

**KING FAISAL,
A MAN OF DIGNITY**

Early in ١٩٧٣, I took Qadaffi with me—as he had asked me to do—on my way to Saudi Arabia to make the *‘umra* pilgrimage, prior to attending the Islamic conference in Lahore, Pakistan. We went to Riyadh and met King Faisal. I had a long-standing acquaintance with him and knew King Faisal to be an honest and upright man, the ideal of Arab wisdom in its sublimest form. Our session with him lasted three-quarters of an hour.

King Faisal was distinguished by a very powerful memory. He had a wonderful ability to quote details, including dates and places, and to describe the condition of those to whom he spoke. He had that nomadic perspicacity. When recounting an incident or conversation that had taken place thirty or forty years earlier, he would tell you, for example, that so and so used to sit fourth to the left; he used to wear such and such; Ali Allouba Pasha's opinion was this; Mahmoud Fahmy Nokrashî's was that, and I answered him thus to the letter.

To sit with King Faisal was to sit with a man who had begun his political life at the age of thirteen, for his father had pushed him into the international sphere of politics at a very early age. From politics he learned honesty, a rare quality, and rarer still, he learned to be straightforward and upright.

In those forty-five minutes with Faisal, Qadaffi listened to an expose of the Palestinian issue, the like of which he had never heard before. For King

Faisal was a walking encyclopedia containing the minutest of details. He spoke from personal experience. He had been a part of everything he recounted and narrated. Faisal thus participated in the recording of history just as he shared in the making of it.

One of the historic facts revealed by King Faisal for the first time was that the English had at one point proposed to the Palestinians that they agree to the immigration of only fifty thousand Jews, in return for which the English would hand Palestine over to the Palestinian administration. The Palestinians at that time said "no." They were supported in this by the Arabs who, in the sphere of politics, know no other word and thus complicate the problem rather than solve it—or perhaps they do not want a solution. Had the Palestinians agreed to that proposal, they would have saved the Arab nation a lot of trouble, anxiety, blood, disaster, and men. Fifty thousand in the midst of those millions are not frightening. They could be contained and would not constitute a threat to the Arab nation.

Thus King Faisal, apart from being a historic figure, and one who had participated in the recording of Arab history, also had an objective outlook and a capacity for seeing into the future. Most unfortunately, Muammar al-Qadaffi did not understand the lesson.

My relationship with King Faisal was one of love and respect. Furthermore, my long experience with him confirmed that what he said, he carried out. His word was law and not subject to discussion. Even in the days of the Yemen War, when a basic difference existed between the two states, my ties with King Faisal were not severed. Thus, until his death in

March ١٩٧٥, my strong relationship with him remained one of brotherhood and friendship.

Many of King Faisal's stands were proof of his nobility and chivalry, in the face of which one could not but love and respect him. In the Khartoum Conference, held in the summer of ١٩٦٧, Gamal Abdel Nasser met King Faisal, who was accused at that time of being the ultimate reactionary. Faisal had not rejoiced at Nasser's defeat. On the contrary, a stand was adopted that astonished Gamal Abdel Nasser himself; Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya had resolved to give aid to Egypt, the amount of which was equivalent to the revenue of the Suez Canal. Gamal Abdel Nasser had not imagined that the aid would exceed ٥ million pounds, or ١٠ million at most. That had been the opinion, at that time, of the late Prince Abdullah el-Salem of Kuwait, who had tried to convince Faisal of his point of view. Everyone, especially Nasser who had been defeated, was therefore astonished when King Faisal announced at the meeting that Saudi Arabia would pay ٥٠ million pounds and asked Kuwait to pay ٥٥ million!

My personal friendship with the king began when I visited Riyadh to attend the first Islamic Conference, which was held in ١٩٥٥. At that time he was crown prince, and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan were the founders of the conference. In spite of the Yemen War, we remained friends, for the meaning of the friendship was the same to him as it was to me.

King Faisal was a man of few words, but when he spoke his words were worth their weight in gold or diamonds. Those who knew Faisal as I did knew that life had taught him many, many things. His political experience and his association with international figures had taught him to

be gentle and patient as well as to find an excuse for every human being. Perhaps he had come upon all this when he sat face to face with Gamal Abdel Nasser in Sudan. For he was before a giant of an Arab leader, but one who had been deeply wounded; he was before the harshest and fiercest of his enemies, but the situation warranted that he hold out his hand toward the wounded commander. Such were the qualities of the noble Arab. King Faisal was of that caliber of men whom one could not but love and respect.

Just as he stood by Gamal Abdel Nasser in his ordeal, so King Faisal supported me in my troubles with the Soviets. In 1956, my problem with the Soviet Union had become greater and more complex. That year, the Communist centers of power were dissolved; then there had been our stand with respect to the Sudanese revolution. Each of those two had involved disagreements with the Soviet leaders, who felt that the regime in Egypt was no longer subject to them. Their every action was proof of their veiled enmity. Consequently I lost all hope in the Soviet Union and its leaders.

I contacted King Faisal and said to him: "You have Lightning fighter bombers?" "Yes, I have," he replied in his brotherly spirit. My problem with the Soviets had always been that their planes were short-range whereas those of the West, including those of English make, were long-range. For the Soviet Union always wished us to remain suspended in midair, never supplying any weapon that could determine the war. When I contacted Faisal and told him I needed English planes, he said: "You are welcome to them. I shall send you twenty of those planes."

But that make of British plane was old and outdated. It had been used in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The English had stopped manufacturing them,

for they were complicated and excessively costly. The English themselves were content to use American Phantoms.

This was in ١٩٧١, the year in which I made two visits to the Soviet Union, one in March, the other in October, after our relations with the Soviets had greatly deteriorated. This had happened for two reasons. The first was my dissolution of the centers of power in May of that same year; the second was my support of Numeiri against the Communist revolution that took place in Sudan in July ١٩٧١ and which subsequently failed. The Soviets had asked me to recognize the new government headed by Hashem el-'Ata. I not only refused, but I also told the Soviet ambassador that I would not countenance the establishment of a Marxist regime on my borders.

The Soviets were very bitter about my attitude toward the July revolution in Sudan. Relations deteriorated rapidly. They resorted to their well-known tactic, that of halting their arms supply. They even stopped supplying me with spare parts for the weapons we already had. That, of course, was apart from their refusal to give us long-range planes. After a lot of argument and trouble, the Soviet leaders allowed me to travel to their country on October ١١. As I said, I had previously asked King Faisal for Lightning planes, even though that model was outdated and its maintenance was so complicated that the English themselves had complained about it. Its one advantage was its long-range. King Faisal and I had, as usual, no written agreement. With King Faisal, one's word was enough.

On October ١٠, one day before my departure, I was surprised to receive a cable from King Faisal informing me that Saudi Arabia had resolved to supply us immediately with twenty Lightning planes. When I

received the cable, I laughed; the assistants who were with me had not understood the point of the cable. They had known for some time that we had agreed upon the twenty planes. So why had Faisal now sent that cable? I told them: 'This cable is proof that King Faisal is a very shrewd and wise politician as well as one with nobility and values. He wished to help me confront the Soviet. He wanted me to announce officially that I shall receive twenty planes from Saudi Arabia.'

It was so ... When I informed the Soviets, they were furious. The news fell upon the three leaders, Podgorny, Brezhnev, and Kosygin, like a thunderbolt. Brezhnev in particular looked as if he had been bitten by a serpent. They said: "How can you accept planes from Saudi Arabia, knowing what that country represents to the Soviet?" I said to Brezhnev: "My voice has become hoarse from the number of times I and Nasser before me have asked you for long-range planes, but to no avail. We told you we did not want the planes in order to attack, but rather so that we could have defensive weapons with which to retaliate if Israel should attack us in depth. So if Saudi Arabia comes along offering us those planes, should we refuse?"

Shortly before the October War, in August ١٩٧٣ to be precise, the first Supreme Council of the joint Egyptian and Syrian armed forces met in Alexandria to prepare, arrange and equip for the war that had been set for October. However, Field Marshal Ahmed Ismail, may he rest in peace, saw that the Syrians were backing out, on the pretext that they had not assimilated the new weapons. Those weapons had been with them for over a year, and the Syrians had been trained to use them. We, on the other hand,

had received the same weapons very shortly before the war, yet our armed forces had been able to assimilate them fully and expeditiously.

The most important of those weapons was the BMB which had been named “the moving citadel” or the “armed battle car.” It had all the characteristics of a tank but carried a greater number of soldiers. In ١٩٧٢, after I had expelled the Soviet experts, the Soviet Union had showered Syria with weapons, to the extent that Assad had told me he could no longer find any space to store them and had been compelled to use some of the schools as depots for the weapons during the summer holidays. If we return to the October War, we find that fifteen days earlier, Israel had carried out raids on those very schools.

The danger of postponing the date set for the war in October was that it would mean postponing it indefinitely. For from November until spring, the Golan Heights were unsuitable for military action and, when spring came, the Syrians might find another excuse, and so on. For this reason, upon being informed of the attitude of the Syrian command, I told Ahmed Ismail that I would go to Syria to meet Hafez al-Assad. I also asked to pay a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. I did this for two reasons: to inform King Faisal and Sheikh Khalifa that the war was imminent, and to give Ahmed Ismail time to end the Alexandria Conference and to send the Syrian command back to Syria, for I wished the Syrian minister of defense to be in Damascus during my visit there.

A long discussion took place between King Faisal and myself during my visit to him toward the end of August ١٩٧٣. I said to him: “God willing, we shall wage war against Israel. I have agreed upon this with President

Hafez al-Assad.” King Faisal raised his face to the sky and prayed to God that we be victorious. Then he said: "Mr. President, this Hafez al-Assad is first of all a Baathist and second an Elouiiite. How can you enter with him upon war and feel secure?" For a quarter of an hour I tried to reassure King Faisal about Hafez al-Assad. He was silent for some time and then asked: “What is the role required of me?” I said: “I ask for nothing other than that you take your stand toward a war that will determine the destiny of the Arab nation in all the coming generations.” He said: “I have one request. If you wage war, do not cease fire after a few hours or days. Let it be a long battle, for if it is prolonged, we shall be able to take a unified Arab stand.”

I shall never forget that phrase. It was one that revealed the utmost political wisdom. For the establishment of unified Arab stand implied that the whole Arab nation would join in the battle. The Arab nation would not do so unless it was proved that, after the Arabs had lost confidence in themselves, we were in fact able to wage a long war against Israel. This would not come about except after a prolonged war and the passage of some time. Faisal was right, for had the battles not continued, the oil weapon would not have become a factor in the war. We all recall that oil did not become a factor in the war until ten days after it had started. Had we carried out the demand of the Elouiiite Baath to cease fire after only forty-eight hours from the start of the war, no victory would have been won and oil would not have been introduced as a weapon.

Another important matter is that in that meeting, which lasted over an hour. King Faisal did not ask me about zero hour. Here is my reply to those who justify their stand with respect to Camp David—which they did not

read—by saying that I had not informed them. In spite of the length of the discussion, Faisal did not ask me about zero hour. He knew, without being told, that zero hour concerned Assad and myself alone. I could not mention it, not because I distrusted him, but rather because of military considerations. For this reason, King Faisal was unique and outstanding among the Arab leaders who had been refined by time and experience, and before time and experience by nobility and truth; for what can time and experience do for a person with no nobility, no truth, and no morals?

Some people thought I had asked King Faisal to help us by using oil as a weapon. That was not true. All I said to King Faisal was that it was my responsibility to activate the situation militarily and to fight. “As for your role,” I said, “I leave that to you. Do what you can and what you see fit.” I told him, “You are the head of the household, and it is the head of the household who best knows who and what it contains.”

Faisal did not need me to say any more. He was a wise man and came to that decision through his own political sagacity, astuteness, and experience. Faisal was the hero of the oil war. The Arab oil was the soul of Western civilization. He knew full well that it was possible for the Arabs to destroy that soul. For this reason, King Faisal’s stand at the head of the oil countries and their historical resolution to place an embargo on oil was as critical as a military battle.

In the wake of the October War, King Faisal came to Cairo. Together we visited the Suez Canal and the sites in which the most honorable Arab battle had been fought. In spite of his poor health, Faisal insisted on crossing to the east bank of the Canal on foot. His joy at the victory had made him

forget everything else. At the top of the site of the Barlev line, which our forces had destroyed, a moving historic discussion took place between King Faisal and myself. I said to him: "We have now crossed the Suez Canal on foot as you promised. We shall never forget, and neither shall the Egyptian people, your support in every step that realized victory and restored pride and dignity to the Arabs. We pray God that he restore your health so that. God willing, we may together complete the battle."

Faisal replied: "What the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did was but its national duty toward its sister Egypt and toward the Arab nation. What I now see before me is a miracle for the whole Arab nation. We shall stand by you at all times." Upon our return to Cairo, King Faisal's joy at the victory was very apparent on his face and was revealed in his every word and action.

I still see that man before me; his quiet words still ring in my ears. His death was a great loss to me, to Saudi Arabia and to the Arab nation at large. The bullets that were fired at him left a wound that will never heal in the body of the Saudi Arabian family and the entire Arab nation, especially as the criminal was from the royal family itself. Immediately upon hearing the sad news, I left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For the loss was a personal one. I had lost a dear brother and noble friend. He was my biggest aid in all situations and the greatest ally in the struggle for our mutual welfare and for the victory of the Arab nation.

What is a human being but a representative of truth and commitment? King Faisal was a man who knew the meaning of morality, of friendship, of dignity, of honor. He was a man to whom I said: "You promised and were true. You pledged and honored your pledge." I said that to him during his

life-time and I say it today after his death, recalling in all pride, acknowledgment, and love a man who was a human being in the role he played, and that is the greatest thing that can be said of a man.

Picture

Arrival of the Shah of Iran, ۱۹۷۹. In forcing the Shah to leave, “the Western leaders did not realize that they were installing a time bomb inside Iran. They did not grasp what they had done until after it exploded, with its shrapnel raining all over Iran.”

Picture

One of Sadat’s last press interviews. Of the Ayathollah Khomeini he asks: “How can we accept as head of state a sheikh who wears a turban and makes a god of himself? When Khomeini stands up and says his oppression and terror are an Islamic revolution, we [Islamic countries] should oppose him and tell him that he does not represent Islam.”

During the October War, ۱۹۷۳, Sadat walks with his wife, Jihan, dressed in a nurse’s uniform, at Tahra Place.” What did that war achieve for us? It taught us that we could gain less by war than by peace,

Picture

Picture

With King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, 1951. “An honest and up upright man, the ideal of Arab wisdom in its sublimest form... a man who knew the meaning of morality, of friendship, of dignity, of honer. He was a man to whom I said: ‘You promised and were true. You pledged and honered your pledge.’”

Picture

Greeting President Assad of Syria and Colonel Qadaffi of Libya. “Qadaffi is the embodiment of the personality known as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.... He has the mentality of a small child. The tragedy is that the toys he plays with are real weapons”.

Picture

Bidding farewell to Soviet President Podgorny, 1951. “Where was Podgorny now? One day he was head of the whole Soviet Union, the next he had suddenly disappeared. May be was in Siberia, or working as a railway station master. May be they had made him a caretaker in a primary school or an elevator operator in one of the a ceretaker in a primary school or an elevator operator in one of the government buildings. Nothing is unlikely in the Soviet Union.

Picture

With President Tito of Yugoslavia, 1951. “He would often scoff at the empty Soviet slogans, using an amusing catch phrase, always repeating in his delightful English accent, ‘Socialism, socialism.... and *no food!*’”

Picture

President Nixon’s visit to Egypt, 1974. “Nixon is, and will remain, one of the most brilliant and intelligent politicians I have met in my life.” Of President Reagan, Sadat writes: “An easy man to get on with . . . He thinks in headlines and not in details, but is clear in his thoughts, decisions, and answers.”

Picture

A telephone conversation with President Carter, 1978. “For Carter to have been faced with the enmity of the Zionists and the Israelis is understandable. What is not understandable is the antagonism of the Arabs toward the only American president who had called for a national homeland for the Palestinian people.”

Picture

Handshake after signing the peace treaty: “It would surely be said [of Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem in 1977] that it was an uncalculated gamble. How can you venture to go to your enemies? Are you sure they wouldn’t shoot you on the streets of Jerusalem? My answer was ready. This is my fate. The

day of my death is set beforehand by God. It might take place in Jerusalem or even in Cairo. The hour is coming, have no doubt.”

Picture

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