

**Middle East - Suez story No
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Dag Hammarskjöld's samt.

Middle East / Suez story - 32

13 - 27 Dec. 56

D.H.'s memoranda

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I had to raise the issue again with Dr. Fawzi, using as a counter weight to the Lloyd statement, my own interpretative reply to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. At the same time I had to raise the issue with the French in order to get them in line with my interpretation of the British attitude. Also this switch of line complicated the issue in relation to the Egyptians considerably.

On 7 December the British introduced their "all or nothing" idea regarding the salvage operation, later in the day followed by the French, who tried to link it to the rhythm of withdrawal.

After some consideration I brought the matter up with the French and the British on Saturday, 8 December, pointing out that the all or nothing attitude presented me with an impossible dilemma, and that the linking of the salvage operation with the time-table for the withdrawal might easily lead into a complicated political deadlock.

Sunday 9 December, after receiving the first report from Wheeler, I formulated the United Nations stand which was reflected in instructions to Wheeler, and in a direct demarche to Dr. Fawzi (see special memorandum).

Monday 10 December, the line taken in relation to Wheeler and in relation to the Egyptians was brought to the attention of the British and French.

Tuesday 11 December, the Americans and Mr. McCloy were fully informed about our stand, without any objections from their side.

Wednesday 12 December, it became apparent that the British had used all their resources in all relevant capitals in order to save their all or nothing line by a sharp criticism of our "acceptance of the Egyptian stand" and our general planning. It was obvious that the propaganda line was neither accompanied by nor based on proper information concerning our position. I was approached among others by the Delegates of Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium. At the same time the British and French delegations showed growing understanding for our line.

Thursday 13 December, the French stated orally - what they had already said in writing the day before - , that our line, given certain conditions, might be acceptable. From the British side it was pointed out that the British Cabinet had only withheld its decisions on complete withdrawal and that the matter had already had repercussions on the rhythm of the withdrawal.

They wanted further clarifications. I gave them the explanation of the seeming difference between my instructions of Sunday and Wheelers more restricted attitude as reflected in a report Wednesday morning. I further said that all I could do would be to stick to my guns in both directions, with a possible margin upwards to the extent openings developed later for a wider use of British crews and equipment on a strict basis of registered needs.

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As a counter point to this development we had a continued discussion concerning the treatment of nationals, culminating so far, 12 December, with a British request for an immediate decision concerning base personnel and, 13 December, with a French allegation that an expulsion order, effective 18 December, had been issued by the Egyptian authorities.

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13 December 1956

*Final
by Fawzi*

MEMORANDUM

18 December 1956

I discussed with Dr. Fawzi the situation created by the British reaction this morning. Dr. Fawzi replied "I can formally assure you, for my Government, that the ships and the crews will be perfectly safe. Their security will, in the first instance, ^{be guaranteed through} ~~depend on the~~ protection by the Egyptian police. I need not add anything about the rest because you know what I mean".

[The last reference was to my proposal that civilian watchmen or guards be added both to the crews and to the ground personnel; that they would be armed and that they, although recruited from UNEF, would be under the orders of General Wheeler as regular elements of his personnel.

Dr. Fawzi said that he felt that the Egyptian police should not "formally" know about the existence or functions of our guards. They would be a fact, not to be publicised although, of course, ^{known} ~~recognised~~ ^{to} by the Egyptian Government.]

MEMORANDUM

This transmitted unofficially to Dixon 14 Dec. later annexed to Ardenn memo 16 Dec, some-what corrected.

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 2 November on the Middle East crisis, in the first operative paragraph, urged as a matter of priority that all parties involved in the hostilities in the area agree to an immediate cease-fire. It further, in the second operative paragraph, urged the parties to the Armistice Agreements promptly to withdraw all forces behind the Armistice lines. In the fourth operative paragraph of the same resolution the Assembly also urged "that upon the cease-fire being effective, steps be taken to reopen the Suez Canal". This resolution obviously does not establish a time sequence between a withdrawal and "steps" for reopening of the Canal. It is said that such steps should be taken as soon as the cease-fire becomes effective. This obviously does not mean that clearing operations should start immediately on a formal cease-fire. It rather indicates that such operations should start at such a later stage when there would be security that hostilities might not be resumed. Without any possibility to establish a fixed relationship, one seems entitled to say that the clearing operation was seen in conjunction with the withdrawal, which obviously was assumed to be closely related to the cease-fire both formally and in substance, as the cease-fire could not be regarded as effective until the possibility of a resumption of hostilities was eliminated by, at least, a decision on withdrawal.

2. The later resolutions of the General Assembly, 7 and 24 November, directed the attention exclusively to the question of withdrawal and did not even refer to the question of the clearing. They obviously established a priority for the withdrawal, confirming the interpretation given in the previous paragraph. Attempts to read the resolution of 2 November in the opposite sense would not be supported by the text of that resolution, and

would be contradicted by the fact that the two later resolutions refer to the withdrawal as an urgent matter, without any reference to clearing.

3. In the report of the Secretary-General, 20 November, on the Canal clearing, it was said: "Although the work is not proposed to begin until after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian forces from Port Said and the Canal area, the Secretary-General considers it possible to pursue negotiations and, in agreement with the Government of Egypt, to arrange for the necessary survey of the conditions in the Canal without delay". This point, like the report in its entirety, was covered by a general approval given by the General Assembly in its resolution, 26 November. This confirms the interpretation in the previous paragraph of the view of the General Assembly on the timing of the clearing operation undertaken by the United Nations.

4. In the report of the Secretary-General, quoted in the previous paragraph, it was also said that the Secretary-General intended to negotiate agreements with such private firms as might speedily and effectively undertake the clearing operations. He would, given the approval of the General Assembly to this proposal, "intend to address himself to firms in countries outside the present conflict". The text gave no reference to the use of Anglo/French resources. The reference solely to countries outside the conflict, and to private firms, indicates that other resources were understood not to be used or used only in case the means indicated would prove insufficient. Also this statement was covered by the general approval of the General Assembly.

5. In the debate on the report, 25 November, Mr. Selwyn Lloyd expressed himself as follows: "The United Kingdom Government has firmly given its full

support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to organize a salvage team under the auspices of the United Nations. It has declared its willingness to release any salvage ships, now under charter to the British Admiralty or to the British Government. We shall do everything in our power to help, and we welcome the assumption of the United Nations responsibility." Later on in the same speech Mr. Selwyn Lloyd said: "We are ready to lend our resources to work in any way wanted in this task..."

6. Formally the utilization by the United Nations of Anglo/French resources was raised with the Secretary-General for the first time on 29 November when the Permanent Delegate of the United Kingdom, on behalf of his Government, asked the Secretary-General whether he could give an assurance that he would be free to use Anglo/French resources for the clearing operation. After a contact with the Government of Egypt, the Secretary-General was able to give the assurance that he would be "free to use any equipment he considered necessary" for a successful operation. The question of the use of British or French crews was left open.

7. From the British side the matter was mentioned again in the course of various informal talks. However, it was not raised again formally until 7 December when it was stated on the Government's behalf that "the Anglo/French salvage fleet, with its administrative support, was a single unit, which must either stay as a whole or go as a whole". This stand was later confirmed in writing on 8 December. The position thus taken obviously involved a serious qualification of the stand of Mr. Selwyn Lloyd in the debate in the General Assembly. It further changed the bearing of the question transmitted on 29 November.

8. The British stand was further modified in the course of the next few days, as appears most clearly from a statement, 13 December, by Mr. Butler, according to which no British ships would serve without the British crews. Combined with the statement of 7 December, this stand indicates that Mr. Selwyn Lloyd's statement in the General Assembly debate, which was worded unconditionally, now should be understood to mean that the United Nations either could use the whole allied fleet, with its crews, or else would have to work only with its own resources.

9. After the assurance by the Egyptian Government on 29 November that the Secretary-General would be free to use any equipment, leaving aside the question of crews, the same matter has been discussed informally between the Foreign Minister of Egypt and the Secretary-General on various occasions. In the course of those discussions, it has been apparent that the question of the use of British and French crews, in the view of the Egyptian Government, could not be opened as long as the two countries of which the crews would be nationals, were in occupation of part of Egyptian territory in contravention of the decision of the General Assembly. Whether the question of principle could be raised at a later stage or not, was never made fully clear. It was, however, indicated that the matter might be raised as a technical problem on the proper level if and when the United Nations faced a practical need.

10. General Wheeler had, at the beginning of his mandate in Egypt, received instruction that, having regard to the Egyptian stand in principle, he could on his own, if and when the situation indicated that it was justified, raise the question of use of British and French crews. This was in line with the indications given by the Foreign Minister of Egypt,

according to which the matter could be considered as transferred from the political level, where no solution in principle might be possible, to the practical level, where pragmatic solutions might be reached.

ii. In the light of the British stand on 7 December and the position of Egypt, as maintained consistently from 29 November, General Wheeler was on 9 December instructed as follows:

- (ii) The United Nations salvage fleet, under General Wheeler's directions, will alone conduct the operation with non Anglo-French crews. However, it will not be legitimate that specific and limited salvage projects under way on individual vessels should be dropped by Anglo-French salvage crews and the long and complicated salvage task recommenced by the United Nations. The loss of time and expense involved would raise serious criticism in political and public circles both of the Egyptian authorities and of the United Nations. Such work should therefore continue and be brought to the speediest possible conclusion under General Wheeler's direction and the Anglo-French crews involved "phased out" in the shortest possible time.
- (iii) The United Nations will require to take over six selected vessels from Anglo-French forces which could, but only where technically appropriate, include vessels engaged in operations under two above. For this purpose, the United Nations would require to place on board such vessels non-British crews recruited by the U.N. 24 hours before transfer of the vessels from Anglo-French operation to U.N. operation. The required technical composition of these crews will depend upon necessary immediate observation by General Wheeler in Port Said.
- (iv) For a period of one calendar week after transfer of six Anglo-French vessels to the United Nations for operation by non-British crews, it will be necessary that three of the British crew members remain on board for instructional purposes. A total of 18 British personnel will therefore require to be retained by the United Nations for a period of seven days after the United Nations becomes possessed of these vessels.

12. As the needs specified in the instruction corresponded to the appraisal of the United Nations experts and contractors, this instruction, and the policy it reflects, was in full conformity with the basic position taken by the General Assembly when approving the report on the Canal clearing operation. The report on the one side establishes priority for private firms and resources from neutral countries but on the other hand cannot be interpreted as having given this -- obviously political -- standpoint a weight blocking the use of other resources to all the extent necessary for a successful operation. If the Egyptians were to resist the use of non-private, non-neutral resources to the extent indicated by the needs established by the experts, that would introduce considerations foreign, or even contrary, to the approach in the basic report. So would the British and the French if they insisted on the use of non-private, non-neutral resources above the registered needs.

13. When the decision to withdraw was announced, the position for the United Nations in relation to the United Kingdom was clearly defined through the report as approved by the General Assembly, by the British declaration before the approval of the report, and by the Secretary-General's declaration, 29 November, as to his right to use any equipment (later qualified, 2 December, in a talk not mentioned above, by a statement from the Secretary-General to the effect that he did not intend, at that stage, to raise the question of crews again with the Egyptian Government). In later instructions to General Wheeler no other political consideration is

reflected than the one which explains the order of priority established in the report, and that consideration has been permitted to influence UN policy only to the extent that it did not conflict with the speedy and effective clearing operation.

14 December 1956

Top secret.

27 December 1956

M E M O R A N D U M

Because of a question put to me by the British Delegation I raised today the following point with Dr. Fawzi.

According to reports from Wheeler Younis said, 24 December, that the Anglo / French ships brought down south of Port Said would be seized by Egypt if they were not changed to United Nations ownership. The fear had, therefore, been expressed that Egypt might intend to seize the Anglo/French ships now in Port Said under U.N. flag. I said to Dr. Fawzi that my understanding of the situation was as follows:

When the Anglo/French forces withdrew without the situation concerning the salvage fleet being clarified, I decided to take the ships over under U.N. responsibility and U.N. flag, until a clarification and settlement was reached. It was my understanding that this situation was recognised by the Egyptian Government. Any measures against the fleet, of the type mentioned by Younis regarding ships south of Port Said would, therefore, in my view, be measures taken against U.N. who had the ships as its own and under its protection, and I would, on behalf of the U.N., have to fight such measures.

Dr. Fawzi said, first, that he "did not quarrel with" my interpretation of the situation and, later, made his stand more precise by agreeing that I could say that he personally shared my understanding. He had no reason to believe that any other view was held in Cairo, but would, as a safety measure, inform Cairo about the situation. I understood this to mean that he would tell Cairo about my interpretation and his reply.

I said to Dr. Fawzi that it had never appeared to me, even as a remote possibility, that any measures would be taken against the Anglo/French ships in Port Said under U.N. flag. In fact, Younis' statement could be read as an indication to the contrary. At all events, I would consider such an action illegal and as directed against the U.N. It would, furthermore, if he permitted me to say so, of course be political folly. Dr. Fawzi seemed on the whole surprised that the matter had been raised and said he considered it necessary that all rumours to this effect were effectively killed. He added that he felt, however, that if, at a perhaps much later stage, the Egyptian Government felt that the ships should leave, they should not, so to say, be forced upon the Egyptians.

AS