

Confidential

Note of a meeting with President Husni Mubarak at the Presidential Palace, Cairo on Sunday, 15th November, 1981 at 11.30 p.m.

Present:

President Husni Mubarak

The Rt.Hon. Julian Amery, M.P.
Colonel Neil McLean
Viscount Cranborne, M.P.

After an initial exchange of courtesies, the President explained that he had just received Khalid Mohieddin, the left wing leader. Mohieddin had come to protest against martial law and the restrictions on the press and to explain his opposition to certain aspects of Camp David. The President had told him that martial law was necessary particularly for his sake. Without it the Fundamentalists would "break your neck first of all because they look on you as a Communist". The President went on to say that he did not regard Mohieddin as a Communist but that he had contacts with the Soviets and was indeed pro-Soviet. He had made it clear to him that he would not allow anyone to act as a channel for foreign propaganda. He was not going to sit on his hands and allow the Soviets to come back and dominate Egypt. The President added that on Camp David he had told Mohieddin that there was no other way in which the Sinai could have been recovered. It could not have been done by war. So why was Mohieddin complaining? What would he have done? Mohieddin apparently agreed but said that he could not say so publicly since he had opposed Camp David in public from the beginning.

The President went on to say that the autumn had been a time of great trouble for Egypt but now things were much quieter and the universities were open again. A number of people had been arrested and were awaiting interrogation. When this was completed the Government could decide what further steps to take. But as at present advised, he did not think that foreign powers had been directly involved in President Sadat's assassination.

Mr. Amery asked whether relations with Saudi Arabia were improving. The President replied that he had good unofficial

contacts with the Saudis and had received private messages of condolence after the murder of President Sadat. Mr. Amery recalled that President Sadat had told him that Egypt could make friends with the Saudis whenever it wanted to. Had the time come? The President said that he preferred to move slowly. The essential thing was to complete the Camp David agreements and not give the Israelis any reason to go back on or postpone their withdrawal from the Sinai. Both Mr. Begin and Mr. Peres had assured him that they would stick to the Agreement and he believed them. "War has been erased from the Israeli/Egyptian vocabulary" Nevertheless, there were voices raised in Israel urging at least postponement of withdrawal.

The President went on to speak of the autonomy talks. He did not expect to reach a detailed agreement by April 25th 1982 but he hoped there might, by then, be a framework within which more detailed negotiations with Israel could be carried on by Palestinians and Jordanians, hopefully with Saudi encouragement. Egypt would naturally do what it could to help. But the Egyptians could not be expected to assume the main responsibility. This must be left to the parties directly concerned. The Egyptians could not be expected to fight other Arab states battles for them. When the Israelis had bombed the Bagdad reactor some Arab Governments had called on Egypt to take action against Israel. But what had they done themselves? All Iraq had done had been to refer the question to the UN. So why should Egypt fight Iraq's battles for her?

The President went on to talk about the PLO. This was a mixture of different groups divided into a pro-Syrian, pro-Iraqi and pro-Libyan faction - and all paid for by the moderate Arab states! The PLO could only follow a united line of policy if its three backers were in agreement. Of the three Syria was the most important because it had physical control of the main PLO bases in South Lebanon.

The President doubted whether the PLO leaders were really very keen on peace with Israel. If a Palestinian state were

established, financial contributions from Saudi Arabia would go to the new State and not to individual leaders, to the detriment of their Swiss Bank accounts. The President did not regard the Fahad proposals as a serious or effective plan but rather as a possible starting point for talks. The Venice initiative too had some merit. But the PLO could only negotiate seriously if the Syrians, and so the Russians, gave them the green light.

Mr. Amery mentioned that Lord Carrington was trying hard to involve the PLO in the peace process. The President commented "God help him", this in a tone that conveyed exasperation rather than benison. For his part he was inclined to doubt whether the Palestinian question would be settled for "50 years". But that, he added, was a purely private view. He went on to say that he had been told, also privately, by "a senior member of the Saudi Arabian Royal family" that the Saudis were not really all that interested in a settlement for the Palestinians. They would agree to terms with Israel if a solution could be found for Jerusalem. He believed this view was shared by other Saudis and perhaps some of the Gulf rulers.

Turning to Syria, the President doubted whether the Syrians really wanted a settlement of the Palestinian problem as this would end their chances of extracting money from the rich Arab states. The Golan Heights were worthless land but provided a reason for keeping the Syrian army on the alert and so for extracting money from the Saudis. Golan was really "a furnished flat for which the rich Arabs pay the rent".

The President expanded at some length on the mercenary character of the Syrians. He claimed that earlier this year Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia had paid the Syrians \$500 million just to withdraw from the Jordan border which they had never really intended to attack. They had apparently even mentioned the sum of \$16 billion as their price for pulling out of Lebanon:

Nevertheless, after the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, Hafiz Assad could be in a tight corner. Assad's Government had pursued a policy of confrontation with Israel. Egypt had opted instead for negotiation. All Sinai would shortly be in Egyptian hands. The Syrian people would begin to realise the mistakes of what was anyway a very unpopular and minority government. This might well prove fatal to Assad's regime.

Colonel McLean asked what sort of regime would follow? The President thought that on balance it would be another pro-Soviet regime. If it were an anti Russian regime this would be a great defeat for the Russians, too great perhaps for them to accept, though obviously desirable.

Turning to Jordan the President said that King Hussein could expect a great deal of trouble from the Palestinians. Nevertheless, after the return of Sinai, King Hussein must be associated with the next phase of talks about the West Bank. But it would be very difficult to pin King Hussein down. "He is very clever but you can never catch him. Even when you have him in your grasp he slips out". He accompanied this remark with a graphic gesture as of one trying to grip an eel.

The President then turned to Libya. He thought that President Ghadaffi was experiencing some difficulty at home because of a shortage of liquid cash. He had, however, received private assurances from Ghadaffi that Libya would not attack Egypt. Ghadaffi had also sent him a private message, just after President Sadat's murder, but the timing of it had been in such contrast with Ghadaffi's public statements as to be "impolite". Anyway he did not want to negotiate with Libya "while this madman is at the helm". When Mr. Amery remarked that it would be constructive if Egypt had access to Libya's oil resources, the President smiled appreciatively but said "Yes, but that is something we cannot discuss".

The President discounted reports of concentrations of Libyan troops on the Chad/Sudan border. The country was too inhospitable

to sustain the presence of an army for long. He also thought the reports of fighting between the troops of the Chad Defence Minister and the Chad Foreign Minister were false. They might have been invented to give the Libyans an excuse to return to Chad should Ghalaffi later wish to do so.

On the subject of the Soviet stockpile of arms in Libya, the President said that this stockpile was indeed substantial. Ghalaffi had bought the arms at a time when he believed the Americans were stockpiling arms in Israel. He had planned himself to establish a parallel stockpile for a pan Arab war against Israel. The President, however, predicted that Libya would find that there was a desperate shortage of spare parts. He had had some experience of Soviet methods when commanding the Egyptian air force. He had found, then, that there were not even spare tyres or engines for Russian supplied Migs. It was the classic Russian technique for keeping control of weapons they supplied.

He personally had a poor opinion of the Libyan armed forces. "We gave them a good drubbing when we bombed Tobruk in 1977 and destroyed the airport facilities and some aeroplanes on the ground". He believed some Russian advisers had also been among the casualties.

Mr. Amery asked how the President saw the outlook in Iran. He thought the opposition to Khomeini strong but very divided. There was not much hope of doing anything until a strong man arose inside the country, probably from the armed forces. His own guess was that the Soviets would strike next in Poland which would be "very bad for Europe" but he himself was more seriously concerned about Iran. It was the Middle Eastern country most vulnerable to Soviet expansion.

Colonel McLean asked about the situation in Yemen. Here the President was very critical of the Saudis for having no positive policy. He spoke with disapproval of a Saudi prince

who had told him that the Saudis had no quarrel with Aden and this at a time when the Russians were building a major new airfield and expanding their naval facilities. He thought the situation in North Yemen was deteriorating seriously and that this could be disastrous for the Saudis.

Mr. Amery said how much he had been encouraged by President Reagan's general approach to the international situation. The President agreed warmly. He found the Americans reacted much faster than they had under President Carter who had been rather slow. He liked General Haig very much. In particular he was grateful to the Americans for their swift reaction to the murder of President Sadat. He was very pleased with the "Bright Star" manoeuvres which had just started, though he had not yet had any detailed report about them.

Strategically he thought it essential that there should be an American presence in the area of the Gulf and judged that Mascira could serve very well for this purpose. He was, however, doubtful about the present American military capability in the area. But this could be greatly improved once they began to establish stockpiles of war materials in Egypt and facilities for servicing weapons. He did not want American bases on Egyptian soil but would give them all facilities.

He welcomed the AWACS deal with Saudi Arabia as evidence of American determination to defend Western oil supplies. He could not understand why the Israelis had made such a fuss about the AWACS planes. As an air force officer he knew that they would remain under effective American control with American technicians on board and on ground installations. If the Saudis had not bought them the Americans would have stationed them there anyway. The only difference was that the Saudis had paid \$10 billion for what they could have had for free!