



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15/14 July 1980

*Dear Michael,*President Nimeiri of the Sudan

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

We have our doubts about this assessment, since it is clearly in Ethiopia's interests to give exactly this impression if they are ever to detach the Sudanese from their support for the Eritreans. Nevertheless, the Sudanese have had recent high level contacts with the Ethiopians and are in a good position to judge their attitudes. The Prime Minister might ask President Nimeiri for his assessment,

Since President Nimeiri will be calling at teatime, the Prime Minister may wish to be reminded that President Nimeiri is likely to be observing Ramadhan at the time. Muslims are obliged during Ramadhan not to eat, drink or smoke between sunrise and sunset or to keep company with those who do. There is a possibility however that the President may be exempted from fasting on medical grounds (he has high blood pressure). If this is the case we will inform you.

(G G H Walden)

M O'D B Alexander Esq

Sudan.



10 DOWNING STREET

Note for the file.

P.M.'s talks with Pres.
NIMEIRI cancelled: Nimeiri
ill.

17. 7. 80.

CALL BY PRESIDENT NIMEIRI OF SUDAN

Points to Make

Bilateral Relations

1. Glad to be able to contribute £61 million towards Power III Project and £850,000 for refugee relief in the Sudan. Mr Marten grateful for warm reception in Khartoum at recent refugee Conference. Was Conference a success?

Arab/Israel

2. Nine intend to explore views of all concerned. Wish to build on achievement of Camp David, not to undermine it.

3. Will keep up pressure on Israel over settlements, but Arabs must help by counselling PLO to be flexible. Without indication of Palestinian readiness to coexist with Israel, further progress difficult.

Afghanistan

4. Recognise Islamic countries are in forefront of search for solution. Our role to lend discreet support. Welcome President's view on ways pressure on the Russians can be kept up.

Africa

5. How are relations with Ethiopia developing? Does the President believe Ethiopians will compromise over Eritrea? Will Sudan continue support for Eritreans till they do?

6. UK shares Sudanese concern to see stable government and internal security restored in Uganda through free and fair elections. We will consider carefully any request from Military Commission through Commonwealth Secretariat for observers. Concerned at apparent worsening of relations between Kenya/Sudan and Uganda/Tanzania. Is there any prospect of revival of coordinated approach to Uganda's problems?

7. Divisions of opinion within OAU over Western Sahara dispute worrying. Do Sudanese see any prospects for a negotiated settlement?

ESSENTIAL FACTSBilateral Relations

1. Our relations with the Sudan are in excellent shape, largely due to our decision to honour a commitment to help finance a major project (Power III) to increase the supply of electricity to the three towns of the capital and surrounding agricultural areas. Nimeiri has described our relations as a source of pride and affection. We remain the Sudan's main supplier and provide training for her armed forces both in the UK and through a British Army Training Team in Khartoum. She has become the largest recipient of UK aid outside the Commonwealth.

2. Mr Marten visited Khartoum in June to attend a Sudan Government refugee conference, to make a UK pledge of £850,000 for refugee relief in the Sudan and to sign the Power III agreement. The measure of Sudanese gratitude both for our offer of help with their refugees (more than 500,000 mostly Eritreans) and for the Minister's attendance at the Conference was shown by the reception given him. He was received by Nimeiri and four Ministers and no less than ten Cabinet Ministers attended a dinner given in his honour by our Ambassador.

Arab/Israel

3. The split in the Arab world over the Egypt-Israel peace treaty has left Sudan in a dangerously exposed position in the middle. Nimeiri wishes to maintain good relations simultaneously with Egypt, to whom he looks for military and political support and with whom his country has close historical ties; and with the oil-rich Gulf States, who could provide considerable aid to Sudan's ailing economy. He also needs to defuse the hostility of the radical Arabs who support those within Sudan who could undermine his regime. The difficulty of maintaining a balancing act between these rival forces explains Nimeiri's eclectic foreign policy. Although initial Sudanese support for Camp David has cooled considerably, the Sudan has refused to join in Arab measures aimed at isolating Egypt and bilateral contacts continue.
4. Sudanese reaction to the Venice Declaration has been reasonably welcoming. They have characterised it as a compromise but welcomed

/the

the prospect of the Europeans as a community making their influence felt in the area. They accept the importance we attach to trying to build on Camp David and to keeping discussions going during the hiatus created by the US elections.

Afghanistan and Africa

5. In recent years the Nimeiri regime has been consistently friendly towards the West and helpful to us over such issues as Rhodesia (when Nimeiri was OAU Chairman in 1978), and more recently in her response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Without taking the lead she has supported strong condemnation of Soviet action by the Islamic conference. Nimeiri has taken a consistently moderate and statesmanlike stance on many African issues. Since achieving a peaceful settlement of the Sudan's longstanding (North v South) Civil War in 1972 he has consistently advocated the peaceful settlement of other African disputes for example in Rhodesia, Chad, the Western Sahara, the Ogaden and Eritrea and Uganda.

6. A personal meeting with Mengistu at Freetown in July 1979 failed to improve relations with Ethiopia, but since then there have been a number of bilateral meetings culminating in a visit by Mengistu to Khartoum in May 1980. These exchanges appear to have gone well and a number of border problems have been settled, but there has been little substantive discussion of the one major issue between the two sides; Eritrea. Nimeiri is thought to have offered his good offices as a mediator to Mengistu during their recent meeting and recommended to him a solution over Eritrea similar to that achieved in the Sudan, where the Southern region has a large measure of autonomy. But we fear that Mengistu may be acting on Russian instructions in an attempt to undermine Sudanese assistance to Eritrean liberation groups, and that he has no intention of granting any measure of self rule to Eritrea.

7. Sudan is following events in Uganda with close interest. The Sudanese want stability restored and elections leading to a civilian leadership free of military or external domination. After the

/6 June

6 June summit in Tanzania between Nyerere, Numeiri and Muwanga of the Military Commission, Numeiri briefed President Moi of Kenya (who had belatedly declined to attend). Both Kenya and Sudan have called for the withdrawal of the (approximately 13,000) Tanzanian troops in Uganda so that elections can be held free of pressure. Both fear that Nyerere intends to install Obote as President by foul means if necessary, but Obote is perhaps doing less well in electioneering than expected. The risk of civil disorder remains whether or not Obote wins or elections are free and fair.

8. The recent OAU summit in Freetown was unable to decide on the admission to the Organisation on the Polisario Front's Sahara Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as the rightful government of the Western Sahara which is currently occupied by Moroccan troops and claimed by King Hassan as part of Morocco. The summit referred the dispute back to the Committee of Five Heads of State under President Stevens chairmanship with instructions to report back in three months time on the prospects for a compromise solution. The Committee of Five (Nigeria, Tanzania, Mali, Ivory Coast and Guinea was first set up to consider the problem under President Nimeiri's chairmanship (as the then OAU chairman) at the 1978 OAU Summit. Its report, discussed at a special OAU Conference at Monrovia in December 1979, recommended a referendum for the territory. This was unacceptable to the Moroccans who claim that the wishes of the people were ascertained in 1976 through a non-elective consultative body set up by the Spanish during the colonial period. The chances of the Committee achieving a compromise solution by October, therefore, appear remote.

9. We recognise neither Moroccan nor Polisario claims to the territory and are neutral on the dispute. But we would welcome a negotiated settlement because the fighting threatens stability in the area, provides an opportunity for Libyan troublemaking and complicates western relations with Morocco and Algeria (the Polisario Front's main diplomatic supporters).

GAAFAR MOHAMMED NIMEIRI

President of the Republic.

Born 1930 at Wad Nubawi, Omdurman, of an Ansar family. He attended school in Wad Medani and Hantoub. He graduated from the Sudan Military College in 1952 with the rank of Second Lieutenant, and was posted to Darfur. In 1963 he was sent to West Germany for a training course and by 1964, as Commander of First Battalion, Khartoum Garrison, he was one of several officers arrested for a short time by General Abboud's regime, which was ousted shortly afterwards.

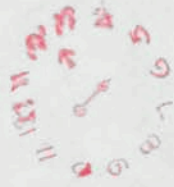
His obvious qualities of leadership marked him out for further Staff College training and he was sent to Fort Leavenworth, USA, in August 1965. On his return to the Sudan he was appointed Acting Commander of Eastern Command in November 1966. The next month he was arrested for involvement in an abortive coup. He was reinstated in January 1967, though his automatic promotion was blocked and he remained until the Revolution of May 1969 a Colonel.

In his ten years in power he has made a number of U-turns taking the Sudan from extreme Arab nationalism and friendship with the Communist countries to a policy of attracting petrodollars and Western technology for his development plans. He replaced his military Command Council in 1971 with a quasi-civilian presidential system and a one party organisation, the Sudanese Socialist Union, through which he has tried not very successfully to encourage popular participation in government. He was elected President in 1971 and re-elected for a further six years term in 1977. He has survived several attempts to unseat him, the most serious being in July 1971 (by the Communists) and in July 1976 (by the National Front led by Sadiq el Mahdi and Sherif Hussein el Hindi). His greatest political achievement was the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 bringing to an end the 17 year old rebellion in the South. He regards himself as an African as well as an Arab statesman and has of late been leading the field in denouncing Soviet penetration in Africa. In Arab affairs he has been on close personal terms with President Sadat of Egypt although these have been strained by recent Sudanese coolness on Camp David. At home he has tried to mend his fences with his former enemies, notably the Ansar and Sadiq el Mahdi. In government he has tried to stamp out corruption and bring greater efficiency; but the results have been disappointing.

Nimeiri is very much a soldier: disciplined, courageous, of average intelligence, strong physically and with a streak of ruthlessness. He is very hardworking despite periodic anxiety over his health (he suffers from high blood pressure). He has not been very successful in his attempt to delegate authority. He enjoys power and is determined to keep it.

Essentially a patriot, he believes that he knows what is good for the Sudan and is best qualified to provide it. Unsophisticated and inexperienced in politics when he came to power, he has since developed considerable political skill. He has built up his public image by touring the country, making numerous speeches and mixing with the people. He probably lacks deep convictions, though he has increasingly strong religious ones. He has been disillusioned by his experience of communism and appears to have decided that a moderately pro-Western policy is the Sudan's best bet. He inspires respect rather than affection. However, he has developed a certain 'charisma' by dint of being in office so long and he stands head and shoulders above those around him.

POST OFFICE



AC/SED

17th July 1980

Prime Minister .

D. Wolfson Esq.
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

Dear Mr. Wolfson

On 17th June 1979 we received a letter of intent from the Sudanese Government signed by H.E. Dr. B.E.M. Idris, Minister for the Presidency, for a study for the Upper Atbara project worth over £5 million. This study covers the irrigation of the Upper Atbara region and would involve a sugar complex, roads, dams, bridges etc. - a contract worth £2 billion.

We have organised the study finance from Arab sources and everything has been in order to proceed for 18 months. When I asked the Arab financier why no decision had been reached, he remarked that the difficulty was that Sudanese ministers are usually at variance with one another which precludes decisions being taken. A word from Mrs. Thatcher or a minister to President Numeiri would be very helpful now.

No other British firms were involved in the study but we may well involve such when we get the main contract.

Yours sincerely

Ambrose Congreve

Ambrose Congreve