outside of Britain to believe in Anthony Eden’s hype, then this makes it all the more surprising that the PM acted as he did. In many respects his policy during the SC had been completely out of character, and it is little wonder that his performance during 1956 led some to speculate on his health, and to question whether Eden was, by this point, not in fact himself following a sequence of health problems and a large quantity of daily drugs.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Eden would have greatly valued such unshakable confidence in his leadership at home. He was kept regularly updated by his subordinates about the noise being made by the legal officers, who, anxious for their positions now that Suez was winding down, emphasised repeatedly that they would not be able, in good conscience, to state that the intervention in Egypt was legally justifiable. We’ve seen in previous episodes how Britain’s legal officials tied themselves in knots in their efforts to remain loyal to the Government as well as their profession. Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, the legal advisor to the FO and the AG in particular both experience no end of stress and inner battles during this intense period, as they debated amongst themselves how best to proceed. It had long before been settled that they would not claim that the Suez intervention had been legally justified. Instead, these legal officers hoped that a sense of loyalty would be enough, while the awkward legal questions from the political opposition in particular could be avoided. One major bone of contention was the behaviour of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir, who presented himself throughout the crisis as a kind of legal advisor to the PM, when his job title entitled him to be nothing of the sort. The AG said as much in a memo to Eden, sent on 8th November, as follows:

The Lord Chancellor, I gather, expressed the view in Cabinet that our threat and our use of force was legally justified. He expressed that view in the House of Lords on the 1st November. In the House of Commons the Foreign Secretary on the 31st October expressed similar views and the Lord Privy Seal on the 1st November said, "There is no doubt that our action is in accord with what is described as customary international law." Although I support what we have done and have said so publicly, we cannot, as you know, agree with the statements made on behalf of the Government that we were legally entitled so to act. It is because it has been repeatedly asserted that our actions are legally justified that we are in such an embarrassing position.

In response to this telegram, one of Eden’s private secretaries echoed the belief that all supporters of the intervention should stop immediately with any references to the action being justified under international law. As he put it in a memo to his peers:

In these circumstances I think it would be inadvisable for Ministers to repeat, in future speeches, the claim that our action was justified in inter-national law. I think it will be wiser to avoid further public argument on the legal issue-for it will plainly be embarrassing if it is disclosed that the Lord Chancellor and the Law Officers take differing views on this.

We have examined the struggles of Britain’s legal profession to come to terms with the intervention in the past, and while it may bore some of you guys to tears, it is an important plank of our story because of what it says about Eden’s policy. If his subordinates in the legal office could not approve of what Eden was doing according to the definition of international law and according to their own consciences, then surely this was a grave indication of how baseless the PM’s actions had been. For so long, Eden had seemed to be in denial of this fact, yet considering his agreement to the ceasefire and his total abandonment of the idea that the intervention had been legally justified in subsequent debates – indeed, considering his complete recasting of the intervention as one which Britain did for reasons of security and international good *rather than* because it had been legally justified or compelled to act, we must conclude that Anthony Eden also realised that the entire Suez operation had been based on shaky ground to begin with.

Whatever he had told himself, whatever he had claimed to have been the truth and whatever facts he had lied about to suit his story, only Anthony Eden knew for sure, deep down, why he had felt so compelled to act in Egypt. Was it to save the unity of European interests and preserve a kind of ‘third way’ in the CW? Was it because the PM was worried about British prestige, and anxious to recoup what he believed was its lost credibility after the nationalisation of the SC? Or, was it simply because President Nasser had embarrassed Eden, and the PM believed it plainly wrong that this Egyptian upstart should have had the power in the first to do so? It could well have been all of these factors that compelled Anthony Eden to play his pivotal role in the SC. Without him, it is impossible to imagine that the Israelis and French would have acted as they did, and we imagine the ME thus developing in a very different manner in the 1950s because of this. In any case, we must bid farewell now to Anthony Eden, and leave his government in the rear-view mirror for the moment. We will return with a final note on Eden and his fortunes in the final episode, but for now, we must turn our attentions to the interests and angles of the Soviets and the Americans.

On the same day that Anthony Eden was squirming out of answering any questions directly in the Commons, thousands of miles away, another political leader of a different sort was celebrating victory. Dwight D. Eisenhower had, as he had suspected deep down, won the right to sit in office for another four years. In fact, he had won the office handily, with a disparity of 9 million votes between himself and Adlai Stevenson, his Democratic opponent. While Eisenhower wouldn’t be able to translate this gulf in popularity into the Senate or House, he was able to coast through on his popularity, a popularity which was to stay with him right up to the point of his death in 1969.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This is of course not the place to discuss the presidency of Eisenhower, but it suffices to note that he had been re-elected not just because of his warm smile and effectively crafted self-image. Eisenhower was successful in the 1956 election because he promised Americans a middle of the road approach to foreign policy and domestic policy, as well as a reduction in the sharpening of political attitudes and bipartisanship, so that the average American could simply get on with their lives. Americans, in short, wanted security, and as the historian Vincent de Santis noted, ‘they looked for this to Eisenhower, who assured them the problems and dangers would pass.’[[6]](#footnote-6) Eisenhower retired in 1960, having acquired the honour of being one of the few Presidents to leave with a greater popularity than he had had before entering office.

Yet, the President was also plagued by criticism from academics and political observers, who judged Eisenhower harshly, and claimed that Ike’s middle of the road approach at home and abroad prevented much concrete things from being done. What was more, the blustering and pontificating which had swept him to power in 1952, amidst claims that the Republican Party would finally confront the communist threat, had all but evaporated by 1956. This did not mean that Eisenhower ignored the communists, or that he refrained from criticising them in public – what it did mean was that Ike claimed in public to be taking a stiff line against Moscow, where in private it was ensured that the Soviets were never sufficiently spooked. Eisenhower was in fact far more cautious than is often presumed; if one was to judge him by the statements he made and commitments he followed through on – ‘I will go to Korea’ coming to mind in particular – then it is sometimes easy to forget that Eisenhower did not promise much radical change during his first term, and that he hoped his second term would be just as uneventful.

Re-election granted him the opportunity to implement more of the same, but if anything, his second term was to prove more active, as Ike implemented what was deemed the Eisenhower Doctrine, which had as its goal the rollback of communist influence in the ME.[[7]](#footnote-7) This commitment to engage in a rollback of communism was partly a reaction to the Suez Crisis, where American policy had been characterised as ineffectual and unmoving in the face of the determination of the Anglo-French and the stubbornness of the Israelis and Egyptians. Eisenhower aimed at the ME to reduce the fallout from Suez, and to nip in the bud any suggestions that American foreign policy in the ME would take a back seat to the British or French. A not negligible rivalry over oil pockets in the ME did characterise Anglo-American relations in that portion of the world into the 1960s,[[8]](#footnote-8) and John Foster Dulles’ presence was gradually reduced as the poor Secretary of State slowly succumbed to cancer, which further affected the Anglo-American relationship. Historians continue to debate exactly how much influence over foreign policy Dulles had, and whether he was subordinate to Eisenhower in the crafting of foreign policy, or whether Ike simply let Dulles at it.[[9]](#footnote-9) The two men, historians do agree, made a great team – one which was founded on far more worthy qualities than Eden’s on-off relationship with Selwyn Lloyd.

Back to the point that Eisenhower criticised the Soviets in public, but in private sought to maintain peace with Moscow at all costs, we are drawn to the intensification of the Hungarian revolt in the last days of October, and the reassuring messages Washington sent to Moscow during that time. Furthermore, even while America officially condemned the Soviet crushing of Budapest, she simultaneously was at pains to emphasise that she at no point wished to commit troops to save the doomed Hungarians. If we cast our mind back to the first part of 1956, and to the visit Khrushchev paid to Yugoslavia on 2nd November, shortly before committing the tanks to crush the revolt, then a further nugget appears. This nugget took the form of a startling telegram sent by the US State Department to Tito, the Yugoslav leader, which stated that ‘The Government of the United States does not look with favour upon governments unfriendly to the Soviet Union on the borders of the Soviet Union.’

It was in his article examining the Soviet-American response to the twin crises of Suez and Hungary, that the historian Brian McCauley assessed the importance of this telegram, stating that:

This alleged telegram…would undoubtedly have been intended for Khrushchev's ears. The United States may have become aware of the secret…visit through its intelligence and have taken this opportunity to give the Soviet leaders one last reassurance of American non-involvement. The wording of the alleged telegram gave Khrushchev full sanction to act as he saw fit to end the crisis. Of course, the decision to crush the revolt had already been made by this time, but the American message, if it was sent, would have solidified Soviet resolve to act with impudence.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The US did not want the Soviets to think that they intended to intervene to save Hungary, because it was feared that this would provoke Moscow into some radical course which only a thoroughly cornered state would adopt. By calming Soviet nerves through constant reassurance, the Eisenhower administration aimed to reduce any potential spill-over from the Hungarian crisis, especially as Suez posed such a problem and continued to dominate the proceedings of the UN. On 3rd November, America’s ambassador in Hungary, who had only arrived the previous day as it happened, sent a seriously gloomy message home to his government, noting on the build-up of Soviet arms and the high tension in Budapest that:

Soviet intentions [are] unclear as to [the] ultimate use [of] these overwhelming forces but [the] current guess is [that] after making dispositions [the Soviets] will issue [an] ultimatum to [the] Hungarian Government, possibly in [a] veiled form of negotiations, about Hungarian participation in Warsaw Pact and [about] form [of] government. Major problem [for] Hungarian Government in yielding in [the] face [of] hopeless odds is that aroused populace may not *repeat not* follow. This could lead to slaughter. [The] Hungarian Government appeal to [the] UN and four-power guarantees is desperate striving to find [a] way out.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Even if Eisenhower had wanted to save the Hungarians through the use of force – an impossible idea, it must be said – this kind of telegram would have told him all he needed to know about the prospects of success for that venture. If helping the Hungarians was impossible, then the Soviets should be informed that there was no need to proceed in a paranoid fashion, in fear of Western intervention. It is worth noting that Eisenhower may also have believed that if Moscow felt less threatened, it might deal with Imre Nagy’s revolutionary government less harshly. Yet, Eisenhower’s policy towards Hungary was complicated by the fact that election time was looming. Having made several pronouncements to the effect that he intended to rollback communist influence, it would have been fatal to his political prospects to be seen to publicly appease the Soviets in the UN’s different bodies.

Thus, we are brought to understand the cynical but also sensible policy of Eisenhower towards the Hungarian crisis. With the reports of its ambassador in Hungary safely in hand, Eisenhower would have known, even before the axe fell, that the situation in that country was dire indeed. For the sake of keeping up appearances though, in the evening of 3rd November, the American delegate introduced a resolution calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, and for peace to be maintained between the two states. Remember, that since Imre Nagy had announced Hungary’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact on 1st November, Soviet troops had no official reason to remain on Hungarian soil. This put extra pressure on the Americans to do something, pressure which would have to be pandered to by following the usual protocols of diplomacy, facilitated by the UN SC and then the GA.

Incidentally, when the American delegate to the UN did propose the resolution in the evening of 3rd November, the debate lasted for four hours, into the early hours of 4th November. If we remember the timeline then we’ll recall that dawn on 4th November was the moment when the huge numbers of Soviet troops on Hungarian soil finally proceeded as many had expected and feared. Because of this timetable though, and because the Soviet delegate in the UN SC almost certainly knew of it, he was anxious to end proceedings before it could be learned that Hungary was again in flames. Luckily for him, even if the resolution was vetoed in the SC, it was unlikely that the GA would have time to discuss it, since the GA was at this point dominated by – you guessed it – the Suez Crisis, and the Canadian efforts to solve that searing problem in the ME.

What is interesting for the sake of our Suez Crisis angle is how the British and French attempted to keep the SC session in motion, so that they could avoid talking about Suez and focus instead on Hungary, and the Soviets did the opposite to try and push the spotlight off of themselves. When some members of the SC attempted to table a motion to continue the SC debate on Hungary though, the American delegate abstained, and the resolution fell short of one vote. Even more incredibly, the American delegate voted against an Australian proposal in the UN SC to resume the debate the next day. The British and French etc. could cry foul at this American ‘treachery’ against the Hungarians, and Eisenhower, for his part, was not about to announce to the American public what had been done, but if we take a step back for a second, the American behaviour in the SC makes more sense.

As we saw, Eisenhower had already come to terms with being unable to act in Hungary. In addition, the President’s mission became one of persuading the Soviets that America meant her know harm, and that consequently she could tone down her aggressive policy a tad without a risk of the Western powers swooping into Hungary in the meantime. This latter idea proved a forlorn hope, but in my view the real reason the American delegate proved so set against resolutions to do with Hungary can be summarised in just a short snappy sentence – Hungary was lost, and Suez needed to be solved. There was little point in waffling on about Hungary – let the GA do that when it had the time. The US and Eisenhower himself was far more interested in bringing the conflict in Suez to an end, and, to the fortune of the Soviets, the Americans wished to avoid the Hungarian problem where possible. Avoiding the Hungarian issue was preferable not just because it made American diplomacy look bad, but also because it was little more than a distraction.

To hide its shortcomings at such a sensitive juncture – perhaps even just until Eisenhower had won his second term – Hungary was shoved to the backburner and the crime of Suez was emphasised. Of course, avoiding the Hungarian issue for the next few days was made nigh on impossible when the full extent of the Soviet re-invasion and crushing of the country became clear. The American delegate could not hide his shock, and approved of the resolution which effectively pawned the issue off to the GA, which of course was what had been desired in Washington all along. Let the issue be sent to the GA, which was itself also occupied with Suez. While there it would require some effort and time to get any support for a resolution together, and even if a resolution condemning the Soviet action in Hungary was produced in double quick time – which was in fact what happened – this was only the GA, and Washington could effectively ignore its outcry.

As we said, the Americans were likely surprised, but not unduly worried, when all present took a break from discussing Suez to hastily condemn the Soviet action. On the afternoon of 4th November in fact, barely a few hours since the tanks had rolled into Budapest, the Assembly passed a resolution condemning the Soviet attack and calling for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary (by a margin of 50-8-14). As had been suspected though, this token act of disapproval did next to nothing. By this stage, there was no doubt that Hungary would be crushed, if it hadn't been already. Furthermore, whereas Suez had mobilised the sentiments and enthusiasm of those present in the GA, in response to the Hungarian situation, no United Nations observer force was proposed. As the historian Brian McCauley noted, ‘The vote simply put on record the fact that the overwhelming majority of the members of the United Nations were appalled by the Soviet action. Coming ex post facto, it was like whistling in the wind.’[[12]](#footnote-12)

The Suez Crisis, for all of the confusion and problems it caused for Britain and France, also demonstrated the limits of Soviet and American power. Despite the acclaimed link between Egypt and the Soviet Union, which Eden was to attempt to make a great out of for the sake of propaganda purposes, Moscow had been forced to backpedal significantly in Egypt once it became clear that there was a potential for her to be engaged on two fronts. Obviously, Khrushchev was always going to choose Hungary over Egypt, and despite the blustering telegrams sent to the relevant powers, there was never any real intention to attack the entente in Egypt’s name. The Kremlin even went as far as withdrawing the small air force from Egypt, and as we saw last time, the focus in Egypt and the developing world in general was to gain a propaganda victory instead of a strategic or military one. While he would never have admitted it in public, Khrushchev had been rocked by the months of revolts and unrest in the Soviet Union and its satellites. He had been forced to choose which theatre to invest in, and he had been forced at the same time to greatly roll back his promises to President Nasser.

The prospects for American power told a similar story. Not only had America’s allies demonstrated their determination to act independently of the collective good of NATO or any good sense, Washington had also manifestly failed to persuade the European neighbours of the Anglo-French to make them see sense. This shortcoming in her West European policy was painfully evident in Central Europe, where Washington was powerless to protect Hungary. In both the American and Soviet cases, compromises had to be accepted, and the leaders in each state had to take a realistic approach to the situation. At the same time as this realistic approach was being taken, propaganda in the Soviet case, and something very close to propaganda in the American case, was adopted for the relevant theatres.

Let me explain what I mean by that. In the Soviet withdrawal from Egypt, it was underlined how in bed the Western imperialists were in their efforts to recolonise Egypt and then Africa. In the Soviet propaganda which followed, great emphasis was placed upon the impact of the Soviet threats, which were intended, as we saw, to pull the allies closer together rather than make war a reality, so that their propaganda could be based on some nuggets of truth. It was largely to avoid this trap, and to ensure that her own policy wasn’t seen as ineffectual, that American policymakers in Washington as well as the UN attempted to bring the Suez Crisis to an end peacefully, with Canadian initiatives above all. The American propaganda, if it can even be called that, can be detected in the efforts of the Eisenhower administration to distract from Hungary where possible, and to insist when forced to talk about that the US was doing all it could, while in private ensuring that the Soviets knew there was no danger of American intervention.

In short, both powers said or intimated one thing and set about doing the other. Even while we can speculate that the US would not have gotten involved in Hungary, it can certainly be said that Suez sharpened all dilemmas. Even so, while the Eisenhower administration decried the Anglo-French behaviour and moved to contain it, it may well have represented something of a blessing in disguise for Eisenhower’s image. Think about it – at least with the Suez debacle waging on, Washington had an excuse for not getting involved in Hungary. In addition, in the aftermath, when fingers needed to be pointed, it would be far easier to blame the Anglo-French, even if collusion and conspiracy were not mentioned, as the powers responsible for dooming Hungary to its fate. While it is certainly the case that everyone’s plates in the UN would have been that much emptier without Suez, it also is highly unlikely that the kind of UN EF which materialised for Egypt would have been sent to Hungary. It was tacitly accepted, however reluctantly, that anything beyond the iron curtain was a lost cause. Even with the evident zeal of the Hungarians, and their clear passion for self-determination, there was no question of making war on Russia in their name.

What is clear, though, is that the invasion of Hungary would have been a much more damaging PR disaster for Khrushchev had he not enjoyed the cover and confusion provided by Suez. In this case, it must be said that Eisenhower also benefited. If Hungary had to be crushed, then it was just as well in American strategic thinking that it be crushed at a time when the government could protest at its hands being tied. In the midst of greatly benefiting from the Suez crisis, both the Americans and the Soviets had gone to great lengths to prevent the possibility of war breaking out in either theatre. As we saw, the Soviets removed their forces from Egypt, and the Americans sent calming messages through the Yugoslavs. There was no question that either party wished to see the relevant hot spots lead to WW3, because neither party cared enough about either hot spot to take matters to their explosive, apocalyptic conclusion.

What can be said though is that in all these manoeuvres, both the Americans and Soviets, in spite of what they said, were saved, in many respects, by Anthony Eden’s blundering Suez policy. Providing a conflict Britain did not need, that it could not afford, and that its populace and government could not quite understand, Suez was the product of Anthony Eden’s failures, insecurities and naivety. Without Eden pushing for such a 19th century strategy, both the Soviets and the Americans would have emerged from 1956 far less unscathed than they eventually did. As it stands then, in my view, Anthony Eden was both the sacrificial lamb, the hero without a cape and the most significant casualty, of the year that was 1956.

Next time, we will conclude our series with a look at what occurred in Britain after Suez. Was this the great decline of British fortunes? Was it the true beginning of the bipolar relations which characterised the CW? How could the Egyptian situation, the Suez Crisis and the prospect of repeated conflict in the ME be solved? All of these are issues we will address next time, in our final episode. I hope you’ll join me for that, but until then my lovely patrons and history friends, my name is Zack, and this has been 1956 episode 2.20. Thanks for listening and I’ll be seeing you all soon.

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2. See Graham Spry, ‘Canada, the United Nations Emergency Force, and the Commonwealth’, *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 33, No.3 (Jul., 1957), pp. 289-300; p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. James Eayrs, ‘Canadian Policy and Opinion during the Suez Crisis’, *International Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring, 1957), pp. 97-108; p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See THE RT HON LORD OWEN, CH, Paper – The Effect Of Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s Illness On His Decision-Making During The Suez Crisis, *Quarterly Journal of Medicine* (2005); 98, pp. 387–402 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For more on the popularity and image of Eisenhower see: Henry Z. Scheele, ‘The 1956 Nomination of Dwight D. Eisenhower: Maintaining the Hero Image’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Bicentennial Considerations and the Eisenhower and L.B. Johnson Presidencies (Summer, 1987), pp. 459-471. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Vincent P. de Santis, ‘Eisenhower Revisionism’, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr., 1976), pp. 190-207; p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Peter L. Hahn, ‘Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Presidential Doctrines (Mar., 2006), pp. 38-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Tore Tingvold Petersen, ‘Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952-1957’, *The International History Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 71-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Richard H. Immerman, ‘Eisenhower and Dulles: Who Made the Decisions?’, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn, 1979), pp. 21-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Brian McCauley, ‘Hungary and Suez, 1956: The Limits of Soviet and American Power’, p. 792. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cited in *Ibid*, p. 793. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See *Ibid*, pp. 793-795. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)