

The following day in response to these instructions, Ambassador Charles Bohlen reported that the British Government had already delivered the invitation to the Soviet Government the previous day so that he was unable to convey the United States perspective prior to Soviet receipt of the invitation. Bohlen added that he seriously questioned the approach contained in telegram 131 "which could only confirm to Soviets fact of serious division in Western camp over courses of action, and I believe would tend to stiffen Soviet opposition" to the terms of reference and composition of the conference. Instead, Bohlen proposed that he be authorized to tell Soviet officials that "rejection of Conference proposal by Egypt or the Soviet Union would cause situation to revert to one of extreme danger, to indicate that U.S. in such event would be disposed to back its friends in more direct action." (Telegram 279 from Moscow, August 4; *ibid.*, 974.7301/8-456)

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59. Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Cairo, August 4, 1956—4 a.m.

240. Am aware that Department would wish me to take no initiative with Nasser at present time in absence instructions and without background of London talks. However Nasser asked me to come see him evening August 3 and there seemed no alternative but to comply.

Nasser was relaxed and friendly. As a sidelight on the nature of this man he had spent the day in Alexandria with his children on the beach and went to a movie to "clear his mind".

Nasser seemed reluctant turn conversation to business but when he finally did he made following points (which he stressed were his preliminary and tentative views):

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Central Files, 974.7301/8-456. Secret; Niact. Received at 5:43 a.m. Repeated Niact to London and Priority to Paris. In a later telegram, Byroade cautioned the Department: "Hope extraordinary precautions will be taken to see that contents niact 240 do not get in hands of press. This would tend to make more cautious our best source of political intelligence, i.e. Nasser, in delicate period and perhaps freeze him into unfavorable position when we are still not entirely without influence to guide him if this later desired." (Telegram 241 from Cairo, August 4; *ibid.*)