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November 17, 1956
Section 1

JE 1094/163

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND Mr. LOY HENDERSON AT HER MAJESTY'S EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, ON NOVEMBER 17, 1956

Mr. Henderson said that he thought we were in a bad mess and he had no very clear idea about the best way to get out of it. He did think that we were unlikely to have peace in the Middle East so long as Nasser remained. He also thought that the United Nations was tending more and more to disintegrate the unity of the Western world. On the question of the withdrawal of British and French forces, Mr. Henderson said that his personal view was that it would be disastrous if our forces pulled out and were only replaced by an inefficient United Nations force which, in practice, would be subject to Nasser's dictation. Mr. Henderson said that he could not speak on this for the President or Mr. Dulles, and he thought it might well be that they were anxious for the early withdrawal of the British and French forces. Mr. Henderson also said that as he understood the President's views the latter was not in favour of open consultations with the French and ourselves at this moment since he feared that this might look as if the three Powers were conspiring together.

The Secretary of State said that this attitude would not matter so much if the United States Administration were not

trying to throw away the only two cards we held, namely, our possession of Port Said and the Israeli occupation of Sinai. We wanted to get out as soon as possible, but if we were not to be succeeded by a United Nations force there would be a complete vacuum and there could be no certainty about the future. We could not agree that the composition, functions, area of operations and time of withdrawal of the United Nations force should be decided by Nasser. These must be matters for the United Nations.

Mr. Henderson said that in his view the clearing of the Canal was of the greatest importance and he thought we might well challenge Nasser to allow an investigation about the ships sunk in the Canal. This had clearly been done out of spite, not merely against the United Kingdom and France but against Europe and the Asian countries who depended on the Canal. The Secretary of State said he very much hoped that the United States would be prepared to put its full weight behind a resolution in the Assembly urging immediate clearance of the Canal as a technical and non-political matter.

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(1074/298/56)

British Embassy,

Moscow,

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November 9, 1956.

No. 241 ✓

Sir, E 1074 100 ✓

With reference to my telegram No. 1563 of the 6th of November, I have the honour to enclose herewith the original text of H.A. Dulganin's letter of the 5th of November to the Prime Minister.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant.

The Right Honourable
Selwyn Lloyd, C.B.E., M.P.,
etc., etc., etc.,

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your particular interest in the Canal. But that does not give you the right to carry out military operations against the Egyptian people. Moreover the British and French Governments cannot take upon themselves the role of judges in the question of methods of ensuring freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal, inasmuch as many other states, which condemn the aggressive actions of Britain and France demand the preservation of peace and tranquillity in the Middle East, are no less interested in this matter. In addition, it is well known that freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal has been fully assured by Egypt.

The Suez Canal question has been merely the pretext for Anglo-French aggression, which has other and more far-reaching aims. It cannot be concealed that in fact there is now being launched an aggressive brigandly war against the Arab peoples with the object of liquidating the national independence of the Middle Eastern countries and the restoration of the regime of colonial slavery which the people had overthrown.

It is in no way possible to justify the fact that the armed forces of Britain and France, - two Great Powers, permanent members of the Security Council - have attacked a country which only recently achieved its national independence and which has not sufficient resources for its defence.

What would have been the position of Britain, if she had been attacked by stronger powers, with all kinds of modern offensive weapons at their disposal? And remember that such countries at the present time need not even send their naval and air forces to British shores, but could use other means, such as rocket techniques. If rocket weapons

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were used against Britain and France, you would no doubt call this a barbarous act. But how is this different from the inhuman attack carried out by the armed forces of Britain and France on an almost unarmed Egypt?

Deeply concerned as we are by the course of events in the Middle East, and guided by the interests of preserving universal peace, we consider that the British Government must listen to the voice of reason and stop the war in Egypt. We appeal to you, to Parliament, to the Labour Party, to the Trades Unions, to the whole British people: stop the armed aggression and cease the bloodshed. The war in Egypt can spread to other countries and grow into a third World War.

The Soviet Government has already put forward to the United Nations and also to the President of the U.S.A. a proposal to employ, together with other members of the United Nations Organisation, naval and air forces in order to bring to an end the war in Egypt and to curb aggression. We are filled with the determination to use force to crush the aggressors and to restore peace in the East.

We hope that at this critical moment you will show the necessary prudence and will draw from this the appropriate conclusions.

With sincere respect,

N. BULGANIN.

The Kremlin,
MOSCOW.

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Mr Rose

sq's has not seen

10 Downing Street
WhitehallR 4/7
November 8, 1956.Secret

My dear Donald,

On the Minister of Defence's minute (AH.142/56) of November 8, of which you have a copy, the Prime Minister has minuted, against the last sentence of paragraph 6:-

"Foreign Secretary. Perhaps Sir G. Jebb should mention, especially in the light of our overwhelming air power in the area.

A.E. Nov. 8"

I am sending a copy of this letter to Forward, who will know that his Minister spoke to the Prime Minister about this minute, and to Maude and Hunt.

Yours ever,
Philip

D. A. Logan, Esq.,
Foreign Office.

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TOP SECRET



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, S.W.1.

PRIME MINISTER

This is to confirm that in accordance with your instructions at this morning's Cabinet I had a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff concerning the re-deployment of the Musketeer force.

2. In broad terms, it was decided that the units now in Port Said (approximately nine battalions) should be relieved by the equivalent force of infantry, thus freeing the Parachute Brigade and the Commandos.

3. There will be an extra reserve of one Brigade in Cyprus, the Commandos will be available in Malta, and the remainder of the force, together with the shipping, will be returned to the U.K. and the shipping freed in the most rapid and economical manner.

4. So far as naval forces are concerned, two carriers will be available in the area and the entire salvage organisation will remain at Port Said at readiness to start operations. The R.A.F.'s ground organisation will be retained in operation so that if there is an emergency aircraft can be flown out in a matter of hours and will become operational almost at once.

5. I have been into the details of all this with the Chiefs of Staff, and I feel convinced that this re-deployment should meet the likely operational requirements and is at the same time reasonably economical.

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6. I have discussed our proposals with General Ely who is in agreement with them. I have, however, put two points to him about which I hope he will meet us: Firstly, I suggested that it would be wise from a political point of view if the French were to avoid putting into Port Said Senegalese administrative units. I have sent a signal to General Keightley advising him to avoid this if possible by consultation with Admiral Barjot. Secondly, I queried whether it was altogether wise for two French squadrons to remain with the Israeli Air Force. He fully appreciated the point and undertook to mention this to M. Mollet. If you feel strongly about this question it might be worth a signal from yourself or one from the Foreign Secretary to M. Pincau.
7. I have sent a copy of this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Sir Norman Brook.

Anthony Head

8th November, 1956

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COPY

November 5, 1956.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

The Soviet Government considers it necessary to draw your attention to the fact that the aggressive war launched by Britain and France against the Egyptian state, in which Israel played the part of instigator, is pregnant with extremely dangerous consequences for general peace.

The extraordinary special session of the General Assembly took a decision in favour of the immediate cessation of military action and the removal of foreign troops from the territory of Egypt. Without regard to this, Britain, France and Israel are increasing their military activities, are continuing the barbarous bombing of Egyptian towns and villages, and have landed paratroops on Egyptian territory, devastating its towns and killing peaceful inhabitants.

Thus the British Government, together with the Governments of France and Israel, have embarked on unprovoked aggression against Egypt.

The motives given by the British Government to justify their attack on Egypt are completely unfounded. At the beginning the British Government announced that they were intervening in the conflict between Israel and Egypt in order to prevent the Suez Canal from becoming the scene of military action. After the Anglo-French intervention the Suez Canal Zone became the scene of military action and navigation on the Canal was disrupted, causing damage to the interests of states using the Canal.

Attempts to justify the aggression by referring to the interest of Britain and France in freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal also cannot stand up to criticism. We understand

/your