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BS 1051 (184)

Conversation between Sir R. Stevens and the  
U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mr Donald Heath,  
at the Foreign Office on November 8.

Mr Heath said that he was on his way from the United States to Jeddah and had therefore nothing new to say. He had had a brief talk with Mr de Ribbing in New York and found him to be fairly fair-minded and well-informed. Sir R. Stevens then explained in general terms our attitude to the de Ribbing mission and the need to move carefully over the question of the return of refugees. He said that matters had subsequently been complicated by the raising of the Oman issue at the United Nations General Assembly. The Saudis had informed Mr de Ribbing that they were anxious both for good relations with H.M.G. and indeed for a continued British presence in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula but we were somewhat bemused by the different obstacles which they put in the way of a resumption of relations. First there was Buraimi then there was Khor al Odaid and then again Buraimi refugees and now it looked as though Oman were going to be made a pre-condition of some sort. Mr Heath said that Prince Faisal and King Saud were in favour of some kind of settlement with the United Kingdom though Prince Faisal had certain Arab nationalist hankerings.

Sir R. Stevens then mentioned the role of the Saudi delegate to the United Nations and the leading part which he appeared to have played in the Oman issue. He wondered why the Saudi Arabian Government continued to support so embarrassing a delegate. Mr Heath said that he thought the Saudi Arabian Government kept Shukairy as "window dressing" to show that they were as good nationalists as any other Arab government. He might well have some hold over them and while he might salve their reputation as nationalists, he certainly must cause them some misgiving. Mr Heath illustrated this by saying that in a recent speech Shukairy had not once mentioned the Saudi Arabian rulers but had praised Nasser and supported Lumumba in the Congo and he (Mr Heath) had this brought to the attention of the Saudi Arabian authorities. Shukairy is also believed to cost the Saudi Arabian government a great deal. Nor was he the only one in the Saudi delegation to take this virulent Arab nationalist line. His assistant, Mr Baroodi another Palestinian, did likewise. Mr Heath said he would enquire of the State Department whether, on return to Saudi Arabia he might not tell Prince Faisal that he had found the British Government perplexed by the Saudi Arabian attitude over ~~Oman~~ at a time when efforts were being made through Mr de Ribbing to bring the two governments into better relations and that the U.S. Government considered that there was some ground for British perplexity. Sir R. Stevens told Mr Heath that we for our part might be protesting to the Saudis through the Pakistan Government on this subject.

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(~~Public Document~~)  
November 8, 1960

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*L.A. K. Jones*  
*25/11/60*

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UNITED KINGDOM HIGH COMMISSION,  
KARACHI.

EXT. 46/6/4.

25th November, 1960.

*BS 1051/180*

As I said in my letter of 18th November (EXT. 46/6/4) we were unable to get any immediate first hand information about President Ayub's political discussions in Saudi Arabia and the U.A.R., because of the President's departure for Rawalpindi and Ikramullah's illness. We hope to have something soon however.

2. In the meantime you may like to know however that the American Ambassador, Mr. Rountree, was able to have a talk with the President on 13th November and my colleagues in the American Embassy have let me have a quick sight of a copy of a long saving telegram in which Mr. Rountree has now reported this interview to the State Department.

3. I was not given a copy and I had no opportunity to take notes. However I hope that the enclosed memorandum is a reasonably accurate summary, though far from verbatim, of the salient points which Mr. Rountree has reported.

4. His saving telegram was repeated to the American Embassy in London so the Foreign Office may already have been given some or all of this information. In case they have not, the memorandum - for the shortcomings of which I apologise - may be of interest to them.

5. President Ayub evidently did not mention Anglo-U.A.R. or Anglo-Saudi relations to Mr. Rountree - or if he did the latter reported that part separately.

6. I enclose two spare copies of this letter and its enclosure and I am sending copies to the Chanceries at Cairo, Ankara, Tehran, Amman, Tel Aviv, Washington and P.O.M.E.F.

(A.A. GOLDS).

A.W. Redpath, Esq., C.B.E.  
Commonwealth Relations Office,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

oa.

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PRESIDENT AYUB'S MIDDLE EAST TOUR.

The following are to the best of my recollection the salient points in the saving telegram in which the American Ambassador in Karachi reported to Washington his conversation of 13th November with President Ayub.

2. Mr. Rountree had evidently, on instructions from the State Department, lobbied President Ayub on at least two matters before the latter's departure for the U.A.R. - see paras. 11 and 12 below.

3. SAUDI ARABIA.

President Ayub had been impressed by the reception given him wherever he went and by the efficiency of the arrangements. He got the impression that King Saud himself was very definitely in full control of the country. (Prince Faisal was present at some of their talks but stayed in the background.) This impression was confirmed to him by other Saudis whom he met. President Ayub did not notice any tension or difference between the two. He was impressed by the rate of development in the country and the great emphasis that was being given to it and the general interest taken in it by the Government. He saw no sign of discontent among the people. President Ayub had been encouraged by the good opinion which Saudis appeared to have of the efforts of the Pakistan Financial Adviser who is assisting the Saudi Government.

U.A.R.

4. President Ayub was very satisfied with the kind of relationship that he has now built up with Nasser: he was confident that they can now speak quite frankly to each other without offence either way. The President claimed to have done some straight talking.

U.S./U.A.R.

5. Nasser had denied that there was any particular problem with, or that he had any special grudge against, the United States; relations would however be better were it not for the fact that it was only as a result of U.S. and general Western support that Israel existed. He was afraid that relations between Arabs and the West would always be cool and distant as long as this situation continued.

U.S.S.R.

6. Egypt had not wanted Russian intervention in the middle-east. He had only taken Russian arms because the West was withholding them. He would not tolerate Russian intervention in Egypt and Nasser referred to some "tough talking" that he had had with Khrushchev on the subject of the latter's attempts to support local Communists. Nasser also spoke to President Ayub about the threat from "imperialism" and President Ayub pointed out that the old western imperialism was rapidly receding and rubbed in the threat from Communist imperialism. President Ayub told Mr. Rountree that he remained unhappy at the lack of recognition of this threat among other Egyptian leaders e.g. the Vice President who had been very naive on the subject.

/Iraq. 7

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IRAQ.

7. When questioned on Iraq Nasser said that though he did not like Qasim he saw that the only alternative to him at the moment was "Communism" and he preferred Qasim to that.

CENTO.

8. Nasser did not think that CENTO served any useful purpose and he did not approve of it; however he had no quarrel with people who did.

PALESTINE REFUGEES.

9. President Ayub said that he had told Nasser frankly that he ought not to make a political issue out of the Palestine refugee problem and urged him that, on practical and humanitarian grounds, he should not oppose the permanent settlement of refugees in neighbouring countries. When Nasser argued about the size of the problem, President Ayub contrasted it with the infinitely larger problem which had been faced in India and Pakistan. However, he did not get the impression that he made much headway with Nasser.

JORDAN AND IRAN.

10. President Ayub asked Nasser why he did not try to be on better terms with some of the other Muslim countries. He had divided the Muslim (and Arab) world himself, e.g. by his attitude towards King Hussein and the Shah of Iran. Nasser claimed that he had not himself taken any initiative against King Hussein; it was the latter who had started the propaganda campaign and was still continuing it. President Ayub argued the necessity for stability and peace. On Iran Nasser had said that the Shah had always been against him but he admitted frankly that the main reason for the degree of his present antipathy against Iran was the encouragement which the Israelis had received from the Iranians to build a pipeline from Aqaba. Nasser had added that "the hand of God" had already removed most of his enemies since the time of Suez instancing inter alia M. Menderes, Sir Anthony Eden, President Chamoun and Nuri-es-Said; only three of his bitterest enemies remained - Ben Gurion, the Shah of Iran and King Hussein of Jordan - "for the hand of God to deal with". Nasser confirmed however that he had no interest in disturbed conditions and was only interested in the economic progress and development of his country including, of course, the Syrian region.

EAST-WEST RELATIONS.

11. President Ayub said that he had, as Mr. Rountree had requested, advised Nasser against any initiative over East-West relations that would embarrass the State Department at election time and play into Khrushchev's hands; he had found Nasser responsive.

CONGO.

12. He had also (again as prompted by the Americans) pointed out to Nasser that the abolition of the office of Secretary-General as proposed by Khrushchev would be against the interests of smaller nations. Nasser had assented to this but President Ayub had found him much preoccupied with "imperialism" and he would not agree that President Kasavubu's position in the Congo should be supported, and argued in favour of Lumumba - whom President Ayub described as "insane". President Ayub had also pointed out the dangers of Communist domination of the Congo through Lumumba. However, he had persuaded Nasser to agree that it was urgently necessary to establish a central authority to represent the Congo with which the

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/United Nations

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United Nations could work.

IRAN.

13. On his return through Teheran President Ayub had told the Shah of that part of his conversation with Nasser which affected Iran. In the process he had suggested to the Shah that he ought to have made more play of the fact that the Iranians had not granted de jure recognition to Israel instead of emphasising the fact that de facto relations already existed. It had been embarrassing for Iran's friends. The Shah had replied with derogatory remarks about Nasser and Arabs in general. President Ayub found him self-confident and assured and evidently considerably encouraged by the birth of his son.

MR. IKRAMULLAH'S ILLNESS.

14. President Ayub told Mr. Rountree that had it not been for the opportune presence of Doctors at the time when Mr. Ikramullah suffered his attack, he understood that it might well have been fatal. However, he seemed to be in fairly good shape when President Ayub left though at the moment the Doctors were strongly urging Mr. Ikramullah's immediate retirement.

15. Mr. Rountree's saving telegram ended to the effect that as the conversation had already gone on for a long time he did not feel he could press the President for more information on this occasion but would hope to report further in due course.

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CONFIDENTIAL

1. M. Bennett  
2. P/W

BY AIR BAG  
1056/31/60

British Embassy,  
Washington, D.C.  
December 8, 1960.

BSIGS. 192(A)

*Don Kitch,*

A report from the American Embassy in Jedda, which reached the State Department yesterday, provides an interesting postscript to Rountree's account of President Ayub's visit to Saudi Arabia (Golds' letter No. EXT 46/6/4 of November 25 from Karachi).

2. According to the American Embassy the visit aroused only moderate popular interest, although King Saud laid on elaborate arrangements for the President's reception, including a full-scale show of military and air force strength. On the other hand they report that the President's outspoken remarks about the need to revitalise Islam and to bring Moslem thinking more in line with the requirements of the twentieth century were distinctly unwelcome to the Wahhabi divines.
3. The Embassy had it on reliable authority that the transforming of what was originally intended as a private pilgrimage into a State Visit was entirely the King's initiative, which he carried through over the opposition of Prince Faisal. (The State Department suspect that the King's object, which apparently did not succeed, was to obtain an invitation to pay a return visit to Pakistan). Faisal was said to feel that it was premature to expose the shortcomings of present-day Saudi Arabia to the head of a comparatively advanced Moslem country like Pakistan. This would explain why Faisal took a back seat during the visit and how President Ayub got the impression that King Saud was "in full control". It is an impression that the State Department definitely do not share. They believe that the conflict still smoulders below the surface and that Faisal still has the edge over the King, but not to such an extent that he feels he can safely leave the country.
4. Among other insights that the President would have had into the Saudi Arabian body politic, the Embassy instanced an occasion where two of the Princes who travelled with the President on an air journey within the country were drunk and incapable when the aircraft arrived at its destination.
5. The Embassy had nothing of interest to report about the substance of the President's conversations.
6. I am sending copies of this letter to John Ford in Bahrain and Tony Golds in Karachi.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*M. S. Weir*  
(M. S. Weir)

K.H. Jones, Esq.,  
Arabian Department,  
Foreign Office, S.W.1.

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