

Caffery should take similar position in discussions with Egyptians emphasizing our conviction that seven years duration is best obtainable and should be accepted.

SMTH

No. 1223

641.74/9-2353: Telegram

*The Ambassador in Egypt (Caffery) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET PRIORITY

CAIRO, September 23, 1953—2 p. m.

357. Nasir said last night (mytel 354)² he had difficult time in RCC meeting as all RCC members except Salah Salim were most unhappy over British proposals. (He remarked he was "losing his prestige" in RCC because he was accused of leading them into dangerous position through repeated concessions to British.)

Nasir made observation that he was not so concerned about details as about "general shape" of agreement in eyes of public and that British position on "duration" particularly unfortunate in this respect. We repeated our conviction that UK could not be budged from stand on seven years duration but suggested Egyptians explore with British possible ways of improving "look" of agreement. Nasir said most important in this regard that evacuation period be set at one year. He reiterated (mytels 292 and 293, September 6) that there could be "gentlemen's agreement" to cover small residue of "clean-up troops" for some additional months.

Only other point raised by Nasir was Suez Canal preamble. Although he still suspicious of British motives in raising this issue we did our best to allay his concern and explain importance of reassuring western public opinion and maritime nations about future of canal.

My over-all impression is that if British will try to be helpful on details there is fair chance agreement can be reached which will meet UK requirements on essentials.

(It is significant that press today announced postponement of University opening from October 3 to 24.)

CAFFERY

¹ Repeated to London as telegram 125.

² Not printed.