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"Israel Says Cairo's Stand is Rejection", a Newspaper Clipping from the Jerusalem Post, January 1955

Published on 29 December 1955, this newspaper clipping from the Jerusalem Post contains an article entitled, "Israel Says Cairo's Stand is Rejection", addressing Egypt's rejection to Swedish diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld's proposals for establishing peace between Israel and the Arab countries in general, and with Egypt in particular.

Jerusalem Post of 29.12.55

Jerusalem Post Reporter

Egypt has not yet formulated its final position on the Hammarskjöld proposals for restoring quiet to the El Auja (Nitzana) Demilitarized Zone, and "considers the negotiations still open," the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization spokesman said yesterday.

He made the statement following the return to Jerusalem of the Chief of Staff of the T.S.O. from Gaza where earlier yesterday he met Col. Salah Gohar, Director of the Department of Palestine Affairs in the Egyptian War Ministry.

He also said that "the disturbance of public opinion in the Arab countries following the retaliatory action by Israel forces on the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias (Kinneret) has made it impossible to make further progress in these negotiations until the present time."

The Israel operation took place on December 11 against Syrian army positions threatening Israel fishermen on the Lake.

Gen. Burns and Col. Gohar discussed the position on the Hammarskjöld proposals, incidents involving firing across the Demarcation Line bounding on the Gaza Strip, the visiting and exchange of prisoners taken in Egyptian-Israeli engagements, and the improvement of communications between T.S.O. headquarters and Cairo.

Further Talks Shortly

The spokesman said that further discussions on some of the points raised would be held shortly with the Israel Foreign Ministry.

The U.N. spokesman's statement came as a reaction to yesterday's Israel Foreign Ministry summary of negotiations carried on by Gen. Burns since the Hammarskjöld proposals were made on November 3.

The T.S.O. spokesman said Israel's opinion that the Egyptian attitude toward the Hammarskjöld proposals amounted to a rejection creates the impression that the negotiations have finally broken down, having been rejected by Egypt while being accepted by Israel.

"In point of fact," continued the spokesman, "both parties stipulated conditions for their acceptance of the proposals."

(The Israel Foreign Ministry spokesman had stated on Tuesday that the proposals had been accepted "unconditionally" by Israel. There was a reservation pending clarification of one point — the marking of the Demilitarized Zone by the U.N. alone. But Prime Minister Ben-Gurion assured Gen. Burns on December 5 that Israel was prepared to

forgo this reservation if Egypt agreed to a complete cease-fire and full implementation of the General Armistice Agreement.)

The U.N. spokesman said that the Hammarskjöld proposals "were initiated as a step towards easing the tension and removing some of the pressing dangers of the situation in the... Zone area as it existed at the beginning of November. They did not extend to restoring the whole of the situation to accord with the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement which had been violated by both parties...."

He then enumerated the violations. Israel, he pointed out, has armed forces in the Demilitarized Zone contrary to Article VII(2) of the Armistice Agreement. (This paragraph sets out the boundaries of the Demilitarized Zone). Egypt has violated the Agreement by holding defensive positions east of the El-Kusma-Abu Angella line prohibited by Article VII(3).

Both parties, continued the spokesman, have forces "other than defensive in areas near the western front, prohibited by Article VII."

The statement goes on to say that "the premature introduction of questions beyond the scope of the proposals for immediate action complicated the negotiations and greatly delayed them."

Talks Call Ignored

The T.S.O. spokesman said that the conditions "put forward by Israel for the acceptance of the (Hammarskjöld) proposals" were Egypt's acceptance "of a complete cease-fire" and implementation of the Armistice provisions. He made no direct reference to Mr. Ben-Gurion's statement that Israel had intentions of calling a conference between Israel and Egypt under Article XII to promote peace between the two countries.

Egypt's condition for accepting the proposals, as seen by the U.N., was the marking of all the boundaries of the Demilitarized Zone (which is within Israel). Egypt argued that the 30 Israeli police left in the Zone — in accordance with an agreement made with Gen. Burns — were really armed forces and should be withdrawn. It based this argument on a decision of the Mixed Armistice Commission taken in 1953. An appeal by Israel is pending before the Special Committee, the spokesman added.

He stated that "strong representations have been made to the Egyptian Ministry of War to take necessary steps to prevent firing across the Demarcation Line on Israeli patrols in Israel territory."

At the same time, he continued, "the Israeli authorities were urged to keep the patrols at such a distance from the Demarcation Line as not to give Egyptian outposts cause to apprehend that they were about to be attacked, as has happened in various incidents in the past."

Israel Says Cairo's Stand is Rejection

Commenting on the U.N.T.S.O. communique the Foreign Ministry spokesman said in Jerusalem last night that it reflected a remarkable and anomalous situation. Israel had explicitly affirmed its unconditional acceptance of Mr. Hammarskjöld's proposals. The Egyptian stand, however, was tantamount to their rejection — a fact in no way modified by the communique. Nevertheless that communique is at pains to try to show that Israel has not accepted these proposals while Egypt is being assured that for its part it has not really rejected them.

Not Helping Burns

The drafter of the T.S.O. communique, in claiming that Israel has imposed conditions which it has in fact not imposed, has hardly been helpful to the U.N. Chief of Staff in his efforts to secure the agreement of the parties to the U.N. Secretary-General's proposals. Israel's suggestions for promoting border quiet and the faithful observance of the armistice agreement were at no time made a condition for the implementation of the Secretary-General's proposals. Nor does Israel's reference to this aspect of the situation warrant the T.S.O. assertion that this "complicated the negotiations."

Strong Representations

Israel has noted that "strong representations have been made to the Egyptian Ministry of War to take necessary steps to prevent firing across the Demarcation Line on Israeli patrols in Israel territory." At the same time, the spokesman stressed, the U.N.T.S.O. should have been aware of the fact that in not a single instance had an Israel patrol started an attack against an Egyptian outpost in Egyptian territory as indicated in the communique. No suggestion to limit the movements of Israel troops within Israel territory, merely to satisfy Egyptian whims, would be acceptable to Israel, the spokesman concluded.

① is the announcement made by General E. L. A. Burns, Chief of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization in answer to Israel's statement of 28.12.1955

② is Israel's reaction to ①.