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By ROBERT C. DOTYSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
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Egypt Cannot Stay Neutral, Ex-Premier Says—Issue of Foreign Troops Stressed

By ROBERT C. DOTY
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CAIRO, March 16—Egypt's most influential elder statesman said today that he favored his country's participation in a regional defense organization linked with the West.

Dr. Aly Maher, former Premier and chairman of the commission now drafting the new constitution, made this statement in an interview in which he discussed the possibilities confronting Egypt as she moved toward the restoration of constitutional life after twenty months of military rule.

Egypt abruptly rejected the idea of a Middle East defense organization and persuaded the other Arab states to do likewise when it was proposed by Britain, France, Turkey and the United States in 1951. Although Dr. Maher is not currently responsible for Egyptian policy, he has advised the military regime on the return of parliamentary rule and is likely to play an important part in shaping the country's course after the election of a constituent assembly in June.

He was asked if he agreed with those who feared that a settlement of the long-standing dispute between Britain and Egypt over control of the Suez Canal zone would be more difficult once the terms of the agreement were exposed to political partisanship and demagoguery in the elected assembly.

Trend of Talks Not Favored

He replied that he did not approve of the kind of settlement toward which the regime headed by President Mohammed Naguib had been working in intermittent negotiations since last May.

The Government has sought an arrangement under which Britain would withdraw her 80,000-man garrison, leave a force of 4,000 technicians to maintain military installations under Egyptian sovereignty and have the right to reoccupy the bases under certain emergency conditions, the definition of which still is subject to dispute.

With the talks long deadlocked, Egyptian leaders have flirted with the idea of "neutralism" or "noncooperation" as a means of bringing pressure on Britain.

"It is impossible for Egypt to be neutral either politically or militarily," Dr. Maher said. He added that other Arab states that had followed Egyptian leadership in the past were beginning to recognize that their interests lay in economic and military cooperation with the West and were preparing to conclude agreements to bring this about.

He was confident such a policy could be presented in a way to win popular approval, particularly if stress were laid on the economic and social benefits that probably would accrue to Egypt.

Turning to the domestic scene, the former Premier said he believed the proclamation of the Egyptian Republic by the military junta last June 18 should be ratified by the nation in a referendum to give it legitimacy. Only if the voters approve a republican form of government can the constituent assembly work with confidence in equipping it with permanent institutions, he explained.

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