

No. 1256

641.74/12-1653: Telegram

*The Chargé in France (Achilles) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET

PARIS, December 16, 1953—11 p. m.

2320. Merchant spoke Dixon further December 16 concerning points made by Secretary in his talk with Eden on December 15. Former pointed out that our understanding (based on London's 2603 to Department of December 14) was that in fact there was ambiguity or non-agreement on four specific subjects already considered agreed according to Eden between British and Egyptians. Merchant also pointed out that status of forces agreement particularly if comparable to what one would assume British had obtained from the King of Libya, would in all probability prove extremely thorny subject. He added that financial arrangements apparently have not been raised as yet and that this subject could contain difficulties.

Merchant went on to say that speaking in all frankness, there was a considerable body of American opinion which believes that present British Government had in fact no intention of negotiating any agreement on Suez with Egypt; and that failure to reduce reported points agreed to precision in writing, plus existence at least two difficult subjects as yet untouched, gave color to contention that even if Egyptians accepted British position on availability and uniforms, the British would be unwilling to initial agreement but would introduce further demands. Merchant added that we had over long period desired to be helpful and in our judgment, in large part through Caffery's efforts, had brought Egyptians long way down road to agreement, but that it was virtually impossible to support them when we did not know in fact what true British position was and hence what we were supporting.

Dixon acknowledged real risk of misunderstanding and said that all this was helpful in their understanding of our suggestion that agreed points reached to date be reduced to writing. He said he would discuss it further with Eden on their return to London.

Dixon then went on to say that revolt within Conservative party on Suez issue was extremely serious and that, whereas there is no doubt as to Eden's desire and intention to reach an agreement with Egyptians, he was in for serious fight in which he naturally was heavily involved.

¹ Repeated to London as telegram 562 and to Cairo as telegram 28.