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THE FRENCH AND THE U.A.R.

E 1072/1

While on leave in Paris I saw M. Vincot, the Sous Directeur du Levant at the Quai d'Orsay on December 29. After speaking about I.P.C. problems, see separate minute, M. Vincot went on to talk about the Middle East in general. He showed satisfaction at the Syrian revolution and suggested that it might mark a turning point in Middle Eastern affairs and that there was a possibility that in other countries we might find Conservative régimes well disposed towards the West coming into power. In particular he thought that this might well happen in Egypt where there was a great deal of opposition to Nasser even in the army since the socialist decrees of last July. M. Vincot wondered whether in the circumstances the Western policy of non-involvement and of placating Nasser was not becoming out of date. In particular it seemed unnecessary for the Americans to go on giving as much aid as they were. M. Vincot claimed that in arriving at this view the Quai d'Orsay were not influenced by their current difficulties with Nasser, which he seemed anxious to play down. I suggested that they might nevertheless be being too gloomy about Nasser's prospects and too sanguine about the prospects of Conservative governments in the Middle East.

2. M. Vincot showed me a telegram from the French Ambassador in Bonn, reporting the reaction of Nasser's Diplomatic Counsellor to a démarche made on Dr. Adenauer's instructions in favour of the French diplomats. Mahmud Riad had said that the measures taken against the French were aimed essentially at the Right Wing elements in Egypt and that the U.A.R. had no wish for an all-out row with the French Government. In fact they desired good relations with them and the only Western country which they remained fundamentally suspicious were the British.

3. M. Vincot concluded by saying that he would very much like to come to London sometime and spoke of resuming the periodic exchanges of views which used to take place in London and Paris. I subsequently discussed this with Mr. Hadow who tells me that these have always been confined to Africa and never to his knowledge covered the Middle East. The next talks on Africa are I understand to take place when M. Sauvagnargues the Directeur d'Afrique - Levant comes to London on January 22-23. Mr. Hadow said that an offer to extend the talks to cover the Middle East would obviously be welcome from the point of view of H.M. Embassy at Paris. He could not guarantee the French would not come forward with awkward questions or suggestions but on the whole he did not think this likely. As regards Nasser, his impression, like mine, is that the French are not considering a forward anti-Nasser policy but are content to watch the situation with a certain amount of satisfaction.

4. Subject to your views I think there might be advantage in following up M. Vincot's remarks and offering to extend M. Sauvagnargues talks to cover the Middle East, if the French so wish, if only as part of the general process of trying to work more closely with the French. It is in any case possible that they may <sup>not</sup> want to follow up an offer of this kind since I understand that the duration of the talks on

/Africa

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2.

Africa has been cut down at the request of the French. Any talks about the Middle East should I suggest be of an informal nature since we have few concrete problems to discuss with the French and it would seem a waste of time to prepare lengthy papers particularly as we and the French have just taken part in an exhaustive NATO review of the Middle East.

*You may however consider that there is a risk that knowledge of such talks may leak and have to feed Nasser's suspicions of an imperialist plot and that it would be better to let sleeping dogs lie. Perhaps we might speak*

*G.F. Hiller*  
(G.F. Hiller)

January 3, 1962

Mr. Beith

Copies to:

Mr. Crawford

Mr. Walmsley

The history behind this suggestion is as follows (pace Mr. Hadow). Lord Harvey, when Ambassador in Paris, attached importance to keeping up a biannual exchange of views about the Middle East, largely I think in the general interest of Anglo-French relations. I believe that these exchanges were kept up fairly regularly, most of the interest in their continuance being on the French side.

*(in London)*

2. When I was Head of Chancery in Paris I attended what I think must have been the last of these occasions in February 1955. I recall that Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh and M. Henri Roux of the Quai d'Orsay were the protagonists and we met in the Ambassadors' Waiting Room.

*(of this formal kind)*

3. After that the only vestigial remains of a meeting was a business meeting at lunch in Paris which Sir E. Shuckburgh arranged during one of his visits and which I attended. After this last dying spark, Anglo-French exchanges on the Middle East ceased, though of course there was a lot of specialised business in connexion with Suez.

4. As someone who spent two or three years of his life arguing with the Quai d'Orsay about the merits of the Baghdad Pact, I view the prospect of a renewed, regular Anglo-French exchange about the Middle East without much enthusiasm. It is almost impossible to achieve a meeting of minds with

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the French about Middle Eastern questions and, frankly, the French image in the Arab world has been so unfortunate that the less we are associated with it, the better. The French think they know just as much about the area as we do and I can recall no occasion on which we were able to exercise a useful influence on them. This does not mean that they are not sometimes right about Middle Eastern issues. In many ways they were more right about the Baghdad Pact, as it used to exist, than we were.

5. However, having said all this, I would in no way dissuade Eastern Department from renewing these exchanges as a sort of appendix to the African talks on the limited basis indicated by Mr. Hiller at the end of his minute. I think it is always a mistake to refuse to talk to our opposite numbers about matters of mutual interest, if they are keen to do so. I fear however that the exchanges will not be very productive.

6. It is perhaps worth mentioning that a regular exchange of this kind takes place, or used to, on a wider basis in NATO twice a year. Our representative to that meeting has of course every opportunity to exchange ideas with the French and might perhaps arrange to stay on for a day or two in Paris for this purpose.

*J. G. S. Beith*  
(J. G. S. Beith)  
January 5, 1962.

Copies  
Mr. Crawford  
Mr. Walmsley

*I suggest that in the circumstances we should not pursue the idea unless the French revert to it. There seems little point in inviting M. Vincent particularly as M. Sauvagnanque can if he wishes discuss the Middle East informally with Sir R. Glaser*

*G. F. Hiller*  
8/

*I agree - and we might say to the 6 monthly meeting in Paris with the French. I think that is meet the case*  
*J. G. S. Beith*  
*I am*

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I am glad to have seen these minutes but wd. not propose to initiate discussion on the subject. Mr. M. Vincent is so concerned let him (et Mr. Sauvergnon) (who like me deals with the IRE) to raise it a fortnight hence. I think we have more to lose than gain by talking to the French about their problems generally.

clp  
9/12

PK 19,  
Mr. A. H. H. 10/1  
Mr. H. H. H. 10/1  
Mr. F. H. H. 10/1  
Mr. C. H. H. 02

I have held these minutes as it has been uncertain who might next be exposed to the French suggestion eg. during the NATO talks. It now looks like being myself. Unless things change I propose to give the French no chance of initiating an Anglo-French exchange during the NATO meeting (now to be March 14-16).

W. Cope  
24/1

9PM  
25/1

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MR. HILLIER

*Minutes*

*81072/3*

ANGLO-AMERICAN POLICY IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST

As you know only too well, beliefs in the Middle East are almost as important as facts, and it seems to me when I try to survey the Arab scene from Beirut that there are two beliefs current, both of which do harm:-

- (a) that the Americans are "backing" Nasser, and
- (b) that we are "backing" King Hussain.

It will not, I think be denied by anyone that these beliefs are current. I think they do harm from three points of view

- (i) because they carry an implication of Anglo-American disunity
- (ii) because they complicate the relations of both H.M.G. and the U.S. Government with other Arab Governments, and
- (iii) because they have a depressing effect on public opinion in the Arab World generally.

My direct concern is of course for British relations with the Lebanon. Criticism of U.S. policy is seldom, if ever, expressed to me by Lebanese officials, but it is often expressed to me by others, just as British policy is no doubt often criticized in front of / Americans.

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

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~~Minutes~~

Americans.

When this happens, I look disapproving and take the line that never in my experience has there been a greater degree of discussion and harmony than now. About British policy I naturally go into details. As I reported at the time, I took the line after the abortive coup

(a) that our support for Jordan was basically due to our fear that a collapse or violent changes there might lead to another war, and that far from our aiming at an exclusive position in Jordan we were doing all we could to interest our friends in her welfare; and

(b) that we were most anxious to improve our relations with Nasser, as with all Arab countries, and that indeed, given the importance of Egypt, we did not believe it possible for us or anyone else to have a sensible Arab policy which ignored or was even hostile to her.

On President Chehab and M. Takla I think this made some impression, and I do not recall that anything has happened recently to strengthen the belief in our special feeling for Jordan. But the latest reports of U.S. plans for giving massive further aid to Egypt have strengthened the other belief. Christian circles here are much upset by it, and I

/ should

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*This is also line  
of the conservatives  
in Syria*

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*Minutes*

should guess that this was true of most of the Arabs who are afraid of Nasser.

What can H.M.G. and the U.S. Government do about all this? Obviously we cannot stop giving aid to Jordan or Egypt which we consider justified and expedient. But we should both always bear in mind that there are a great many Arabs who like neither King Hussain nor Nasser, and we should, I think, make a conscious effort to shew that we have nothing against them. Some Arab countries, e.g. Iraq, are difficult to help, and others, e.g. the Lebanon, do not really need much help. All the same, opportunities offer themselves from time to time, and I think we might even seek them out. From this point of view, I greatly regret the decision not to proceed with the School project here: and welcome the modest beginnings of technical assistance to the Lebanon. I should like to see help of an unprovocative kind given to Syria.

P. M. C.

( Sir M. Cresswell )

H. Cresswell  
H. Fugate 19/6  
H. S. 18/6  
H. S. 21/6

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PRODUCT

**E**

EASTERN DEPARTMENT

GENERAL

**E** 103145/1

FROM *Henniker-Rap*  
*Adman.*

SUBJECT:

*Leban Agreement:*

**CONFIDENTIAL**

No. 825

Dated August 4.

Received August 6.

Concern at reports that the U.S. Ambassador in Damascus had offered to mediate to restore union between Syria and the U.A.R. Details.

References

VG 1122/168.

EJ103105/7

MINUTES

In view of the lies which the Beirut press have carried about Jordan since the Lebanese coup d'etat (failed) on Dec 30/31, the P.M. is being slightly disingenuous if he now decides to tell us that he believes what the Beirutis are saying. The tale about the Americans is now old and he should have heard it already.

However I do not doubt that the P.M. is right about general Arab belief of the story.

(Printing Instructions)

- 163970

(Outward Action)

(Action completed)

(Main Indexed)

*8/14/68*

*21 163*

*NEAD 21/75*

*Adman*

*9/8*

*4/9/8.*