

Confidential

Note of a talk with Major General Kamal Hassan Ali at the
Foreign Ministry, Cairo on Sunday, 15th November, 1981 at 1.30 p.m.

Present:

The Deputy Prime Minister and
Foreign Minister, Major General
Kamal Hassan Ali

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

The Minister's Private Secretary

After recalling earlier conversations and expressing regret over the murder of President Sadat, Mr. Amery wondered whether it was not the Arab world that was isolated from Egypt rather than the other way round? The Minister agreed warmly and quoted with approval a leading article which had just appeared in Al Madina, a Saudi owned paper, published in Kuwait, which had ~~agreed~~ argued: "peace with Israel is inevitable". The Minister thought many of the Arab states were now drawing closer to the Egyptian position. The war of words in the press and on the radio had practically stopped. The peace process would continue to grow.

The Minister welcomed the proposal for a European contribution to the multi-national force in Sinai and thought the Fahad plan was encouraging in its implicit recognition of Israel. But the Europeans must be careful not to create difficulties which might upset Israel and slow down or even stop the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.

He was frankly worried about Israel which he described as suffering from "unlimited suspicion". He had noted press reports of the possible formation of a coalition Government in Israel and recalled that the Israelis only went in for coalitions when they faced some grave national difficulty. He thought the coalition government might mean one or 3 things.

1. A decision to evict Israeli settlements in Sinai by force. This might involve bloodshed.
2. A decision not to withdraw from Sinai by April 1982. He

thought this unlikely but as a soldier had to take account of the worst case.

3. A political preparation for an attack on South Lebanon with the object of ejecting the Syrians and breaking up the PLO military organisation.

The Minister repeated his view that he thought it unlikely that Israel would postpone their withdrawal. Israel had made a pact to withdraw from Sinai not only with Egypt but with the rest of the world. An attack on the PLO and Syrians in South Lebanon would be more understandable. It would be a preemptive bid, rather in the style of 1967, to knock out the increasing strength of the PLO and the Syrian presence in the Bekkaa Valley. It would be a limited war. The Israelis would not go as far as Damascus. But if they were successful, which he seemed to assume, this would probably lead to the fall of the Assad Government and the end of the Alawite supremacy in Syria.

If Israel adopted the third course, Egypt would not interfere. Indeed its non intervention would be Egypt's first test of its commitment to the Camp David agreement. Egypt would keep faith with Israel.

The Minister then turned to the autonomy talks. These had been very disappointing. The initiative in raising the talks to ministerial level had come from the Israeli side. In the event the Israelis had had nothing new to propose. Presumably they had failed to reach agreement in their own cabinet before the meeting.

There were important differences between Israel and Egypt about the concept of autonomy.

1. The first concerned the structure of the representative body. This was important because the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza were an educated people and such a people had to have representative government. Egypt wanted to see about 100 representatives who would elect a council of 13 to 17 members into the administration. *as an administrative body.*

2. The Egyptians wanted autonomy to be based on the whole area of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis wanted it based on the population as distinct from the land. Of the (?)100,000 hectares in question, about one third was state land, mostly mountainous and rocky and partly settled by Israelis already. The second third belonged to Palestinians who had emigrated or to the WAKF. The final third belonged to existing inhabitants. In the Israeli view autonomy only applied to them.

3. There was the problem of Jerusalem. Of its 400,000 inhabitants, 115,000 were Arabs. In the Egyptian view these should also be represented in the autonomous institutions. Israel disagreed.

Egypt could not compromise with Israel on these three points (i.e. the size of the representative body, its constituency, and Jerusalem).

Egypt's objective however, was to establish a framework within which further negotiations could take place after the final Israeli withdrawal ^{from Sinai} in April 1982. Thereafter Egypt's responsibility must diminish. It would be up to the Palestinians and Jordanians to discuss ^{with Israel, the issues} the details of internal security, foreign affairs and defence which were separate subjects to any rights secured under autonomy. This would involve simultaneous recognition between Israel and the Palestinians and so, presumably, the PLO.

The PLO, however, was severely fragmented. The larger part, as much as 80%, was moderate. The others owed allegiance to more extreme Arab states. The question was would the activist tail wag the dog? The moderate bulk of the PLO depended on Syria and thus on the Soviets, because their main body and armed forces were situated in the Lebanon which was under Syrian control. They could do nothing without Syrian and so Soviet approval.

The Foreign Minister regarded the PLO as an essential ingredient in any settlement. He believed that the problem

4.

The Israelis could not help withdrawing in the end. If they

should be solved within 2-3 years. ~~If Israel~~ tried to absorb Gaza and the West Bank there would be more ARabs than Jews in Israel. This prospect would oblige Israel to be as flexible as Egypt had been.

But there was one cause for concern. Prince Saud bin Faisal had made an offer to the Russians to approve Prince Fahad's plan and join in discussing it. The Soviets unexpectedly had said "yes". This could be interpreted in one of two ways. Perhaps the SAudis were nodding in Moscow's direction to obtain Libyan and Syrian support at the Arab Summit. Alternatively the Soviets were trying to get in on the act by the back door. The question was, who was pulling whose leg? If it were a purely tactical manoeuvre on the part of the Saudis there would be no harm. But the Minister did not want to see the Soviets brought back into the Middle East.

The conversation then turned to Chad. The Minister was not convinced that the Libyans had in fact withdrawn. He thought they would probably try and stay in the uranium rich northern province. They might, however, have withdrawn from the capital in order to secure the arms deal they were negotiating with the French. Ghadaffi had unbounded ambitions but his support for the Polisario was not an expression of Libyan expansionism but came purely from a desire to destroy King Hassan of Morocco.

Turning to the Horn of Africa the Minister said that although the Ethiopian regime was a Soviet puppet they were now fairly quiet in their relations with the Sudan. They had not tried to stir up the South Sudanese. Eritrea was also quiet. There was still a problem between Ethiopia and Somalia but President Ziad Barre had proved himself a great survivor.

Looking across the Red Sea the situation in North Yemen was deteriorating steadily and could be a danger to the Saudis unless they developed a more positive policy. The Americans understood this but had so many points of relative friction with

the Saudis that they hesitated to press them where the Yemen was concerned.

In conclusion the Minister expressed the view that the American military capability in the area would develop quite rapidly once they had established effective stockpiles and servicing arrangements in Egypt.

After an initial exchange of courtesies, the President insisted that he had just received Khalid Mohiaddin, the left wing leader. Mohiaddin 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 Mohiaddin 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 Mohiaddin 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 Mohiaddin complaining? What would he have done? Mohiaddin 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