

Middle East - Suez story No 33-35a: Middle East - Suez story No 33-35a - 14

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Middle East / Suez story - 39

14 - 25 July 56

Dulles, John Foster (Secy of State, USA)

- 1 message to D.H.
- 2 letters from D.H.

L 179: 1159

UNITED STATES RESIDENT DELEGATION
AND CONSULATE GENERAL
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

July 14, 1956.

TOP SECRET

EYES ONLY

Your Excellency,

I have the honor to deliver to you the following extremely secret message - for your eyes only - dated July 13, 1956, from the Honorable John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State of the United States of America:

"Your Excellency,

As you know, on April 9 a statement was issued by the White House regarding the serious situation in the Middle East. The statement declared that the United States is determined to support and assist any nation in that area which might be subjected to aggression, and expressed confidence that other nations will act similarly in the cause of peace.

Pursuant to this statement and to enable it to act promptly and effectively thereunder, the United States Government has completed arrangements to maintain in close proximity to the Middle East area certain stockpiles of military supplies and equipment earmarked for delivery to any nation subjected to aggression arising out of the Arab-Israel dispute, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that our readiness to provide such assistance will serve as a deterrent to any country contemplating aggression and assurance to any country attempting to pursue peaceful policies. We felt that you should know about this program although we plan to withhold any public announcement until some time following your visit to Jerusalem and Cairo. None of the parties to the dispute

His Excellency
Dag Hammarskjold
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Geneva.

knows of the foregoing, but I wished you to know of our plans for your own information.

Most sincerely,

John Foster Dulles
Secretary of State."

Please accept, Your Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest esteem and consideration.

(Signed) Franklin C. Gowen,
U.S. Representative for International
Organizations and Consul General

1. I thank you for your letter and shall reply fully after my visit to the region. Here only a couple of reactions prima vista.

2. The Egyptian initiative is not surprising. It is in line with the interpretation of their stand which I arrived at in April. I believe that they are honest although inspired also by a wish to appease the West. But they simply have to act on Art. VII and/or Suez if we are to get anywhere and force the Israeli's to take them seriously.

3. Re "stage one". As Fawzi recognizes the exploration cannot take place until we have got away from the present Jordanian trouble. There are also some essential changes in Ben Gurion's political philosophy that must be achieved before we can usefully discuss their negotiation margins : today he is aggressively intransigent on the basis of the status quo. I may be used to prepare the ground in the ways mentioned but cannot engage in the long operation which is likely to follow. This is true for the reason you give, but also because it would take too much time and because we may already have risked the prestige of the Office to the limits set by wisdom, in view of future needs. What arrangements should be made if and when I have to stop my one-man operation must be given further thought.

4. Re "stage two". I share your doubts on this point and agree with your objections. The ideal would, of course, be direct contacts between the Parties with due pressure from the outside. It may also be the only technique open to us. At least I think it is wise to try out the possibilities in this direction before embarking on an enforcement policy, which may easily fail and would force the assisting nations to take sides prematurely and would render a conflict with the USSR only too possible. I have Shepilov's promise to support my present efforts to build up "an atmosphere in which we can get the Parties to sit down together" (in the beginning necessarily on specific issues).

Before talking to Fawzi and Nasser I cannot go beyond this reaction. If their proposal is carried through, I could probably withdraw from the stage. In case of success for an effort to initiate negotiations - presumably they would take the form of negotiations for amendments of the Armistice Agreements under e.g. Art. XII in the Israel-Egypt Agreement - I would probably have to accept at least temporary chairmanship. (Personally I would prefer to wind up my part of the action as soon as circumstances permit).

5. A general observation : Ben Gurion is even more suspicious of outside Powers than the Arabs because he anticipates a pressure on Israel to "give" something to the countries on the other side. This attitude has recently been sharpened and covers also the UN.

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DRAFT

Mr. John Foster Dulles.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Through Consul-General Gowen I received your message concerning certain suggestions reportedly made ^{5 July 1956,} by the Foreign Minister of Egypt.

After my talks in Cairo I wish very briefly to comment on those suggestions which, although significant, in my view are of ~~much~~ less ~~practical~~ importance than first impressions led to believe.

I went into the matter very fully with Dr. Fawzi, and as we know each other intimately, I think I have ^a quite clear understanding of the thinking on ~~that~~ ^{his} side.

I should first of all like to stress that the suggestions cannot be regarded as formal proposals, even if ~~they are~~ interpreted in ^a ~~the~~ most broad sense. They appear to me as a piece of "thinking aloud" within the framework of ~~our~~ ^{the} efforts ^{of the World community} to find the direction in which we should move in order to reach, as quickly as possible, a settlement of the Palestine problem.

The suggestions are firm only in two respects : as an indication of the need to widen present efforts beyond the scope of the armistice agreements, and as an indication of the conviction that even solutions acceptable to ~~respective~~ ^{leading} politicians in the area ~~will~~ ^{may} have to be proposed from outside, not with a view to enforcement but so as to ~~enable~~ ^(steps as) the Governments to ~~make~~ the unavoidable concessions ~~in respect~~ to such outside proposals.

Interpreted in this way, Dr. Fawzil's suggestions are very much in line with the interpretation I gave the Egyptian policy already in April. If they bring in any new element ~~at all~~, which I consider doubtful, it is that Egypt now feels that it ~~could~~ ^{can} go on record in relation to the Western powers with ~~the~~ ^{its} wish to push towards a broader settlement.

Egypt

In doing so, ~~it~~ is doubtlessly to some extent animated by the wish to improve its relations with the West. I guess, however, that Egypt is also influenced by the stand recently taken by Mr. Shepilov, who seems to have left no doubt about his wish to see the situation brought under control while he, on the other hand, did not in any way commit himself on questions of substance.

Finally, there is in the Egyptian move an element of recognition of failure, so far, to get anywhere along the lines ^{we} discussed in Cairo in April, that is through unilateral actions: obviously, efforts in that direction ^{have} been slowed down by complications in relation to other Arab countries' and by Israeli's stubborn failure on ~~each~~ ^{its} side to show any cooperativeness.

In practical terms and terms of action Dr. Fawzi envisages ^{the next} development as follows: interwoven with the continued efforts to safeguard and strengthen the cease-fire and to move towards compliance, I should try and explore such related fields as could naturally be brought up within the orbit of ^{my} ~~the~~ exchange of views. Subjects, time and form for such explorations should be entirely determined by the circumstances, as ^{they} ~~to~~ develop in the course of my continued contacts.

"We are not in a rush", Dr. Fawzi said in this context.

If, as planned, I go to the Middle East in October, this would be the natural time for a stock-taking. Although we should already before that time consistently work for ^{an appropriate} ~~the~~ widening of the field of interest, the October talks would provide the proper occasion for a more systematic effort to get ^{further} ~~on~~. The "exploration" should even at that stage be informal and, as to its concrete content, ^{planned} ~~planned~~ by ear. To the extent that the main parts of ^{the} ~~the~~ peace settlements came up for discussion, it would be ^{our task} ~~a question~~ not only ^{to} ~~of~~ registering ^{the} ~~the~~ stands, and ^{the} extent of the gap, but also, by ^{the} ~~the~~ appropriate suggestions, to try and narrow the gap. Results reached in the ^{then} ~~the~~ exploration which could be made elements of an agreement, might ^{then} ~~have to~~ be presented from the outside, and Dr. Fawzi did not feel that there was any reason now to decide how or by whom such proposals should be put forward; the group of nations he had mentioned had been indicated only by way of example.

planned

On this score he had a completely open mind and could accept anything which, in the given situation, would meet ~~with~~ ^{the} practical purpose.

It follows from what I have said that the suggestions from the Egyptian side do not request any hurried consideration or any quick decision. We ~~would~~ ^{shall} have plenty of time to give them thought and to discuss them, as at all events no innovation ~~at all~~ would be considered within the next future. I therefore feel that I should limit myself to this account of my interpretation of the Egyptian stand, leaving the rest for a discussion on my return to New York.

As to my own role under the Egyptian plan, there is nothing to be said against the Egyptian ideas as concerns the next future. How things should be organised later is a different problem which has to be studied in the light of such circumstances ~~as~~ ^{as} the rather ^{particular} difficult position I now hold in relation to both Cairo and Jerusalem; ~~it is~~ ^{my} difficulty ~~for me~~ to dispose of the time necessary, especially after October; and the doubts I feel about the wisdom ~~of~~ of keeping the Secretary-General's Office so much in the frontline of ~~the~~ a conflict where (it), sooner or later, will be exposed beyond what may serve the

^{long term} interest of the Organisation. Both Cairo and Jerusalem stress their view that I must remain in the picture, but personally I sense increasingly the difficulties this particular task creates for my regular work.

Top Secret

9
D R A F T

de Hon

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Secretary of State
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I should first of all like to stress that the suggestions cannot be regarded as formal proposals, even if interpreted in a most broad sense. They appear to me as a piece of "thinking aloud" within the framework of the efforts of the world community to find the direction in which we should move in order to reach, as quickly as possible, a settlement of the Palestine problem.

The suggestions are firm only in two respects : as an indication of the need to widen present efforts beyond the scope of the armistice agreements, and as an indication of the conviction that even solutions acceptable to leading politicians in the area may have to be proposed from outside, not with a view to enforcement but so as to enable the Governments to take the unavoidable steps as concessions to such outside proposals.

Interpreted in this way, Dr. Fawzi's suggestions are very much in line with the interpretation I gave the Egyptian policy already in April. If they bring in any new element, it is that Egypt now feels that it can go on record in relation to the Western powers with its wish to push towards a broader settlement.

In doing so, Egypt is doubtlessly to some extent animated by the wish to improve its relations with the West. I guess, however, that Egypt is also influenced by the stand recently taken by Mr. Shepilov, who seems to have left no doubt about his wish to see the situation brought under control while he, on the other hand, did not in any way commit himself on questions of substance. Finally, there is in the Egyptian move an element of recognition of failure, so far, to get anywhere along the lines we discussed in Cairo in April, that is through unilateral actions : obviously, efforts in that direction have been slowed down by complications in relation to other Arab countries and by Israeli's ~~stubborn~~ failure, on its side, to show any cooperativeness.

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I may, perhaps, add that my ^{personal} evaluation of the possibility of progress ~~is not~~ ^{is} optimistic in the form suggested is not optimistic. I know only too well the present stands on both sides and the gap is very wide, indeed. Even ⁱⁿ the best atmosphere, for which we hope and work, the gap is likely to remain considerable with very inflexible views held on points not open for compromise. However, we cannot accept the existence of impossibilities, and to proceed now as suggested will at least not do any harm.

I checked them against
private talks during my last
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TOP SECRET

24 July 1956

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Through Consul-General Gowen I received your message concerning certain suggestions reportedly made on July 5th, 1956, by the Foreign Minister of Egypt.

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EYES ONLY

July 25th, 1956

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I refer to your letter to me dated July 13th, 1956, transmitted by Consul-General Gowen.

I wish to express my appreciation of your informing me about the measure decided upon by the U.S. Government. Short of such background information my task in relation to the Middle East problem would be seriously complicated.

From our talk the evening we met at Ambassador Lodge's home, you know that I do not believe that an outbreak of hostilities in the region, if it were to happen, is likely to take a form where the word aggression has a clear sense or where it can be in any way unambiguously determined who is to be considered aggressor. This does not reduce the potential value of the measure taken by you, but it obviously limits the extent to which the measure can usefully influence the present situation. The risk we run now is closely related to the very particular circumstances prevailing in Jordan, and especially the situation in the Jerusalem area. A further fact of importance is to be found in Israel's refusal to accept that acts of retaliation cannot be justified as self-defense, and therefore might constitute acts of aggression.

You say in your letter that you are not going to publish the measure taken until after my visit to the region. It is obviously desirable that the publication be so timed and phrased as to minimize the risk of an association with my visit. Such an association might carry the implication that I had found the risk of aggression so imminent as to warrant a reaction. It should obviously be carefully avoided to provide any basis for such a misleading interpretation.

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