

CONFIDENTIAL



File Sudan MS
Copy to
Master Set

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 July 1980

Dear Paul,

Call by President Nimeiri

President Nimeiri of Sudan called on the Prime Minister on Friday 25 July. He was accompanied by the Sudanese Ambassador. Mr. John Moberley was also present.

After an exchange of courtesies, President Nimeiri expressed gratification about the close relations between Sudan and the United Kingdom. He said that he was especially pleased about the excellent co-operation inside Sudan. His people would remember for a long time the assistance given to them by HMG, particularly over the Power III project. The Sudanese Government were the more grateful in that they were well aware of the cuts taking place in Britain's aid programme as a whole. The Sudanese Government intended to go on giving priority to the development of the country. They were not interested in building up a large army or in threatening their neighbours. They wished to improve the standard of living and political liberties of the people. Given its long history of involvement in the Sudan, Britain was best placed to assist in this programme. The Prime Minister said that she was delighted at what President Nimeiri had said. She wished that more countries would set themselves similar priorities.

The Prime Minister asked President Nimeiri for his assessment of the situation in Ethiopia. President Nimeiri said that Ethiopia could be a good friend of Sudan. The present government in Addis Ababa were, of course, Marxists. But they might well become nationalists rather than Marxists and detach themselves from Moscow. General Mengistu recently visited Khartoum. President Nimeiri had succeeded in persuading him that the position of the Sudan was different from that of Somalia. Sudan did not wish to interfere in Ethiopia. They wanted the regime in Addis Ababa to be secure and they wanted to see the Eritrean problem resolved peacefully. It was essential that Ethiopia and the Sudan should learn to live together. They had a common border of considerable length. Six or eight tribes lived across it.

The Prime Minister asked whether General Mengistu was trying to detach himself from Moscow. President Nimeiri said that that was his impression. General Mengistu had invited him to come to Addis Ababa in November. This was evidence of the rapid improvement

/in

CONFIDENTIAL

In relations between the two countries: indeed General Mengistu had originally intended to invite him in September but this had proved impossible because of a clash of dates with a visit by the President of Hungary. President Nimeiri had not yet replied to the Ethiopian invitation but intended to accept as soon as he had returned to Khartoum. President Nimeiri said that he had advised General Mengistu that he should get round a table with the Eritreans and listen to their views. General Mengistu had said that he wanted the Eritreans to help build the new Ethiopia. Once the process of construction had been completed, the Eritreans would be offered the choice of autonomy or independence. But at present Ethiopia was too poor to let the Eritreans go.

As regards the quarrel with Somalia, President Nimeiri said that he thought both the Ethiopians and the Somalis wanted Sudanese help in finding a solution. He was disposed to try to be of assistance. The difficulty was that, as a result, the Ethiopians suspected Sudan of backing the Somalis while the Somalis suspected the Sudan of abandoning them. He was advising the Somalis that there was no chance of their securing the transfer of the Ogaden. All that would be negotiable would be minor adjustments in the border. President Nimeiri said that he thought Ethiopia would sooner or later listen to his advice on both problems. The country was in a very bad way. It was bankrupt and running out of food. Ethiopian refugees who had been given land in the Sudan were now sending food back into Ethiopia.

Turning to Uganda, President Nimeiri said that the problem there was being created by Tanzania. The Tanzanians had done well in getting rid of Amin but now they seemed tempted to try to impose Mr. Obote on the country. This would not be helpful. It had been agreed in Mombasa that there should be democratic elections in Uganda. But after the meeting in Mombasa, President Nyerere had changed his mind and had adopted the line that no elections could take place in Uganda until the Tanzanian army had been withdrawn and that the army could not be withdrawn until the Ugandans requested this. He was now engaged in placing supporters of Mr. Obote in positions of power. They would not of course request withdrawal. President Nyerere was now criticising both the Sudan and Kenya for their policies towards Uganda. The Sudan, like Kenya had a lot of Amin's men on their territory. So far they had forbidden them to return to Uganda and had tried to deprive them of their arms. But there was a temptation in present circumstances to allow them to return.

President Nimeiri said that if either Mr. Binaisa or Mr. Lule were to run in a campaign against Mr. Obote they would win. They would secure the support of the Baganda tribe. The other tribes were split. President Nyerere was well aware of this. President Nimeiri said that he intended to speak to President Nyerere soon after his return. Given Uganda's strategic position, it was essential to avoid civil war there. If a fire started in Uganda it could well spread to the neighbouring countries.

In a brief discussion of the position of Mr. Binaisa, President Nimeiri said that he had talked to the Chairman of the Uganda Military Committee in Arusha. The Ugandan had said that the Military Committee had charges against Mr. Binaisa. He had taken money from Ugandan banks. President Nimeiri had said that he was

/prepared

prepared to give Mr. Binaisa refuge and that he would ensure that Mr. Binaisa did not work against Uganda. The matter rested there for the moment.

Referring to the situation in Chad, President Nimeiri said that neither side could win the civil war there. The role of the Libyans had been thoroughly irresponsible. They had been supplying large numbers of automatic weapons to their supporters. Given the presence of a number of tribes straddling the border, there was a constant danger that the war might spread into Sudan. Unfortunately the Libyans had an interest in perpetuating the conflict.

After a brief exchange about the OAU Summit, the Prime Minister asked President Nimeiri how he saw the situation in the Middle East. She said that clearly no major advance was going to be made before the US elections. The Camp David negotiations seemed to have run into the sand. President Nimeiri said that he had talked to President Carter about the Middle East during his recent visit to Washington. President Carter was anxious that the Camp David process should continue. He had said that Israel would have to be more flexible but that this was not the right time to talk about Jerusalem. The Prime Minister commented that President Sadat had been very courageous and that one might have expected Mr. Begin to try to be of more help to him. President Nimeiri said the one oasis of hope in the world at present seemed to be Europe. The European Governments could play a useful role in the Middle East, and elsewhere, between Moscow and Washington. The Prime Minister said that she thought the OAU could also play a useful role in some areas. President Nimeiri acknowledged this but said that the OAU was subject to many outside influences. Some of its members were completely under Soviet influence. The Prime Minister said that she had the impression that more and more states wanted to shake off Soviet influence. The price of Soviet assistance was Soviet control and the disadvantages of this were becoming more widely recognised. Moreover the Soviet Union only gave arms whereas Western governments gave practical assistance. President Nimeiri, agreeing, asked about Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister said that we were watching developments there anxiously. There were bound to be problems but we hoped that the situation would work out satisfactorily.

John Lever

Nicholas Alexander

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.