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 REF : Khartoum telegram to US on July 16, 1953; London's telegram No. 1, July 1953 to Khartoum

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SUBJECT: Meeting of Governor General's Commission Postponed Indefinitely

The Governor General's Commission, which was scheduled to meet sometime between the 18th and 20th of July in Khartoum, did not convene, and its meeting has been postponed indefinitely. The Sudan Public Relations Office this week issued a rather confusing statement stating, "It is officially announced that the Chairman of the Governor General's Commission has postponed indefinitely the meeting of the commission which was to have been held in Khartoum next month." Although no official explanation has been given, it is public knowledge that the main reason why the Governor General's Commission did not meet was because the Egyptian Government objected to the appointment of D. M. H. RICHES, the United Kingdom Trade Commissioner in the Sudan, to become an alternate member for Sir Lawrence GRAFFTEY-SMITH, the official British member of the commission. It has also been suggested, although few people take it seriously, that Tayyib HUSSAIN, the Acting Chairman of the Commission, was unable to attend the meeting. However, since Tayyib Hussain informed me in Cairo recently that he intended to come to the Sudan on the 18th of this month, this does not appear to be a valid reason for postponing the commission's meeting.

A considerable amount of confusion exists with regard to the Egyptian rejection of Riches, United Kingdom Trade Commissioner, as an alternate member of the Governor General's Commission. Riches informed me that it was his understanding that the Egyptian Government had rejected his nomination and that he understood this was the sole reason for postponing the meeting. Riches explained that it may have been true, as has been suggested in the local press, that the Egyptians originally accepted his nomination but rejected it after the Ismailia disturbances. About a week ago Riches received an invitation from local Egyptian officials to attend the Cairo celebrations. The invitation was addressed to him as a member of the Governor General's Commission. Since he had not been informed that he had been appointed a member of the Governor General's Commission, he took the invitation to Colonel Abdul Fattah HASSAN, the senior Egyptian official in the Sudan, and was informed that this was an unfortunate mistake and the invitation was subsequently resubmitted to him using his title as United Kingdom Trade Commissioner. This mistake led him to believe that the Egyptians may have originally approved his appointment. Riches stated that it would not be politic for him to attend the celebrations and rejected the invitation on the basis that his duties in Khartoum did not permit him to leave at this time.

Considerable criticism has arisen over the postponement of the Governor General's Commission meeting. This particular meeting did not have important items on the

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agenda, but there is resentment among many Sudanese that a dispute between the two codomini could extend down to a meeting of the Governor General's Commission.

COMMENT

This particular problem in Anglo-Egyptian relations need not have occurred. It was obvious to most observers that if Riches were appointed an alternate to Sir Lawrence Grafftey-Smith, the Egyptians would object. They claim that as a trade commissioner involved in commercial transactions he should not be appointed to the Governor General's Commission because the Governor General's Commission might have to pronounce judgment on some of these transactions and this could mean that the accused might serve as his own judge. Riches' position was that the Egyptian Government had no right to exert a veto and that the British Government could not accept this objection even though it meant postponing the meeting until Sir Lawrence Grafftey-Smith was able to come. Riches intimated that Sir Lawrence did not like leaving France for such a short visit to the Sudan.

The main purpose of the meeting was to approve an Acting Chief Justice while the Chief Justice is on leave. The Chief Justice informed me today that he intends to go on leave but will be available to receive reviews of any death sentences, which is the only function that he must perform. All other functions can be delegated.

This incident of postponing the Governor General's Commission meeting is another instance of the inability of the Egyptian and British Governments to get together in time to forestall disagreement.

Joseph Sweeney

Joseph Sweeney,
United States Liaison Officer.

cc: London
Cairo

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