

ConfidentialNotes of Ambassador Brunner's meeting with the President of Egypt held in Alexandria on 13 July 1991 at 8:30 amPresent:

Ambassador Brunner  
Ms. Buttenheim

H.E. Mr. Muhamed Hosni Mubarak  
President of the Arab Republic  
of Egypt  
Mr. Amre Moussa  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Invited by President Mubarak to share his impressions of the talks he had held in Israel and Jordan, Ambassador Brunner said that he had met with Prime Minister Shamir, Foreign Minister Levy, Defense Minister Arens, Chairman of Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee Ben-Elissar and Labour Opposition Leader Peres. The impression he had gained from the three ministers was that they would like to enter into bilateral talks with Israel's Arab neighbours and to avoid, to the extent possible, any type of international conference. They were prepared to attend a ceremonial international "opening" of the negotiations, but were opposed to a UN role and a reconvening of the international forum. As for Jordan, the Ambassador continued, its leaders recognized that they were weak and in difficult economic straits. Consequently, they were prepared to accept the creation of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and would attend an opening session along the lines proposed by the US. Everyone was awaiting the Syrian response to President Bush's letter.

Interjecting, President Mubarak said that the Syrians had promised to send their reply. He would call President Assad that afternoon.

Ambassador Brunner said that the Secretary-General supported all efforts to launch a peace process in the Middle East, including the US-led initiative. In their earlier meeting in Cairo, Foreign Minister Moussa had been kind enough to explain his perception of a United Nations role in the context of the US peace initiative. The Ambassador was certain that if that role involved more than a "photo opportunity", the Secretary-General would agree that the United Nations should participate.

President Mubarak stated: "I can't understand the way Shamir and his group think. Of course, the so-called conference won't discuss issues. It will be all bilateral. But whenever we use the word "ceremonial" the other Arabs say no. Practically speaking, that is all an opening ceremony can be. Each country





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had its own concerns to discuss. I can assure you that Syria will never accept any partner in its negotiations with Israel concerning the Golan Heights. But for psychological reasons, that Government can't say so because it has been telling its people for so long about the need for a comprehensive solution. If peace prevails, the biggest winner will be Israel. I prefer this challenge to war. We are trying to help all the parties, including Israel. I talked with the Saudis many times; they want to enter into the process but can't say so publicly. Frankly, it seems Shamir doesn't want a solution.

"This is one theory," said Ambassador Brunner. "What is the other?" asked the President. "That he is difficult," replied the Ambassador. "Peres considers his policy to be a disaster for Israel."

"He (Shamir) gets very upset if I tell him this," the President noted. "He tried to meet me in Washington two years ago but I said that something should come out of it. Such a meeting will create big expectations and if nothing happened, how could I explain this to the Egyptian people? They would say that Shamir bluffed the President. It will be seen very badly here and he will be attacked in our media." Ambassador Brunner observed that Mr. Shamir did not consider it an insult if people referred to him as inflexible.

The President recalled that he had Mr. Arens (at that time Foreign Minister) in New York, who had encouraged him to meet with Prime Minister Shamir. The President had indicated his readiness but had insisted that such a meeting should be planned carefully. In the presence of Mr. Arens, he had telephoned Mr. Shamir from his hotel room. He had explained to the Israeli Prime Minister that he was prepared to meet with him if the meeting was well prepared, and the latter had agreed. Yet two months hence, Mr. Arens had informed Mr. Mubarak that the meeting should take place without advance preparation, "without results". "I can't just sit with him and drink tea and coffee," the President said. "I need results."

Ambassador Brunner felt that the moment of truth was coming soon and that Israel was apprehensive about the American pressure to which it would be subjected if President Assad replied favourably to the US letter. President Mubarak reiterated that he was trying his best with Syria. Ambassador Brunner noted that Israel could continue to raise procedural obstacles, such as the composition of the Palestinian delegation, the definition of the UN role and the reconvening. Yet questions of substance would also pose problems. He had travelled by car from Jerusalem to Amman and had seen the rapid growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.



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President Mubarak said that an expansion of Israeli settlements could not be reconciled with the notion of "land for peace". It was difficult to be hopeful about the present situation.

Ambassador Brunner referred to the difficulty of removing the settlements from the Sinai, following the signing of the Camp David Accords. He noted that each of Mr. Baker's visits to Jerusalem had been preceded by the launching of a new settlement. "Are they ready to give back the land?" he asked. "No!" the President expostulated. "Sometimes they offer me Gaza and I say no. We will not accept this. Shamir does not understand that if he keeps the land and builds settlements, it would lead to guerilla warfare among the Palestinians. It will create problems with all of Israel's neighbours and it will be very difficult, especially for Syria and Jordan, to prevent.

The Ambassador cited the possibility of a new government emerging in Israel, such as a Likud-Labour coalition or even a government led by David Levy, who was more pragmatic and flexible than many of his Likud counterparts.

President Mubarak recalled that Mr. Shamir had voted, in his previous capacity as a Likud Knesset member, against the Camp David accords. In fact, he had reminded the Israeli Prime Minister of this, asking him how he intended to implement an agreement which he had previously voted against. Foreign Minister Moussa opined that Mr. Shamir was disingenuous in expressing support for Camp David today.

Ambassador Brunner said that it was important to start a negotiating process. Even to convene the opening meeting would be a kind of breakthrough. President Mubarak predicted that Mr. Shamir would do everything possible to delay such a gathering, and would present obstacles at every stage. Yet Israel should be made to respect the will and decisions of the international community. The President added: "Mr. Shamir hates the UN. He calls it the 'black UN'".

Citing the 17 resolutions that had been adopted in the context of the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait, Ambassador Brunner said that it was logical that resolutions 242, 338 and 425 should be implemented. The President rejoined: "But Shamir is not a man of logic -- he has his own logic."

Ambassador Brunner said that another sentiment he had detected in Israel was that country's sense of isolation -- its "Masada complex". But with the huge number of new Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union, a "second Israel" was being created. For example, many of the programs on Israeli TV now had Russian subtitles.



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"Look my friend," the President declared, "there is nothing called the Soviet Union today. I hope the Palestinians and other Arabs can understand this. I informed President Assad of this when he visited Cairo and he understood it. Khaddafi has also realized that there is only one superpower today and I have convinced him to be more moderate."

The Ambassador remarked that whereas the Soviet Union was in a very weak financial position, the European Community had great economic clout.

The President wondered why Mr. Gorbachev had become so weak, to which Ambassador Brunner replied that there had been three revolutions in the Soviet Union in recent years: the process of perestroika, the economic upheaval and the revolt among the republics.

President Mubarak recalled that he had advised the Soviet President several years earlier that he should introduce economic reform gradually along with other freedoms, as the Chinese were doing. But to establish full democracy immediately had been a major mistake. In his view, Algeria and Yugoslavia had made the same error.

A brief discussion followed of events in Eastern Europe, at the conclusion of which Ambassador Brunner underlined the importance of achieving peace in the Middle East. Following his visit to the region, he would report to the Secretary-General in New York.

President Mubarak extended his best regards to the Secretary-General, and noted that he had nominated Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali as a possible successor. He very much hoped that his candidate, who was quite at home in New York and Geneva, would be elected as the next Secretary-General.

"Occasionally he visits Egypt," quipped the Foreign Minister.

Continuing, the President noted that President Bush often suggested to him that Boutros Ghali should be tasked with important assignments. Alluding to one of Dr. Ghali's "competitors", Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Mr. Mubarak said he did not believe that the latter's personal friendship with President Bush would automatically qualify him to serve as Secretary-General.

Shifting back to the Middle East, the President stated that, thanks to the defeat of Saddam Hussein, many of Lebanon's problems had been solved. Previously, Iraq had been fuelling its conflict with Syria by providing arms and money to General Aoun. Similarly, Iraq had backed Mauritania in its dispute with



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Senegal. Referring to Algeria, the President opined that that country was "in a complete mess". President Bendjedid had asked Mr. Mubarak's advice as to how to establish an "open-door" economy, to which the latter had responded that it should be introduced on a very gradual basis as had been the case in Egypt. Full democracy could lead to renewed dictatorship and this was President Gorbachev's problem today in the Soviet Union.

Ambassador Brunner commented that the Gulf war had revealed the comparatively poor quality of Soviet supplies and weapons. In the President's view, the war had shown that Iraq was not trained for modern warfare. Following the end of the Iran-Iraq war, he had cautioned former Iraqi Vice-President, Taher Yassin Ramadan. "I told him to inform Saddam Hussein that his forces should not be over-confident, but I really meant that Saddam himself should not be over-confident. I tried to explain to him that what had occurred was not in fact a war. I visited Iraq while Iran was still occupying its territory. King Hussein was with me. Saddam showed us on an operational map his strategy for future battles. I was shocked about their plan! The Iranians had deployed 3,000 motor boats, which the Iraqi forces never noticed coming towards them across the water, and even though the boats were only 3 kilometres away! The Iraqis carried out no reconnaissance missions. They did not use their equipment which could enable them to see up to 15 kilometres away! The same thing happened in the Fao peninsula. 6,000 Iranian boats, all second-hand, came in from the Gulf and Iraq couldn't stop them. The only reason that Fao was restored to Iraq was Saddam's use of chemical weapons."

Ambassador Brunner observed that the Iraqi President had made a number of political mistakes. "He made mistakes in all fields!" exclaimed the President. "Did you know that Iraqi oil revenues are treated as his personal wealth and that the Government is only permitted to spend money generated by other sources? He showed complete ignorance."

Ambassador Brunner said that Tariq Aziz's declaration in Geneva (following his 9 January meeting with Secretary Baker) that Iraq would certainly attack Israel in the event of a war in the Gulf had been badly miscalculated.

"And he said that, even though he sent a special envoy to Israel two years ago to assure them that Iraq had no intention of attacking," the President retorted. "Saddam became too arrogant and over-confident. He behaved stupidly in the Arab Cooperation Council. He would act very big and powerful, thinking he was a super man. King Hussein would sit meekly beside him, saying nothing. He was surrounded by "yes men". Only I talked toughly to him. But he never told me secrets. I was always suspicious about his ideas in the two years before his invasion of Kuwait. He always spoke of the need for a redistribution of Arab wealth,

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suggesting to me that the farmers in upper Egypt deserved to benefit from Kuwaiti oil revenues. I asked him: 'What about Iraqi oil revenues?' He never responded to my question. Iraq is a rich country, although he claims that he paid us \$23 million. In fact, he owes Egypt \$2 billion. King Hussein and the President of South Yemen agreed to his terms and received some money from him. Personally he is very wealthy."



Lisa Buttenheim  
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