



MOUNTBATTEN

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memoirs

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MR. SANDERS

Lord Mountbatten and Suez

There has been another article by Bernard Levin in today's Times, with further extracts from Lord Mountbatten's filmed recollection of his part in the Suez affair.

2. Mr. Levin now says that he is not concerned with whether the account was true or not ("I was in no position to evaluate his words") but with Lord Mountbatten's concern that the truth should not be suppressed and with ensuring that Lord Mountbatten's version was not altogether suppressed.

3. The comments made in Mr. Levin's first article (including Lord Hailsham's, but others have commented as well) suggest that it cannot be assumed that Lord Mountbatten's version is "the truth".

4. There is no question of his version being "altogether suppressed". The Secretary of the Cabinet made clear (to Lord Brabourne and to Mr. Kennedy) his view that Lord Mountbatten's account of his role in the Suez affair should in due course be on public record. The question is one of timing. Lord Mountbatten thought that it should be as soon as possible after his own death (he seems to have been more concerned with potential embarrassment to himself than with anyone else's interests). The Broadlands Archives Trustees and the Secretary of the Cabinet took the view that it should not be published while some of those concerned were still active in public life. It is a matter of judgment.

5. The Sunday Telegraph of 9th November 1980 carried a report that "top secret Cabinet papers [on Suez] were extracted from the official record and destroyed either by or under the supervision of Lord Normanbrook". The Daily Telegraph for 10th November reported that Lord Normanbrook had said to Sir Robert Lusty shortly before he died that he "had destroyed all my papers, every note, relating to Suez". A rather similar story was told by Sir Hugh Greene in a letter to the Times on 27th June 1978, when he reported





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Lord Normanbrook as saying that "damned good care has been taken to ensure that the whole truth never does emerge". Sir Hugh Greene assumed that Lord Normanbrook was referring to the destruction of important papers.

6. The memoranda and minutes of the Cabinet and of the Cabinet Committee particularly concerned with the Suez matter are complete throughout the period. If Lord Normanbrook destroyed any papers, they were not Cabinet records.

7. Apart from that, if the Prime Minister is questioned about the destruction of Suez papers, I suggest that she should say that she cannot comment, and we shall have to wait until the official papers become available for public inspection under the rules in the Public Record Acts 1958 and 1967.

REA

(Robert Armstrong)

11th November, 1980