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EGYPT TODAY

By HENRY F. AYRES, C.B.E., M.Inst.C.E.

Lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on June 30, 1954, Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt, G.B.E., K.C.B., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ayres has very kindly come to talk to us today about Egypt. Some people may possibly be thinking, as Egypt is not in Asia, why are we having a lecture on Egypt? That is quite true, but as it is only just over the border and what goes on in Egypt very much affects Asia Minor we felt we were justified in asking Mr. Ayres to come to give us this talk. Mr. Ayres, as many of you know, is very experienced. He has had a long experience of both Egypt and the Sudan—about forty years—and is an engineer by profession. He has served in the Government's services and also in private enterprise. He was elected the president of the Chamber of Commerce in Cairo, but left shortly afterwards.

THE subject matter of this talk is not quite what I was invited to discuss by your secretary, nor does the title printed on the notice now apply. The explanation of this is that after I had accepted the invitation and suggested a title, I discovered that the Royal Institute of International Affairs had just published two excellent articles by Mr. Tom Little, in *The World Today*, which covered almost exactly what I had intended to say. As it was too late to alter the title of this talk, as printed, I am now asking you to accept a new title, "Egypt Today," in its place.

For those who may not have seen Mr. Little's articles, they are in the April and May issues of *The World Today*.

I have found since my return from Egypt that few people in England have any knowledge of the Egyptian background except that provided by the press and private letters home from soldiers serving in the Canal Zone. Now, opinions based on newspapers necessarily depend on the paper usually read and it must be remembered that letters home from service men living under difficult conditions and in a deadly dull part of Egypt are bound to be full of grumbles and grouses against everything concerning Egypt and the Egyptians. On the Egyptian side, opinions are also based on the press, which is not as free as our own and which is quick to report and often exaggerate minor occurrences considered to be evidence that Britain is against Egyptian interests.

My object is therefore to try to explain more fully the position and some of the difficulties. The Egyptians are not "Wogs," nor are our British soldiers "Dogs"—but are human beings, who have been good friends and can be friends again.

Now I shall begin by stating some of the fundamental facts lying behind many of the present-day troubles.

Firstly, Egypt is overpopulated; the population density being over 170 to the square mile and rapidly increasing. About 70 per cent. of

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this population depends on agriculture, and there is not enough land nor any hope of such increase as to meet the needs of the growing population.

Secondly, although Egypt has had contacts with what we now call the West certainly since Alexandria was founded in 331 B.C., these have been almost entirely at her northern end, which, I think, may be the reason why there are still so few enlightened and well-educated people and so many who, in spite of the rudiments of education, remain primitive in their outlook and experience. To my mind this is of greater importance than the usual comparison between rich and poor, because an increase in wealth does not immediately lead to advancement in education and outlook—this takes time.

The importance of this condition of the people becomes at once apparent when we begin to discuss constitutional government and free elections.

Thirdly, Egypt's existence as an inhabited country depends on the water supply from the Nile. This must always be remembered when considering Egyptian affairs with the Sudan and southwards.

Fourthly, Egypt is situated in such a geographical position that, whether she likes it or not, she is forced to be concerned in international affairs of the Great Powers. Egypt must trade with the highly industrialized countries both to dispose of her cotton and to obtain her own requirements. She cannot stand aloof and neutral.

There is no time to delve deeply into the past, but I can say that, according to Western ideas, the Egyptians have, in one form or another, been misgoverned for centuries. The intervention of the British in the 1880s led to rapid development and great increase in prosperity. None can deny this evident truth, although the younger generation in Egypt are not all aware of it; some have not heard of it or read of it. The withdrawal of our control, which in world conditions of today cannot be re-imposed, led to a revival of the old misgovernment in other forms and with the ever-increasing economic problems was rapidly leading the country once more to disaster. Many Egyptians realized this, but no group or individual was able to oppose the evil, with any chance of success, until General Neguib and certain army officers took action in July 1952.

It is difficult to describe the state of affairs just before the riots of January 26, 1952, but it is certain that the political party in power, the Wafdists, under Mustapha Nahas, endeavoured to cover their other misdeeds by encouraging to the full the latent anti-British feeling.

Apart from inciting violent action against the British in the Canal Zone, they encouraged any action against British civilians resident in Egypt. All but four British officials in the service of the Egyptian Government were summarily dismissed, many of them receiving their notices on dirty scraps of paper.

Social clubs were encouraged to turn out all British members, regardless of the fact that some of them had been started by the British. So it went on until the final flare-up on January 26, 1952. It is important to note here that in these riots it was not only British lives and property that

were attacked, but property belonging to people of different nationalities, even Egyptian property.

Now, I have not brought this up to reawaken old feelings and enmities, but to point out what sort of legacy any subsequent government inherited from the Wafdists. As you are aware, the King had to dismiss the Wafdist Cabinet after the rioting. Between then and July 22, 1952, Aly Maher, Neguib el Hilaly and, for a very short time, Hussein Sirry each held office. Whether the King felt more powerful now that the Wafd had been discredited and dismissed or not, I do not know, but I do know that he interfered more and more in both public and private affairs. The army, which in spite of strong feeling had remained loyal even after the arms scandal in the Palestine war, could stand it no longer and forced Farouk to abdicate on July 26, 1952.

It was most remarkable that the country took this so quietly. On July 23 I was informed by telephone at 7.30 a.m. that the army had taken over in Cairo. It so happened that auctioneers' men were coming to arrange a sale of furniture in my house that morning—they came punctually, did their work and the sale was duly held on July 25 with a large public attendance—in fact as usual!

It was not known at the time that this action of the army was to be the prelude to the overthrow of the Mohammed Aly dynasty, but I believe that had this happened at once there would have been little reaction against it. Egyptians like a monarchy and, if Farouk had been other than what he is, the idea of the constitutional monarchy would have worked. It must, however, be remembered that the dynasty only came into being in the nineteenth century and the succession was only granted to the family of Mohammed Aly in 1841. In the century, except for the great popularity at first accorded to the young Prince Farouk, from whom so much was expected, the reigning house meant very little to the bulk of the population.

Before the *coup d'état* the Egyptian Government was a constitutional monarchy modelled on the Belgian Constitution. It was promulgated on April 19, 1923. The Parliament consisted of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. The Senate was elected partly by the King and partly by popular suffrage; the deputies by direct universal suffrage on the basis of one deputy for every 180,000 of the population. With this system and a largely illiterate electorate it is easy to see that a political party having the best and widest organization throughout the country could always get a majority in any General Election. This explains why an appeal to the country appeared to give Nahas the authority to declare that the Wafd was the people and the people were the Wafd.

From the above it followed that power soon got into the hands of certain small groups of politicians, most of whom put their own interests above those of their country.

It is said that revolutions follow certain patterns, so if anybody wants to try to foretell the future from this one I can say that the aristocracy and the rich were certainly not behind it, no political party nor the great masses of the people.

It started with the army and is strongly supported by the middle classes,

and if it succeeds it will have the mass of the people behind it later. Its bitterest opponents will be the worst of the old stage politicians and the once privileged few.

General Neguib's first pronouncement was that the object was to "purge the army and the country of traitors and corrupt people and to restore constitutional life." This was followed by expressing a desire to establish the monarchy on a sound constitutional basis and that the people should participate in directing the affairs of their country.

While no one in this country will deny the virtue in all this, the question arises, but how?

In fact, the ruling groups were still powerful and not prepared to co-operate with the new régime, nor would they purge themselves to help what they hoped would be a temporary authority. This attitude led to the confiscation of all party funds and the dissolution of all political parties. To take the place of the parties and to get some kind of popular support without elections the Liberation Rally was organized as a popular movement early in 1953. It soon became apparent to the new government that things were not going to be as easy as they thought, and, ever since the discovery that the old political parties were not going to help, they have looked for support elsewhere. They want recognition and help from outside as well as inside the country, certainly until such time as they can reorganize the Constitution.

As things are in Egypt it is impossible to appeal to the country by a General Election, so the government, through Colonel Nasser, has proposed a Constituent National Assembly made up from all sections of the community to meet on July 23. This meeting, if held as proposed, should give a good indication of the way things are going. It is not intended to take the place of a parliament but to function during the transition period until January 1956, when a parliamentary government is promised.

Now, all that has been done so far does surely indicate that the government has the honest intention of restoring constitutional government and that those officers in the present régime who wish to continue in politics will resign from the army and become civilians. I cannot detect any sign of a wish to continue with a military junta any longer than necessary. What the future holds no one can say, but if a new Constitution is evolved, and if it results in any government which puts the needs of the country before personal interests, a real miracle will have been performed.

Let us consider what has been achieved since July 1952, firstly in purely internal affairs. To meet the urgent need to provide for the great and growing population, two kinds of works are required: firstly, those to increase the productivity of the country, both agricultural and industrial; secondly, those to improve the living conditions of the people.

Now, in my opinion, the former should take priority; the improvement of the living conditions is urgent, but the wherewithal to live seems more so. Over recent years much has been done in the supply of filtered water in the provinces, in welfare in its many forms, but far too little in major works of development.

The National Production Council under the present government has declared the following to be provided for in its programme :

- Aswan hydro-electric scheme.
- Land reclamation and development.
- Improvement of irrigation and drainage.
- A higher dam project at Aswan.
- Extension and improvement of roads.
- Improvements in inland navigation.
- Electric power station (South Cairo).
- Iron and steel works at Helwan.
- Chemical fertilizers at Aswan.
- Paper factory.
- Oil pipeline from Suez to Cairo.
- Development of sugar beet, etc.

The cost of these projects cannot be met out of the ordinary resources of the country, so, if they are to be carried out, foreign capital must be encouraged. The first step must surely be to re-establish confidence. How far this has been upset in recent years is well illustrated by recalling that the first dam at Aswan was built from funds provided by Sir Ernest Cassel and that for some fifty years the great British civil engineering contracting firms were active in Egypt and the Sudan. Later on I shall make reference to the fact that not one of them is at present anxious to take on any work in Egypt. It is unlikely that any considerable increase in confidence will be felt until the Canal Zone question is settled, but in the interim period the Minister of Finance has taken what action he could to improve matters. He imposed restrictions on imports and encouraged exports; he increased taxes, customs and excise duties; but perhaps of greater importance to foreign interests are the alterations to the Company Law of 1947 and to the Mines and Quarries law of 1948. The latter has already given an impetus to prospecting for oil, which has been held up for some years past, and the news of the agreement on the price question between the Egyptian Government and the oil companies operating in Egypt should further stimulate activities. Of course, if oil is discovered in considerable quantity in Egyptian territory the whole economic situation will be changed.

British trade has been going through a most difficult time, but it is encouraging to note that over the first three months of this year we are back in our old position of biggest supplier, even if by only a small margin. I shall refer to this later. Meanwhile the Egyptian Government has widened its scope by making trade agreements with some Eastern European countries, including Russia.

Apart from the possible discovery of oil, there are three other internal matters that may have a far-reaching effect on the country's future. The first is the agrarian reform, for which the present régime is entirely responsible; the second is the growing influence of labour; and the third is the emancipation of women.

I am not going to attempt to analyse any of these three, but with regard to the first I can refer to the last annual report of the President

of the National Bank of Egypt, in which it is stated that the Committee set up to deal with agrarian reform had shown care in paying attention to local conditions so as to ensure continuity of production. The report adds, however, that the reform has led to a reduction in rents but also to a reduction in agricultural wages.

My own comment on this is that agricultural wages were considered to be far too low before the revolution.

As regards labour, which is one of the most disturbing features of Egypt today: Laws governing the employment of labour in industry and commerce were very much needed and have been brought into being, but at present they are operating so much in favour of the employee that the employer can be seriously embarrassed.

Labour syndicates have been formed and these sometimes take action against firms, which have complied with the requirements of the laws governing dismissal. It might be thought that in such case the firm would be protected by the law, but it has been found that the defence is a long and costly business. This threat from labour is a serious menace to industrial development in Egypt.

The third matter I referred to was the emancipation of women. This applies to the upper and middle classes, as the peasant women have been more or less free. The spread of education and freedom amongst these classes has been remarkably rapid in the last twenty-five years; as here in England, the youth of today can do things that would not have been tolerated in the youth of their grandparents. Women have not yet won the right to vote in parliamentary elections, but with their ever-increasing interest and activities in public affairs, especially welfare, the time cannot be far off when they will achieve this.

Turning now to the Sudan, I am not sure whether this should be treated as an internal or an external matter. I prefer to regard it as external, in view of the fact that the Sudan is at present going through an interim period in its political development. As I said earlier, one must always remember that Egypt's existence depends on the water of the Nile and that this comes via the Sudan. The Egyptian desire to obtain some measure of control in the Sudan arises from this fact and not from any blood relationship or particular friendship with the Sudanese. Although the coming of air travel has made the Sudan, especially the northern parts, more familiar to the Egyptians, not one of them, unless with some Sudanese blood in him, could honestly admit he liked the Sudan and felt naturally drawn to its people. This feeling is mutual; the majority of the Sudanese dislike the Egyptians. They remember the misrule which led to the revolt of the Mahdi, and latterly they have noted the misrule in Egypt itself. Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan was claimed unilaterally in 1951, and while this lasted, no agreement was possible between Great Britain and Egypt on the Sudan. It was the repudiation of this claim by General Neguib's government, which opened the door to the negotiations and the settlement of the Sudan question in February 1953.

The agreement provided for a commission of five to aid the Governor-General during an interim period in which the Sudanese could prepare for elections, etc. This Commission consisted of one British, one Egyptian,

two Sudanese and one Pakistani, the last-named to be the Chairman. An Electoral Commission of seven was also convened to organize elections throughout the country. You are probably all aware of the result of these elections and will remember that the National Unionist Party was returned. As this party had declared its desire to co-operate with Egypt, the result was taken by some to be a severe blow to the British and an expression of ingratitude for all Great Britain had done for the Sudanese. This was not really so. The difficulty is the rivalry between the two great "tarikas" or lines of thought. The followers of the head of the Khatmia, namely Sir Sayed Aly el Mirghani, remembering the bad old days of the Mahdi's successor, fear the return to power of the Mahdi faction, now represented by the followers of Sir Sayed Abdel Rahman el Mahdi. They therefore oppose this group and there can be no real unity in the Sudan until the old fears can be shown to be groundless. The Egyptians are still interfering in Sudan affairs and, in my opinion, will continue to do so even at the risk of losing what influence they have gained through the split I have just mentioned, until they have reached a satisfactory agreement with the Sudanese on the apportionment of the Nile water.

As the full control of the Nile water involves other governments than the Egyptian and Sudanese, it means that until these two can agree as to their respective requirements and justify them, the political side of the matter can only be dealt with in principle.

How all this works out is for the future, but we must remember the vital importance of water to both countries and at least give credit to Egypt's new government for removing the chief obstacle to the achievement of a political settlement in February 1953.

I must now refer to the Canal Zone, which still remains to be a problem of major importance. It is interesting to recall that in 1947 Mr. Ernest Bevin stated that of the questions in dispute between Great Britain and Egypt, by far the most difficult was the Sudan. That shows also how strange it is that although he thought at that time we were very near a settlement over the Canal, it is still not achieved, and the Sudan is. Certainly the Egyptians at first considered a settlement to be near once the Sudan problem was solved, but apparently there was still such lack of confidence concerning Egypt, that our people over here were not prepared to give way on what were considered certain essentials.

As you can see from the sketch map, the Canal Zone occupies a rough triangle. This is nearly all desert and extremely dull and uninteresting country to live in. Our troops are strictly confined to the area and to rules and regulations, so that it can safely be said no one is there because he likes it.

It may be asked how it is that we come to be there at all? In the Treaty of 1936 it was agreed that British troops would be stationed in a defined area on the Suez Canal to assist Egypt in guaranteeing the safe passage of international shipping and that they would hand over to the Egyptian army when it was considered that that army was capable of carrying out the responsibility alone. The treaty was to be revised in 1956. Now the 1939-45 war upset this agreement and the problem was no longer merely the safeguarding of lines of communication and international shipping,

but the maintenance of a great military base in the Middle East. This base had been developed as a necessity during the war and many millions of pounds were spent on it. There is no time now to enter into the many pros and cons of this difficult problem, but I think it would help if it was clearly understood that there are really now two questions, not just one.

The first is the safe passage of ships of all nations in time of peace—this could not be guaranteed by any agreement or any combination in time of war. Now, this is surely a matter for the United Nations, although I am aware of the great importance of the Suez Canal in the minds of our people in Australia, New Zealand and the East.

The second question is of course the military base in the Middle East. Opinion among experts is divided on the absolute necessity for this, although I believe all agree that it would be a good thing if Egypt was friendly and would participate. It seems that a settlement could be reached, and quickly, if only there was more confidence in the Egyptians. This has been stated many times officially and unofficially.

How can this confidence be inspired? It can be helped by such action by the Egyptian government as to show that it is strong enough to act against gangsters in the Canal Zone and to break away entirely from the campaign of violence, either verbal or active, against the British. Over here this does not seem to be very difficult, but it should be borne in mind that there is evidence that violence brings matters to a head if carried far enough, and this is in the minds of some Egyptians.

The failure to settle the Canal Zone question is having most serious effects both on ourselves and the Egyptians. On ourselves because of the continued drain on the British taxpayer in having to maintain large forces, and also in the diminution of our trade with Egypt. Others have been quick to jump into the Egyptian market left open by the delay in settlement and by the non-payment so far by the British Government of £10 millions due to the Egyptians this year and expected by them last January. Nobody seems to know why this payment has, so far, been withheld—it has to be paid, so why not pay it and show a willingness to help? If we intended to delay payment we should have given warning to the Minister of Finance, who was doing all he could in very difficult circumstances to restore the financial position. There is no question of an Egyptian boycott of British goods; simply, they have not had the sterling. The position, when I was in Egypt last February, was that you could not buy British goods—there were none in the shops. On the other hand, there was a Hungarian exhibition, a German exhibition and I have seen only a few days ago, in one of the principal trade journals in Egypt, that about 50 per cent. of its space is taken up with West German-Egyptian interests.

The British Chamber of Commerce of Egypt sent over a special delegation early in 1953, and quite recently the newly elected President was in London protesting against the lack of any support of British interests in Egypt from this country. There is no denying that the Egyptians themselves are partly to blame for this state of affairs, but it is not primarily the fault of the present government—they are suffering from the legacy of the past.

Another aspect of our lost influence is, as I have pointed out ever since 1949, the absence of our great civil engineering contractors from participation in major works in Egypt. There are good reasons for this withdrawal. I put ten of these up to one of the chief officers in the Egyptian National Production Council early in the year. This officer expressed his amazement that such difficulties had been encountered and said that, although he could not clear them all, nevertheless he was grateful that they had been brought to his notice.

The effects on the Egyptians are that they are not able to get on with their internal affairs nor can they inspire confidence, so badly needed, for their economic future. They are well aware of the necessity to depend on the West, yet cannot make any headway until this question is settled.

Now, what is the effect of recent events in Egypt on the Middle East and external affairs?

Here I should like to draw attention to the excellent leading column in *The Times* of June 8 under the heading "Race against Time." As this covers this question most adequately; I may usefully refer to it for my own answer. In referring to the Middle East the writer remarks on the significant changes, mentioning as the most obvious the decline of Egyptian influence; he goes on to state that Egypt has today neither the time, the money, nor the prestige to maintain the leading position she held ten years ago. This is true, but it is perhaps also true to say that she does not attach quite such importance to the Arab League as she did.

Looking to the future, it is stated that the Asiatic part of the Arab League may tend to keep its eyes on Asia, while the African part looks to Africa. I agree with the first part of this statement but not with the latter.

Egypt is the only member of the League situated in Africa and her only interest in Africa is the supply of Nile water. This of course extends as far as the Equator, but it has no military aspect at all, nor do I think the Arab League could influence any decision or agreement made between Egypt and the countries concerned. In this one respect, therefore, Egypt may be said to look towards Africa, but I submit, not as a member of the Arab League.

Apart from the desire for support in her campaign against Great Britain, Egypt is at one with the Arab world in the hatred of Israel, so if she has any trend it is towards the Asiatic side and in particular towards Saudi Arabia. This leaning towards Saudi Arabia is not difficult to understand, as apart from the dispute with Great Britain and the hatred of Israel the Egyptian Government supplies each year the Holy Carpet, and both the departure for and return from Mecca are public holidays in Cairo. It seems to me also that, in regard to the defence of the Middle East, both Egypt and the Saudi kingdom feel themselves to be rather less in the line of fire than other member States.

Following up this line of thought on the defence of the Middle East, I am saying nothing new when I say that the whole of the vast area covered by the Arab League is relatively defenceless, in the modern sense of the word, against aggression by a great power without help from outside. In this area the total population is about 40 millions, of which

over half live in the Nile valley and Delta of Egypt. It is indeed a military vacuum!

So long as a threat exists, the nations in this area will be forced to accept military assistance and present indications are that, whatever may be said otherwise, they want it from the West.

Egypt, by remaining so intransigent over the Canal Base, is doing no good to herself nor to her neighbours. The Middle East remains divided between the policy indicated by the Turco-Pakistani pact and that at present being followed by Egypt. Surely Syria, the Lebanon and Iraq would find things much easier if the Canal settlement could be reached and then be followed by a general acceptance of military assistance from the West.

There are two steps towards cohesion: one is the Egyptian settlement with Britain, and the other is an agreement between the Arabs and Israel. It is just possible that the latter could come about by a satisfactory solution of the irrigation problem at present receiving so much attention.

It is not often referred to, but there is another peaceful development that may, one day, come about between Egypt and Iraq and have far-reaching effects on both countries, namely emigration of labour from Egypt. Egypt has a large surplus agricultural population and Iraq a shortage—the territories lie reasonably close together. This possibility seems very remote at present, but with the spread of education and the pressure of economic necessity, it may come about.

Finally, as regards ourselves and the Egyptians, I consider we should give the present régime in Egypt every chance to make a success of the venture. In spite of differences amongst themselves it is generally agreed that those in power are honest and well meaning in their intentions, and whatever mistakes they have made, on balance, they have already wrought a great service to their country. Colonel Nasser has stated that he does not consider that his military party can achieve many of those things needed by the country, but he aims at bringing back the caravan from its lost way.

It seems to me useless to say that we do not yet know if the country or, as is sometimes said, the people, are behind the present government. In Egypt, a completely false impression has been given in the past that the people decide, although election results do indicate this to an outsider. If the present government is not stable, what government is? The fact is that it has been in power nearly two years; if it falls, I have yet to meet anyone who can suggest something better to take its place.

Mr. NEWHOUSE: I spent a large part of forty years in Egypt and the Sudan, so perhaps I may be allowed to make a few remarks. I agree with practically every word Mr. Ayres has said. A point which I think has not been stressed sufficiently is the failure of the late Egyptian Government to keep up with the development of Egypt. In 1920 the Minister of Public Works put forward a scheme for the development in Egypt by 1955 of the land that could be cultivated, but of course that development has not taken place. There is a considerable area in Egypt which could be very much improved. I believe about one million acres in Lower

Egypt are still swamp, and that there are three or four hundred thousand acres in Upper Egypt which are still under the old basin system of irrigation, produce one crop each year and do nothing for the rest of the year. Some of the improvements have been carried out, but the important ones have not. The Government is now marking time, having no money.

I should like to mention that the present government is one of the very few in the history of Egypt that has cared for the fellah.

The object of holding the Canal was to make it safe for international traffic in peace time. We have not been able to do it. The Egyptians, while we have had 80,000 men at the Canal in the last few years, have stopped any ships they liked, and they liked to stop any going to Israel. During the last two wars we have not been able to use the Canal at all. Why are we keeping 80,000 men, in the conditions Mr. Ayres described, sitting in that desert? Why do we do it? I think those points may emphasize the excellent address we have been given, and I am sure we ought to be very grateful to Mr. Ayres for putting the facts so clearly.

LORD BIRDWOOD: Perhaps as a rather junior soldier I may be allowed to deal with the implication that we could withdraw troops. I do so with some hesitation in the presence of General Shea and General Martin, but I would refer to the new look which the emergence of the Pakistani-Turkey-American axis gives to the problem. The object is to be able to hit very hard and quickly if someone pokes his nose out into that gap over the Iron Curtain and has a look at the oil. That problem can now, I would say as a soldier, be met to some extent by the development of air bases in Eastern Turkey and the development of bases in Pakistan, from which air forces can strike very hard and quickly. There is, it seems, to me, something to take the first strain.

I am not going to say that that eliminates the need for a base, because I am quite aware that once the atom bombs have finished their work we still need infantry to hold ground. In other words, a squadron of aeroplanes cannot occupy an oilfield. A base of some kind or other is needed, but it does seem to me the first strain is taken.

MR. PHILIPS PRICE: May I confirm what Lord Birdwood has just said? Last year I was in Turkey and had occasion to speak to several people there who were very much worried about the negotiations going on in Egypt then. We had, of course, kept them well informed about what the state of the negotiations was, but they felt they were in the front line.

I take the view, as other speakers have, that to keep 80,000 troops in the Canal Zone in the way we have been doing is just wasting our substance, and it is also a provocation to the nationalist feeling running through the Middle East, which is there and nothing will exorcize it. We should reconsider our whole defence problem in the Middle East and first and foremost consider Turkey as the main bastion of Middle East defence.

MR. PAXTON: The speaker has not said anything about the Communists in Egypt or the Moslem Brotherhood. Could he tell us the present position?

MR. AYRES: A reason why I have not gone into that is simply the question of time. One is limited to three-quarters of an hour and refer-

ences to the activities of the Communists and the Moslem Brotherhood simply could not be included. The Moslem Brotherhood is a very complicated question and the activities of the Communists an even more complicated question, and I really do not think I should like to discuss them at this meeting, if you do not mind.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid our time has come to an end, although the discussion could of course go on for a long time.

It just remains for me on your behalf to thank Mr. Ayres for his extraordinarily interesting lecture, so clearly given and so simple and easy to understand. (Applause.)

