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NASSER SAYS "NO"

Egyptian President Nasser says goodbye to Australian premier Robert Menzies and his colleagues - but in spite of the smiles and the friendly handshakes, Egypt's answer to the 18-nation plan for international control of the Suez Canal, is still a flat refusal. Mr. Menzies flies back to London with the disturbing knowledge that although he and his committee did their best, their mission has failed.

Interviewed at the airport, Mr. Menzies tells how the 18-nation plan was explained in great detail to President Nasser, so that he should be left in no doubt as to its implications.

"And the answer to our proposals after long arguments - detailed arguments, arguments to and fro'. The answer is that Egypt will have nothing to do with any peaceful solution of the Canal issue which doesn't leave Egypt the sole and undisputed master of the whole of the operations of the Canal, subject only to the 1888 convention, which in a broad way, guarantees the freedom of traffic - the freedom of course which could be set on one side with the greatest of ease by political management. The political management - which we sought to avoid by having a guaranteed non-political management".

Most vitally concerned in the future of the Canal are Britain and France - and to Downing Street to hear the Menzies report come French premier Guy Mollet and foreign minister Christian Pineau. Sir Anthony Eden and Mr. Selwyn Lloyd greet them at the door of No.10.

These two governments face one of the most vital decisions since the war - as night falls Mr. Menzies arrives with the report which will help them make it. For the first stage of the crisis is over; both sides have made their position clear. And now it is Nasser who makes the next move - he puts a plan for wider international talks to the United Nations. The scene changes; will the atmosphere change, too?