

NOTE OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. FRANCIS H. RUSSELL,
U.S.A. CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, 24 September 1953.

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On Thursday, 24 September 1953, I dined with Mr. Russell at his house. The only other person present was Mrs. Russell.

After dinner, the conversation turned to the tension between Israel and Syria, and Mr. Russell delivered himself of an address roughly along the following lines:-

Bulldozing

"That I can't understand is why you chose this particular time to start these works in the North. After all, only last month there was no intention to start anything of the kind, there was no budget for it, and even now you are using unsuitable machinery which you wouldn't be using if you had planned the thing thoroughly in advance. You are doing this just at the time when it looks as if ~~MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM~~ a settlement with Egypt were around the corner. I suppose you know why the Egyptians released the 'Paron'? I have read all kinds of explanations in the papers, but the real reason is that Caffery made vigorous representations to the Egyptians, and they gave in. Caffery has built up an excellent position for himself in Cairo and enjoys the confidence of the régime. The Egyptians have got various things from us, and there are other things they want to get from us - and they need these things badly. When they have reached a settlement with the British, they will be ready for a settlement with you. I don't know how near a settlement with the British is, but it looks very close now, and the Egyptians are ~~MMMM~~ prepared to start with you immediately afterwards. It won't be easy for them, for they will have to overcome a lot of prejudice and opposition in the Arab world - and this is the moment you choose for angering the Syrians, and so putting off agreement with Egypt! It's just the same as what you did with the transfer of your Ministry to Jerusalem. Two days before he left, Monnett Davis asked you not to transfer the Ministry, and you knew we didn't want you to do it. As a matter of fact, at the time you made the move, the State Department had worked out practically 99.9% a plan for Jerusalem which would have satisfied you completely - but now, by your action, you have put off a solution for at least two years. We can't understand why you do these things."

In the course of talk on the canal which is being dug to divert the Jordan, I mentioned that we had ~~MMMM~~ all along been for regional co-operation in the utilisation of water resources for the benefit of all the countries concerned, but if the Syrians and Jordanians took the Yarmuk, we had no alternative but to make the most of the Jordan for ourselves. To this Mr. Russell replied:-

"It isn't true that the Syrians and Jordanians are taking the Yarmuk. As a matter of fact, the State Department has just ~~reached the conclusion~~ ^{decided} that the Yarmuk scheme should not be continued, and the U.S.A. was preparing to throw all its weight behind a regional project exactly as you have always wanted. Now you go and ~~MMMM~~ start these works in the North and make the whole thing impossible. You've put the Syrians' backs up, and they'll build a dam across the Banias to cut off that source of the Jordan. Then where are you? No regional project, and no Jordan'.

I told him this came as a great surprise to me, for we had made representations on this subject to the State Department two or three months ago and had been waiting ever since for an answer. In fact, during the past

