

Embassy continues receive indications from reliable sources which confirm its earlier reports re concern within government and Conservative party re such negotiations. It seems clear to us that segment of backbench opinion which has been so privately critical Sudan agreement is tending to solidify in opposition to any defense arrangements which would not in its opinion provide adequately for defense of area or which can be interpreted as damaging to British prestige.

Probably not directly related to backbench unrest is attitude of Churchill himself toward defense settlement. We have been told that Churchill increasingly concerned, in light his scornful criticism of Labor "scuttle" from Abadan, at interpretation by some quarters of Sudan agreement as constituting Conservative "scuttle". It is said that Churchill doubted Sudan agreement was possible and therefore did not pay much attention to negotiations until differences were narrowed to point where agreement was about to be reached. At this point, he began to find objections to it, buttressed by attitude his backbenchers, it was only as result Eden's strenuous efforts that Churchill withdrew his objections.

We understand that in light foregoing situation, Churchill is strongly opposed to any defense arrangements which could be termed another "scuttle". Re Deptels 5956 and 5957, March 7, he apparently feels case A does not fit this definition, but that case B does. We regard it as doubtful that Eden wedded to case A as strongly as he put it forward in conversation with you. It seems probable, that in view of difficulty of persuading Churchill by cable, Eden does not feel he has any other alternative at this time than to press Churchill's preference for case A. It would be in character if Eden, under circumstances, bent his efforts after his return to obtain softening of Churchill's attitude to permit more flexible approach to problem in negotiations.

HOLMES

No. 1117

774.57-953: Telegram

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1785. Eden now seeking London's approval on somewhat different formula than that quoted Paragraph 4 of Deptel 5956, repeated

¹ Repeated priority to London as telegram 5969. It was drafted and approved by Byrns.