

Telegram from the British Embassy in Brussels on Belgian reactions following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal (Brussels, 31 July 1956)

Caption: In a telegram dated 31 July 1956, the British Embassy in Brussels informs the British Foreign Office of the Belgian reactions to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. While the Belgian press supports the United Kingdom and France, the Belgian Government seems reluctant to take a stance and refuses to comment on possible measures to be adopted.

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Sir G. Labouchere
No: 164
July 31, 1956.

D: 1.31 p.m. July 31, 1956.
R: 4.40 p.m. July 31, 1956.

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Suez Canal.

Officially the Belgians are at present showing a prudent reserve. Thus, the Minister of Foreign Trade, speaking at a Press conference on July 30, emphasized the extent of Belgian commercial interests in Egypt and added that the Belgian Government "had no opinion on the decisions taken by Great Britain, France or Colonel Nasser". "The decision of Colonel Nasser", stated M. Larock, "is one of the most important that has so far been taken in this part of the world. It is yet too early to speak of the measures or repercussions which will result".

2. The Press, however, which is treating this topic to the exclusion of all else, make it clear that generally the Belgians fully support Great Britain and France and that they consider that nothing less than the prestige and indeed future of the Western world, of which they form part, is at stake. I have found this view shared by such Belgian statesmen whom I have met in the last few days, as well as by individual members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I do not think I am exaggerating when I state that failure on our part to take action clearly demonstrating a check to Nasser would be greeted with consternation.

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