

Middle East conflict - Middle East Development Funds: Middle East conflict ...

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27 Jan. 1958

Letter to Östen Undén
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Letter to Dr. Mahmood Fawzi

Letter to Selwyn Lloyd

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For long I have wanted to inform you personally about a line along which I am trying to introduce some new and constructive elements into the Middle Eastern picture. The easiest way to bring you up to date is to send you, personally, a copy of my first working memorandum on the matter and, also, a copy of a letter of today to Dr. Fawzi. It gives you all the necessary information as to the facts.

I would, however, like to add some observations concerning the background. We have, at present, a period in the development in the Middle East where the undercurrents are less hostile to a constructive approach than they have been for very long. The situation is not likely to remain so and for that reason the opportunity must be grasped. At least we must try to get something going.

None of the big powers and none of the Arab States is in a position just now to take any initiatives which are likely to prove fruitful. Again we face in this sense an awkward diplomatic vacuum. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that an attempt to fill that vacuum, discreet and reasonably well balanced, if coming from the UN, would meet with a positive response in the Arab countries and would not provoke counteraction from any of the big powers.

Such an initiative on our side can take into account the growing recognition in the Arab world that the Arab countries must, at least in the practical fields, try to overcome their present split. It can also reckon with the recognition of the hard fact that none of the Arab countries can engage on its own in a policy of economic reconstruction and development, but has to look at the problem as ultimately a regional one.

The refugee situation is bound to blow up within a few years when greatly increased generations of youngsters will come out of school without any chance of finding work. To counter this risk it is necessary to be able to point to some kind of positive development. At the same time, it is impossible to make a frontal attack on the refugee problem, as nothing is considered more subversive in the whole of the Arab world than an attempt to force upon them now a re-settlement plan.

His Excellency Mr. Östen Undén
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Stockholm
S w e d e n

At present, we would not be helped by an initiative on the Israeli side, if it could be extorted from them. The most they might promise is to negotiate, on the basis of a recognition that some repatriation should come about. A declaration to that effect now would, however, be lost, and perhaps even turn out to be counter productive, as the field is in no way prepared on the Arab side. That concentrates attention on the Arab aspect of the problem.

Two sides of the Arab approach to the refugee problem are obvious. In the first instance no Arab government -- any more than any government anywhere in the world -- can, for internal reasons, engage in a large scale immigration or re-settlement operation (which amounts to the same) short of being able to assure its people that this immigration will not cut into their employment chances. The conclusion is that no Arab government can engage in an immigration policy unless such a policy is built into an economic planning where there is scope for a considerable addition to the manpower. But further: for external reasons, no Arab government can permit itself to take an initiative in the refugee question short of being assured of support of the other governments.

If one combines these two aspects of the problem, the conclusion is clear. The first step towards a fruitful attack on the refugee problem must be a joint planning for economic development in the Arab world.

In view of the enormous difficulties to reach such joint planning, this is a hard conclusion, but it is inescapable. It is a difficult conclusion to accept for some parties also because it would play into the hands of Arab unity, and because it might lead to a weakening of the position of some countries, outside the region, who still want to maintain or play a bi-lateral game in the Middle East. However, in my view, it would be very short-sighted for such reasons to brush aside the conclusion and to oppose such efforts to act in the light of the conclusion as our study of institutional arrangements, possible under UN aegis in order to get joint planning going. In fact, none of the Western governments to which I have talked have, so far, rejected the conclusions or objected against my initiative.

As you will see, I approach this situation in an extremely cautious way. There is no question of any "plan", there is not even a question of a proposal to the Arab governments. What we do is only to undertake an internal Secretariat study, together with the Bank, of the institutional problem arising prior to joint planning, with the intention to inform the parties of the results and with the hope that, with due preparation, they might take up the conclusions of our study for joint consideration, no-one formally taking the first step and no outsider claiming authorship. All this is, of course, an extremely delicate operation with lots of risks involved, but how could we hope that ever anything will happen, as matters now stand, unless we engage in some such risk taking.

If the Malaya journey were to go via Moscow, as indicated as one possibility in the letter to Fawzi, I would probably have an afternoon in Stockholm. I would then be very happy to talk this matter over with you, together with a couple of minor points which I would rather save for that occasion than write about now.

Very much of my time is taken up by discussions about disarmament. The situation remains extremely confused, and it seems to me still to be too early for any open initiatives. But time runs out, and I am worried to see the lack of coordination in the approach to this problem.

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Dear Mahmoud,

As I promised you, I want to send you a few words about the development of the question which recently has brought me not only to Cairo but also to Paris and London.

I have already told you that I felt the matter has got off to a reasonably good diplomatic start. By that I mean not that I have "sold" my ideas to any government, but simply that I have got the people approached to understand the imperative reasons for an effort to try out this kind of line, both in substance and tactically. I have been thoroughly cross-examined, and believe that I have given the examiners some food for thought. I have no wish to get any support at this stage. I want to achieve only two things: first, that they are sufficiently aware of what I am doing, not to react negatively out of suspicion or uncertainty, and, secondly, that they are sufficiently convinced of the validity of my arguments to avoid crossing wires by putting forward this or that kind of plan with less chances of becoming a constructive contribution and, perhaps, involving serious risks. Those two aims, I believe, I have achieved in relation to the three Western big powers, and also within the "fire brigade", that is, in the first place, with Canada.

I believe it is a good sign that so far we have had no leaks - or at least no serious leaks - in spite of the fact that so many who are not always quite discreet know about the matter. If, however, there were to be leaks, I would react in the way indicated at the end of the memorandum which I sent to you.

With reference to that memorandum, my further thinking, in the light also of the questions to which I have had to reply, has led me to the conclusion that a key to the problem will be the checks and balances which we manage to build into the constitution of the new institutions.

In my memorandum I assume that the representative of the United Nations (which in this context, of course, means the U.N. and the Bank) should, without a vote, sit in on the meetings of the intergovernmental committee. That seems to me to be essential in order to create the necessary confidence for the whole operation.

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His Excellency,
Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Cairo, Egypt.

In the memorandum I further indicate that the intergovernmental committee of ministers might either be an integrated part of the new institution or else coordinated with it. On afterthought, I believe the second line to be the better one. That would mean that the operating institution itself would be more like the World Bank than the OEEC in that its management would be internationalised under the laws which usually apply to an international secretariat, while the ministerial committee would not be burdened with operational responsibility but could concentrate on the essential policy making elements, like decisions on project priorities (in the broad sense) and, what I might call, the political audit of the operations of the management. This arrangement might produce some difficulties within the Arab world, but I think that it would add to the efficiency of the operations. Basically I believe that it must be preferable also from the Arab point of view to separate the legislative body and the executive organ, or in other words, the political conflicts and the practical operations. I also feel that it would be easier to sell an organisation with that structure to the potential creditors.

I had recently a joint meeting with McCloy and Black. They have continued their discussions among themselves after my meeting with them, and McCloy is to report on his conclusions early next week, before going on his world tour. Black is solidly in favour of the whole effort, while McCloy, although positive, still seems to be in an inquisitive mood. I shall let you know further as soon as I have seen them again.

One matter which caused Selwyn Lloyd considerable concern was that so far I have left Iraq entirely outside the picture. He fears that this in due time might create the impression of the plan being a plan of the "have-nots", as - although that is, historically, easily explained - I have had early contacts with Cairo. I believe that his impression of a likely Iraqi susceptibility may be justified, and I have therefore arranged for McCloy to stay over in Baghdad on his way back before he gets to Cairo. Whether he takes the matter up in Iraq, and how he does it, will depend on instructions from me, which will wait for him at the American Embassy in Baghdad. My own travel plans have developed so that I may have a chance to come to Baghdad myself on the way out to Malaya, roughly a week before McCloy's arrival. I would then try to prepare the ground politically for the more detailed talk in which McCloy might engage. Also my own visit, if it comes about, would be prepared, as I have asked Selwyn Lloyd in his personal contacts with Iraq in Ankara to say - without going into the matter of substance - that he knows that I am studying possible institutional

arrangements for coordinated economic planning in the Middle East in cooperation with the United Nations and the Bank, and that he further knows that I am anxious to get an early opportunity personally to talk over this study, undertaken on my responsibility, with Iraqi representatives. (This side of the matter, of course, is extremely delicate, but matters being what they are and the time table looking as it does, I do not see how I could approach it in a better way).

I shall try to trim the work with the Bank here so that we know a bit more about where we stand on my return from the Malaya trip around the end of March. That is the time when it would be very essential for me to have a talk with you again, and I remember your kind promise to meet me in Europe wherever it would suit me best. As a kind of pre-warning I would like to tell you that I might arrange it so that I could come to Rome or, preferably, Geneva round the Easter holidays. I think that we might meet at one of those places without attracting too much attention. I wonder how such a meeting might look from your point of view.

This is about all I have to tell. I would like to hear from you, if you have any observations on what I have written, within the next couple of weeks, as things are getting under way and as I may have to leave New York on 10 February.

I have read with some bewilderment reports about new plans in your part of the world. I do not know quite how to interpret this federal move. What would be its bearing on what I am trying to do?

With all good wishes,

P.S. When this letter was already finished I received your letter of January 19. I can assure you that the aspects I mention in paragraphs 3 and 13 will be handled with all the care that their nature requires. However, I simply had to have them as part of the picture in a paper with the specific purpose of the memorandum. Especially, I want to assure you that I have impressed on everybody that the matter must be detached completely from the refugee question.

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I appreciated very much all the arrangements made for me in London and, especially, the personal contact with you out in the country, which gave me more of an opportunity than I have had in a long while to share with you some of my thinking. The value of such a contact to me in my present job cannot be exaggerated. Thank you for all you did in order to render the visit useful, and thank you for all your personal hospitality and kindness. Please give my very warm regards to Joanna, wishing her all luck in her future riding lessons.

I had a meeting with Black and McCloy last Thursday. I asked also Trevelyan and Cordier to take part. We did not get beyond the limits of the London talks, as most of the time was taken up by my presentation of the stage I have now reached in my own thinking, as amplified and clarified in reactions to your questions in London. However, Black and McCloy continued the talks later on, and McCloy will come up one of the next few days to give me his further reactions.

The immediate impression is that Black was strongly in favour of the effort and believes in it with a conviction I have rarely seen reflected in his usually so cautious reactions. McCloy took a more Socratic view and, like you, asked me a lot of questions. However, Black told me that McCloy's reaction in the following talks with him had indicated a very real interest. I had the impression that the lowering of McCloy's temperature - if any - indirectly may have reflected doubts of Dulles', which, in turn, probably reflect hesitation concerning the way in which this kind of approach would fit in with parts of his traditional thinking.

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As to the official visit to London, the 31st of March still seems to me to be the best date, and, in fact, practically the only possible one if the idea to go to Malaya via Moscow does not materialise but, instead, I have to go home over Moscow as originally planned.

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I appreciated very much all the arrangements made for me in London and, especially, the personal contact with you out in the country, which gave me more of an opportunity than I have had in a long while to share with you some of my thinking. The value of such a contact to me in my present job cannot be exaggerated. Thank you for all you did in order to render the visit useful, and thank you for all your personal hospitality and kindness. Please give my very warm regards to Joanna, wishing her all luck in her future riding lessons.

I had a meeting with Black and McCloy last Thursday. I asked also Trevelyan and Gordier to take part. We did not get beyond the limits of the London talks, as most of the time was taken up by my presentation of the stage I have now reached in my own thinking, as amplified and clarified in reactions to your questions in London. However, Black and McCloy continued the talks later on, and McCloy will come up one of the next few days to give me his further reactions.

The immediate impression is that Black was strongly in favour of the effort and believes in it with a conviction I have rarely seen reflected in his usually so cautious reactions. McCloy took a more Socratic view and, like you, asked me a lot of questions. However, Black told me that McCloy's reaction in the following talks with him had indicated a very real interest. I had the impression that the lowering of McCloy's temperature - if any - indirectly may have reflected doubts of Dulles', which, in turn, probably reflect hesitation concerning the way in which this kind of approach would fit in with parts of his traditional thinking.

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His Excellency,
the Rt.Hon. Selwyn Lloyd, C.B.E., T.D., Q.C., M.P.,
Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Office,
London, England.

McCloy promised me to stop over in Baghdad on his way to Cairo. That is in itself a gain. For my own part, I might come to Baghdad roughly a week before him - about February 20 - if my present plan to go to Malaya via Moscow can be followed. Dixon may have reported that I have received a formal invitation from Gfomayko, but that, in accordance with the earlier travel plan which he knew about and which would take me back via Moscow, this invitation refers to the second half of March. I have so far no reaction from him on the alternative time, which I have now indicated on the basis of my later plan and which would make it possible for me to go to Baghdad "en temps utile".

As to the official visit to London, the 31st of March still seems to me to be the best date, and, in fact, practically the only possible one if the idea to go to Malaya via Moscow does not materialise but, instead, I have to go home over Moscow as originally planned.

I cannot end this letter without telling you how much I enjoy having Trevelyan with us and how useful he has already proved to be in my own work.

With renewed thanks and all good wishes,