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5-19 Feb. 59

Fawzi, Mahmoud (Foreign Minister of
U.A.R.)

- 2 letters from O.M.

5 February 1959

You will remember from our talk recently in Cairo that I proposed the marking of the line at the sensitive parts in the border area between Syria and Israel and also a de facto procedure with prewarning, consultation and advice before civilian action was taken in controversial cases. In making these proposals which the President accepted, I had in mind only the elimination of some obvious reasons for incidents which had been highlighted in recent cases. I did not claim that my proposals did more than to reduce the risks, the basis of which I saw mainly in the unnatural local situation as maintained by actions and attitudes on both sides.

The incident of 23 January which Israel brought to the Security Council, was of a type somewhat different from the one General von Horn and I had had in mind when we were making our proposals. In fact, the measures we suggested, would be of only indirect relevance to such an incident as the one mentioned. Thus, this incident directs our attention to those other causes for trouble in the area to which I referred in our conversation with the President but about which I did not make any immediate proposals. Although, to my regret, the measures already suggested - I am thinking especially of the marking - have not yet been taken due to the fact that some confusion seems to remain in relation to the local Syrian authorities (to which I may have to revert if the difficulties are not resolved on the spot), I think that, in these circumstances, we now should try to get somewhere about other causes of tension in that area. In order to do so effectively, I feel that we need a study of the local situation and its possible roots. Quite apart from the fact that such a study would provide us with a valuable basis for action in the field and in relation to Governments, it would put the region under a spot-light which, I am sure, in itself would reduce the immediate risks for new incidents. The initiative for such a study falls within my competence and, as a matter of course, I hope that your authorities will give the Chief-of-Staff the fullest co-operation as this obviously is in line with the interest of the UAR in quiet in the area.

I am directing a similar appeal for assistance to Mr. Ben-Gurion. I hope to issue the instruction for the study within the next couple of days after which General von Horn certainly would wish to get in touch with you.

His Excellency
Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Cairo
United Arab Republic

5 February 1959

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Cairo
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Message for Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi:

You will remember our discussion with the President regarding the incident of 3 December and our proposal to mark the line in the sensitive area between Syria and Israel. The result was summed up in a cabled instruction to General von Horn which I showed you. The key sentence of this instruction, you may remember, read as follows:

" The UAR Government has no objections against your marking the lines in the northeastern area where the absence of such marking on the ground has led to ignorance among the population or the military people of the place of those lines. The President has informed the military command accordingly and you can thus get in touch with the local authorities regarding the matter. It is taken for granted that the marking will take place in consultation with the authorities of the two sides so as to avoid any disagreement as to the proper place of the line as marked on the ground".

Later, I have mentioned this problem to you in my letters of 5 February and 14 February. I did so because General von Horn had encountered difficulties in getting Syrian co-operation in the implementation of the Cairo agreement. I hoped that the encouraging general phrase in your letter of 10 February disposed also of any further difficulties regarding this matter. However, I now find that this is not the case.

I have today received information from General von Horn regarding a discussion with Faycal yesterday in Damascus. At the meeting, Faycal maintained that the only instructions he had received from Cairo were to agree to marking of the Armistice Demarcation Line east of former Lake Hula, i.e. marking of the western limit of the central Demilitarized Zone in Bin El Tina (Dardara) - Jalabina area. He was ready to have a start made on this immediately. He added that if we wished - which is what we do - to mark the line in the Gonen-Shamir area, between the northern and the

central Demilitarized Zone, he wished to make the "counter-proposal" that the whole of the Armistice Demarcation Line be marked. Of course, General von Horn made it quite clear that our position reflected the agreement reached between the President and me in Cairo in January and that that was what we had to carry out. (I have already informed you that the marking, as proposed by us, has been approved by the Israel side).

The present situation is most unsatisfactory and may put in doubt the value of the arrangement agreed upon in Cairo, which is all the more regrettable as that arrangement has been reported to the Members of the Security Council and serves as a basis also for the recent instructions to General von Horn regarding the investigation of the local situation. You will remember that there was no discussion of a marking of the whole line, such a marking being unnecessary and only likely to give rise to uncalled for political complications. Quite apart from the fact that I do not see any reason for Faycal to make counterproposals at this stage, in a context which is not one of negotiation, I therefore wish to leave aside this proposal. Faycal's first stand, based on asserted instructions, must reflect a misunderstanding somewhere along the line, as we are not interested in marking in the area to which he refers.

Mr. Faycal said that he was willing to consult Cairo with regard to our proposals.

In this situation, drawing your attention to the complications which have arisen, I am sure that Cairo will take the necessary steps to get the co-operation of the Syrian authorities to the arrangements regarding which I reached personal agreement in Cairo.

19 February 1959