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Brief No. 4

NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING

Paris, December 16-18, 1963

Situation in the Middle East

12 Dec 1963
E1072/38

Speaking Notes

The latest coup in Iraq was carried out by the armed forces taking advantage of the internal dissensions of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party. In the new Government military men occupy the leading positions; they are nationalist and conservative-minded; one or two have pro-Nasser inclinations though there is no evidence of U.A.R. involvement in the coup. It is clear that the Ba'ath Party has suffered a severe setback. Broadly the Government looks like being mainly Iraqi nationalist in complexion but there remain rivalries within it. Its future policy towards the other Arab countries is not clear.

2. The Ba'athist Government in Syria has taken the new situation fairly calmly and is trying to patch up relations with Baghdad. But there are internal rivalries within the Ba'ath Party, and any weakening in its cohesion will be exploited by President Nasser for whom Syria remains the most sensitive part of the Arab world, because of the breakdown there in September 1961 of his first effort at Arab unity.

3. Before November the apparent strength of the Ba'ath and the projected Syria-Iraqi union left Nasser in an isolated position. The latest events in Iraq must be regarded as to some extent favourable for him at the expense of the Ba'ath, his main rivals as spokesmen for Arab unity. However, the emotional pressure of Arab unity remains strong. The nationalistic and imperialist attitudes created by differing national interests and fear of Nasserite imperialism will probably continue to bar early progress to union.

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4. The Egyptian situation is complicated by the strain on their balance of payments resulting from their continued commitment in the Yemen and the new intervention in Algeria. The Egyptians can, however, reduce the strain by slowing down their rate of investment and there is no crisis atmosphere.
5. In the Yemen itself there is military and political stalemate, which seems likely to continue. We do not think that either the Royalists or the Egyptians can secure a military solution, and efforts are being made to see whether a political solution is possible. The U.N. Secretary-General's representative is in the Yemen investigating the position but the signs are not hopeful. The Egyptians and Saudis agreed to extend the disengagement agreement until January 4 next, but there is no sign of a substantial Egyptian withdrawal, and it seems unlikely that the Saudi Government will agree to a further extension.
6. Soviet propaganda has interpreted recent developments in Iraq as marking the fall of the Ba'athists and presumably the Soviet Union will now attempt to recover some of the considerable ground lost in Iraq under the Ba'athist regime. It is unlikely that the new Iraq Government will be markedly more pro-Soviet than its predecessor. The Kurdish fighting and the Yemen situation offer opportunities for Soviet exploitation and the recent establishment of diplomatic relations with Jordan and Kuwait will give them new chances of making trouble. Above all the Soviet Union retains the advantage of freedom of action with regard to the Arab-Israel conflict.

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Record of an exchange of views on the Middle East which took place in the NATO Political Committee on Tuesday, October 1.

Arab Federation

All the speakers on this subject (i.e. the representatives of Turkey, France, Belgium, Italy and the United States) agreed with the assessment given in Section I of POLADS (63) 8/15. There was a broad measure of agreement that there were unlikely to be any sensational developments although there might be some slight improvement in the relations between Syria and Iraq. No one was prepared to make any forecast about the prospects for a new Syrian/Iraqi union.

The Yemen

2. The text of the paper circulated in advance by the United States delegation is attached as an annex to this record. The French representative doubted whether the Egyptians had substantially reduced the number of their troops in the Yemen. However, the operation might be too heavy a burden on Nasser and this gave rise to the possibility of a political rather than a military solution. Sallal was not thought to be popular; the fact that he was bolstered up by the Egyptians played its part in this.
3. The Canadian representative put forward some tentative thoughts worked out at official level on the future role of UNYOM upon which he asked for the reactions of member governments. He pointed out that the poor implementation of the disengagement agreement raised the question of the utility of the observation mission in its present form. It was unlikely to achieve the objective for which it had been created, namely to verify that disengagement was taking place, but it had to be acknowledged that it performed a useful purpose in helping to maintain stability, etc. However, in the absence of a negotiated settlement there was unlikely to be any solution for the Yemen. In these circumstances, Canadian officials were now wondering whether UNYOM's objectives could be achieved by replacing it with a very small United Nations / mission on the lines

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mission on the lines of the Spinelli mission in Jordan.

One of the attractive features of this idea was that it would be less expensive, and if there were a local settlement and effective disengagement such a small United Nations mission might prove sufficient for a continuing role even afterwards. The only alternative seemed to be for the United Nations to have a much larger presence in the Yemen. This might require a new Security Council resolution calling for an expanded operation specifically designed to get the parties in the Yemen to reach a settlement.

4. The Dutch representative drew attention to recent confidential negotiations in Aden designed to reconcile the two sides. The Turkish representative briefly drew attention to the potential openings in the Yemen for the Soviet Union.

Iraq

5. The Dutch representative dealt with the improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq, citing the withdrawal by the Mongolians of their United Nations item on genocide. He also commented on the improved relations between the Russians and the Arabs generally. More flexibility was being shown on the part of the Soviet Union (e.g. the use of the Soviet veto for the benefit of Syria in the Security Council.) Nasser needed Soviet help for military supplies and for the Aswan Dam and recent developments tending to confirm the improvement in relations included Amer's visit to Moscow, Adjubei's visit to Cairo, and the freeing by the Egyptians of a number of Communist prisoners. But there was also a common bond between the Egyptians and Russians in the fact that Nasser disliked Ba'athist tendencies in Syria and Iraq. The French representative also noted the beginning of an improvement in Iraqi/Soviet relations, mentioning the taking up again by Iraq of Soviet military help. Among the reasons he gave for this rapprochement was the feeling that the Soviet Union could not work against Arab unity, the growing impression in the Soviet Union that the Kurdish war would last for some time and was just as helpful to Soviet as to Iraqi interests, and the possibility that they realised they could not be absent from Iraq when Western aid was on the increase. In general the Soviet Union was acting with prudence in the Middle East. The Turkish

/ representative

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representative mentioned that among the military equipment given by the Russians to the Iraqi government were a number of MIG 21's. With these the Iraqis no doubt intended to demonstrate their strength vis-a-vis Jordan and Israel.

6. There was general agreement that the operations against the Kurds were not going as well as government statements claimed, and that it was unlikely that a military solution to the Kurdish problem could be found in the immediate future. The Turkish representative thought, however, that the Iraqi army was in a more favourable position than it had been before and that the Kurdish position was weaker.

Establishment of diplomatic relations between Jordan and the Soviet Union.

7. In the context of the exchange of views on the improvement in relations generally between the Arabs and the Soviet Union, the German representative subsequently drew attention to the establishing of diplomatic relations about six weeks ago between Jordan and the Soviet Union. This was a development which had been to the West's disadvantage in view of the fact that the Soviet mission in Jordan could be used as a base for subversive activities and of the danger that Jordan might become too dependent on Soviet economic and other aid. The Jordanians were now aware of these dangers but it was also true that they were disappointed with the Western attitude on many Jordan interests (e.g. Israel, Yemen, the Ba'athist party etc.) The overall effect of the establishment of relations with Russia might be to make the Jordanians more neutral. The German government took the view that those countries which were concerned with giving development aid to Jordan should shift the emphasis to sectors from which the Soviet Union could be excluded. In this process it was to be hoped that the Western countries would take into account the growing self-confidence and sensitivity of the Jordanians since diplomatic relations had been established. The Turkish representative agreed that this was a situation which called for study. It was interesting that it was the King who had taken the decision and not the Jordanian government. It was likely that in doing so he might have wished to consolidate his present position.



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United Kingdom Delegation
to OTAN/NATO,
PARIS.
October 2, 1963
RECEIVED IN
ARCHIVES No. 15
14 OCT 1963
E 1072/26.

Dear Crawford

Thank you for your letter of September 27 enclosing the notes for yesterday's discussion of Middle East problems in the NATO Political Committee.

BK 103193/55

2. In the course of the debate I drew fully on the notes. I also made use of paragraph 1 of Foreign Office telegram No. 570 guidance on Iraq/Kuwait relations and paragraph 4 of Foreign Office telegram No. 493 guidance.

BK 103193/42

*Copy of
record, and
of W. report
to
Arabia
Toll*

3. I am enclosing with this letter 3 copies of a record of the points made by the other speakers which may be of interest to the departments concerned. There were no substantial disagreements in the national assessments put forward. Specific points of some interest were the German statement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Jordan and the Soviet Union (paragraph 7 of the record) and the tentative Canadian views upon the role of the United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (paragraph 3). We understand from the Canadian delegation that their High Commission in London have been instructed to bring these suggestions to the attention of the Foreign Office and they may already have done this.

4. There is unlikely to be another discussion in the Political Committee on the Middle East before the Expert Group assembles at the end of this month. But by the middle of November, if we are not too busy preparing for the December Ministerial meeting, the International Staff may propose another exchange of views. We shall let you know in any case as soon as any firm date is set.

*Yours ever
F.S. Tomlinson*

(F.S. Tomlinson)

R.S. Crawford, Esq., C.M.G., C.V.O.,
Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

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*by Crawford 15/7
to Home
etc. V. M. 11/7.
L. C. W. 15/7*



RECEIVED United Kingdom Delegation
ARCHIVED P. 105 NATO,
31 JUL 1963 Paris.
E 1072/32

20710/118/63

July 24, 1963

Dear Figg,

The Political Committee yesterday exchanged views upon the Middle East. Tomlinson began the discussion, making use of the material enclosed with Crawford's letter of July 19 to him. (He is writing separately to Crawford in answer to that letter.)

2. The other speakers were the Turkish, United States, Dutch, Italian and French representatives. The Chairman urged that as many as possible of those who had spoken should circulate their statements in writing and if any of these subsequently appear I shall of course let you have copies of them. In the meantime, the following is a summary of the main points made in the discussion.

3. The Turkish representative spoke of the intensification of the conflict between Nasser and the Ba'athists as evidenced by the last two attempted coup d'etats in Syria. The Ba'athists seemed to be coming out on top there but the internal struggle would continue. In Iraq the situation was more stable than in Syria, no doubt because the bulk of the Iraqi army were engaged in the North in fighting the Kurds and therefore less likely to have the time to engage in politics. The Soviet Note which had been sent to Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries and the bringing of the matter to the Security Council showed that the Russians wished to "internationalise" the Kurdish problem. Their motives were probably a mixture of a desire to retaliate for the severe anti-Communist campaign in Iraq and also the hope of gaining Barzani's confidence. It was most likely that the Kurds would intensify their policy of blackmail in respect of both East and West. The Iraqi Government however had attempted to take the situation in hand and were trying to ensure that there was no outside support for the Kurds.

/4.

L.C.W. Figg, Esq.,
Eastern Department,
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4. The United States representative said that the material which was available to him fitted in well with that supplied by Tomlinson. His authorities had similar views on the struggle between Nasserism and Ba'athism and had reached the same judgment about the Kurdish revolt. The likelihood that it would be a long drawn out struggle. He promised to circulate the rest of his information in writing. (This will follow in due course). He added that the International Staff paper brought up the question of the riots in Iran and United Arab Republic influence. The conclusion of the experts in Washington was that a convincing case had not been made out for any connexion between Nasser and the riots. (The most obvious indication apparently had been placards with anti-Israel slogans on them. This was uncommon in Iran, but it did not lead back very directly to the United Arab Republic.) The French representative commented briefly to the effect that he agreed with both the United States and United Kingdom representatives about the Kurdish situation.

5. The Dutch representative gave the Committee an account of an unofficial report which he had received of a visit to Iraq in June and of the impressions of the visitor, whom he did not name. According to this source, Iraq was under a "regime of terror". The prisons were full, there was a general atmosphere of fear, denunciations were worse than under Kassim etc. One of the major factors in the situation was the recent creation of the National Guard whose arms and equipment were better than those of the government troops. The figures were difficult to check, but their numbers were estimated to be between 10 and 20,000 men. In general, there were widespread signs of apathy among the population and the Government had not succeeded in arousing popular enthusiasm like Kassim.

6. The Italian representative said that the appreciation of the Iraq situation made by his authorities was similar to that outlined by his Dutch colleague. Eighty-five percent of the Iraqi armed forces were engaged in fighting the Kurds. This seemed to suggest that only something dramatic like the capture or death of Barzani could stop the war. Turning to the Yemen, he said that Soviet aid there (in the form of arms and ammunition, tanks and aircraft) had been stepped up. He estimated that the number of Soviet technicians in the Yemen was about 1,200. It was interesting that liaison between Cairo and Sana's was

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maintained by Soviet aircraft, including troop carriers and helicopters. These were at present used only with Russian or Egyptian personnel, but they had originally been gifts from the Soviet Union to the Yemen.

--- 7. I am not copying this letter elsewhere, but I enclose a spare copy in case you wish to pass it on to any of the other interested Departments in the Foreign Office.

James Owen
[Signature]

Jan. (A.E. Donald)

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