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Lloyd, Selwyn (Foreign Secretary, U.K.)

- 2 messages to D.H.
- 2 messages from D.H.

SECRET



United Kingdom Permanent  
Delegation to the  
United Nations,

GENEVA.

May 6, 1957.

Dear Mr. Hammarskjöld

I have been asked by Mr. Selwyn  
Lloyd to deliver to you the enclosed message  
in reply to your message of May 3.

Yours sincerely  
Sostons

Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld.

CONFIDENTIAL



Received 2 May -57

The Foreign Secretary has asked me to deliver to you the following message:

"We are still in the dark about the Egyptian position on the points raised at the last meeting of the Security Council to discuss the Suez Canal. The Egyptians have given no answer to the questions raised during that debate, in particular to the question whether they consider themselves entitled unilaterally to withdraw or amend their declaration relating to the future of the Canal. You yourself referred to this issue in your message to Dr. Fawzi of April 16. I believe this question to be of great importance and so I know do most of the other users. On the Egyptian stand on this point may depend our attitude to their declaration.

"I do not myself believe that the Egyptians intend that they should be able to withdraw it or amend it without agreement. Do you think you could make an early approach to Nasser with the object of clarifying their attitude on this point in particular?

"We are seriously considering whether or not we ought to call a further meeting of the Security Council in the very near future and Sir P. Dixon will be writing to Mr. Lodge to warn him of this. Whether or not there should be such a meeting of the Council might depend to a large extent on whether the Egyptians would be prepared to give an assurance about the binding nature of their declaration on the lines suggested above.

"Mr. Dulles has told me that the United States Government would be prepared to agree to a further meeting of the

/Security



Security Council if you think that it might help to elucidate the Egyptian position. Mr. Dulles did not like the idea of a Security Council meeting at which the Egyptians would be defiant. My own instinct is to feel that the Egyptians would not be defiant and therefore another meeting of the Security Council would do no harm. I should welcome your private and confidential view on this."

4 May 57

I have now been able to consult my colleagues on your message of May 3. The position of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the Canal can be stated as follows.

- (1) We do not accept the legality of the act of nationalisation of last July. Nevertheless, we attach importance to Nasser's willingness to go to international arbitration about compensation.
- (2) We recognise that the status quo ante cannot now be restored and that the constructive approach for both users and the Egyptian Government is to see whether a system can be evolved for running the Canal which will earn the confidence of the users and, at the same time, be acceptable to Egypt.
- (3) The six principles which we formulated in the private talks in New York, and which you subsequently incorporated in your report to the Security Council, seem to us to provide a framework within which an acceptable system could be evolved.
- (4) The letter, which after further discussions, you wrote on October 24 was intended to be a basis of negotiation consistent with the six principles out of which you hoped that a satisfactory system would be attained.
- (5) It is, however, clear that a negotiated agreement is impossible for the time being. We, as the largest user, are not in diplomatic relations with Egypt, nor are the French.
- (6) Therefore, the United Kingdom Government have not rejected the idea that a unilateral declaration by the Egyptians might provide a de facto basis for

/beginning

beginning the use of the Canal again. We realised that it was unlikely that the Egyptians would produce a memorandum which would be satisfactory to us or could be accepted as constituting a permanent system. Nevertheless, we considered that this method of approach by the Egyptians should not be wholly condemned. We encouraged the United States Government to seek clarification and we intended the Security Council debate on April 26 to be a constructive attempt to secure clarifications and improvements.

- (7) There is the further point that we feel that the authority of the Security Council and United Nations is involved in securing a permanent settlement which does conform to the six principles.
- (8) Certain improvements have been made by the Egyptians in the memorandum which is to be registered with the United Nations as compared with the original one put forward privately to certain Governments. The sincerity of the Egyptian professions about arbitration procedures can only be decided in practice.
- (9) The outstanding difficulty from our point of view in giving a trial to the system is that the Egyptian memorandum can be unilaterally withdrawn or amended without prior notice or agreement. As I said in my earlier message, I can hardly believe that that is the Egyptian intention. The problem, therefore, is how to secure further elucidation of the Egyptian intentions on that point.
- (10) We considered with other Governments what method we should use. Although I myself at first favoured a further debate in the Security Council, I saw the force of the argument that if the Egyptians were merely

defiant during the course of such a debate, it would not enhance the authority of the United Nations, nor would it make it easier to begin to use the Canal on the basis of a de facto arrangement. Therefore, I felt that if you were willing to take some initiative with the Egyptian Government it would be the better course.

(11) In your message to me of May 3 you agree that it may be that the Egyptians will clarify the point referred to above, and you state your willingness to make an early approach to Nasser on this matter. You raise, however, the question about further meetings of the Security Council.

(12) I think that we should have to reserve the right to summon a further meeting of the Security Council if any new complications were to arise. If the Egyptians were to make difficulties about payment of tolls, or the servicing of British ships, we might have to bring the matter to the Security Council again. There is also the Israeli complication which might arise at any moment if the Israelis were to seek to send a ship through. However, I think that I can promise you that, in the absence of some factor such as that, we would not seek to use the Security Council as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon the Egyptians during a reasonable period of, say, a week while you are dealing with the matter, in other words, until some time during the week commencing May 12. We have no desire to have a meeting of the Security Council just for the sake of having one. We should want it to fulfil some constructive rôle.

(13) I agree that it would be very desirable that you should be back in New York for any meeting of the Security Council.

(14) If you decide to proceed on this basis, I suggest that you should act on your responsibility as the Secretary-General of the United Nations and not at the request of one particular Government. Anxiety about a unilateral revocation or amendment was generally expressed at the SCUA meetings, and I believe that one or two Governments may have made independent representations on this point to the Egyptian Government.

United Kingdom  
Permanent Delegation to the  
United Nations,  
GENEVA.

May 6, 1957.

3 May

3 May 1957

Message to the Foreign Secretary:

"I received this morning your message concerning a possible Security Council action. I would like to give it further consideration but can give you right away the following reaction:

Second paragraph. I believe that you may well be right in your view that the Egyptians do not intend that they should be able to withdraw or amend the declaration without agreement. I am quite willing to make an early approach to Nasser with the object of clarifying their attitude on this point, but I would like to give the manner in which I go about it some further consideration.

Third paragraph. If I manage to get the Egyptian stand clarified in a satisfactory way, I assume that it would not be your intention to ask for a Security Council meeting. I would find it difficult to press the Egyptians for a clarification if I did not feel that, in case of success, they would not be under further pressure through the Security Council.

Final paragraph. Under present circumstances, that is to say without due preparation, I am sure that an effort to use the Security Council as a means to formally strengthen the declaration would meet with Egyptian defiance. It is obviously not the best way to reach a result if there are untried possibilities to achieve it by direct negotiation. Should I try to get the clarification desired, it would necessarily take some time, and for that reason I assume that a Security Council meeting on the matter under no circumstances should take place until, at the earliest, some time in the week after next. By that time I should be able to report on the Egyptian attitude. For obvious reasons, it would also be advantageous that, if and when we reach a new Security Council debate, I should be in New York.

I shall revert to the matter as soon as I can, but I would appreciate, in the meantime, to hear from you if you have any observations on what I have said above.

Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General".

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Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General".

6 May 1957

Message to the Foreign Secretary

"I received your message of May 6 and would like to make the following observations:

Ad your message, paragraph 11

I confirm my willingness to try to clarify the point mentioned.

Ad your paragraph 12

Of course, I never intended that you should sacrifice the possibility of using the Security Council for such purposes as those now mentioned by you. What I had in mind was that my position obviously would be false if, even in case a satisfactory clarification from the Egyptian side were to be forthcoming, the same issue might be run again through the Security Council machine. This is clearly a different matter from the situations you have in mind. There is, in my view, no reason to consider now whether Security Council action would be the most appropriate approach in those other cases.

I understand that you would hold back an initiative in the Security Council on the issue you have brought up with me during the time that reasonably may be required for the desired clarification. In this context I have to draw your attention to the fact that if, as is likely, I go to Jerusalem on Wednesday, I shall be cut off from the possibility of an exchange of views with Cairo during the latter half of this week. Whatever the action that I may initiate before leaving for Jerusalem it, thus, would have to be followed up in the course of next week.

Ad your paragraph 14

I intend to act on the basis you indicate and in the light of the fact that I made efforts in a similar direction a week before the last Security Council meeting. I dropped my previous initiative partly because of what seemed to me to be a lack of interest on the user side.

Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary-General."