

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

Middle East / Suez story - 11

7-25 June 56

Lloyd, Selwyn (British Foreign Minister)

- 2 letters/personal to O.H.
- 1 letter from O.H.

Foreign Office,
S.M.1.

SECRET & PERSONAL

June 7, 1956.

Dear Secretary - General,

I was about to send you a reply to your letter of May 14, when I received from Dixon the memorandum on the Palestine problem which you gave him on May 22 and which supplements your letter with your thoughts on next steps. Thank you very much for your confidence which I greatly value and shall of course respect completely.

Let me first congratulate you again most warmly on the way in which you carried out your mission, and on the progress which you were able to make with Israel and Egypt regarding a solution of the El Auja/Suez Canal blockade problem. The noteworthy thing to my mind is that the Egyptians were prepared to contemplate the possibility of such a deal. The chief difficulty at present seems to be that each side expects the other to make the first move. I must also tell you that our Ambassador in Cairo has reported independently, although in connexion with your visit, that he doubts if the Egyptians consider themselves committed to relaxing the blockade if the Israelis evacuate El Auja. Nevertheless, it would be a great success if a deal on the lines you have in mind could be brought off: and you can certainly count on our support.

It occurs to me that if, in the event, Nasser refuses to play on the blockade issue you might alternatively consider a drive to get full compliance with Articles VII and VIII of the Armistice Agreement

/as

Mr. D. Hammarskjöld.

as they stand. The first step might be to persuade Nasser to withdraw Egyptian forces behind the El Qouseima and Abou Aoueigila line. In spite of Ben Gurion's argument, described in page 2 of your letter, it would I think be difficult even for the Israelis to justify a continued refusal to comply with Article VIII once the Egyptians had complied with the part that concerns them.

In general I entirely agree with your analysis of the position. Now that our Resolution has been unanimously adopted by the Council you will be thinking of the next steps. I agree that you are the best person to carry forward the negotiations for a solution of the El Auja/Suez Canal blockade problem. We shall certainly avoid doing anything that would complicate your task, and Dixon will naturally keep in close touch with you. Please let me know as soon as you think that we can do anything to help.

Exactly how to set about the third stage (a definite settlement of the refugee, water and territorial problems) will depend on how the first and second go. I agree that we must avoid undue haste and pressure on the parties. But equally we must not let the situation stagnate. In particular I should like to take advantage of the present more reasonable Soviet attitude before the benefit of the London talks has disappeared. In this connexion I should be glad to know in more detail how you contemplate getting a better control over the refugee situation, as mentioned in page 8 of your memorandum. You may wish to discuss this further with Dixon who is of course always at your disposal.

This letter was approved by the Foreign Secretary, Mr Lloyd, before he left for Sweden this morning

Yours sincerely

Rogan

D.A. KOGAN

Private Secretary



Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

June 25, 1956.

SECRET

Mr. Hammarskjöld

Many thanks for your letter of June 11 about Palestine. I was interested to see that you have now written to Fawzi about compliance with Article VII of the Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement. I shall look forward to hearing how the matter goes. You have my sympathy in this very delicate business, and you know that you can count on our support in any way in which you need it.

I was encouraged to read that you still believe in the possibility of being able to force Ben Gurion to accept in principle the right of option by the refugees. King Hussein recently told our Ambassador in Amman that one of the things which sticks hardest in Arab throats about Israel is the unrepentant attitude manifested by the Israelis with regard to the refugees, and that therefore one of the principal barriers to a settlement would be removed if the Israelis would admit that they have something to be sorry about. What is needed is a sort of "act of contrition" about the refugees, even though the act may only be symbolical. It is not going to be easy of course to put this idea across with the Israelis.

Dixon knows my views on possible next steps and will, I hope, be discussing them with you shortly. You may be sure that I shall give his reports the closest attention and that I shall, of course, be only too glad to hear from you personally any time you wish to write.

/I had

Monsieur Dag Hammarskjöld,
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Organisation,
New York.

I had a wonderful trip to Sweden, with The Queen on Her State visit.

With kindest regards,

Yours ever
John

11 June 1956

S e c r e t

Thank you very much for your letter of 7 June. And thanks also for your kind words of congratulation.

May I very briefly comment on a couple of points in your letter. I agree with Trevelyan that it is highly doubtful whether the Egyptians would respond to a solution of the El Auja problem with a relaxation of the blockade. If they are willing to reconsider the Suez question - as seems to be the case in view of the statement they made to me and permitted me to transmit - I think they are just as likely to do it as a "first step". Their response to some Israeli concession on El Auja would probably first of all be withdrawal of troops they now have further down on the peninsula. All this, however, is slightly theoretical as I do not believe in any possibility to force the Israelis to a first step.

In a letter to Fawzi I am approaching him on lines close to your idea that the ball might be started rolling by Egyptian compliance with Article VII. How far such compliance would bring us with the Israelis, is difficult to say, but I would of course use it to the full.

I am most grateful for your understanding attitude. The whole situation is one which in some respects is so unconventional as to make it difficult for me to explain it unless I can count on a very understanding listener.

His Excellency
The Right Honourable Selwyn Lloyd, C.B.E., T.D., Q.C., M.P.
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
London, England

Under no circumstances can we let the situation stagnate. Concerning the refugee question a few developments have taken place which render me more pessimistic. However, I still believe that in a favourable situation I would be able to force Ben Gurion to accept in principle option by the refugees, and that would help a great deal although it still would leave us far from a full solution which probably cannot be found until we get somewhere with the territorial questions. The water problem worries me because the stands on both sides are marked by considerable impatience. I would be happy to discuss it in detail with Dixon so that he can report to you. Under no circumstances can, in my view, anything useful be done until later this fall and provided we have managed then to translate the cease-fire into something like a "state of mind".

Currently I am having trouble both with the Israelis and the Jordanians. The Israelis have started a foolish series of so-called defensive works in the sensitive Demilitarized Zone on the Syrian border, and have made difficulties for our observers; again one of those symptoms of blindness to the facts of the situation and to what is tactically advisable. The Jordanians on the other hand permit far too much of unrest to continue along the Israeli border and for that reason I have, the other day, had to make a rather serious demarche to General Nuwar.

Of course it is impossible to say how far we might go and to what extent we can consolidate what has been gained, but so far nothing has happened which has killed my hope for a consolidation and my expectation that we might get somewhat further in the direction of a normalization of the situation. If that comes true, we have every reason for gratitude remembering the nightmare of the period from 28 February 1955, with the first Gaza incident, to 11 April 1956 which marks the end of the second Gaza conflict.

With many kind regards,