

## **CONFLICT WITH COLONEL QADAFFI**

I was greatly impressed by Colonel Qadaffi the first time I met him, finding him full of enthusiasm, nationalism, and idealism. I told Nasser that those who had carried out the Libyan revolution would lead their country and its people to peace. How deceived I was in the person of Muammar al-Qadaffi! I discovered he had a double personality: the first impressing you with its idealism, enthusiasm and devotion; the second appalling you with its evil, bitterness, violence, and bloodthirstiness. He is the embodiment of the personality known as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

I first met him during a stopover in Tripoli on the way back from the Rabat summit in September ١٩٦٩, the same month that the Libyan revolution had taken place. I arrived in Tripoli at night. Muammar al-Qadaffi received me as soon as I stepped from the plane. I was genuinely pleased at the meeting, which gave me a complete picture of the Libyan revolution and those who had planned and executed it.

Qadaffi revealed to me the secrets of the Libyan under-ground movement, confiding that they had attempted to reproduce the Egyptian Free Officers' movement which had led our revolution in ١٩٥٢. They had even taken on the personalities of the Free Officers, distributing their roles among themselves. Muammar had assumed the role of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Mustafa el-Kharubi that of Abdel Hakim Amer, and so on. I learned from Qadaffi that they had read every word that had been written on the July ٢٢

revolution in Egypt and on those who had taken part in it. Qadaffi reminded me of my story in the newspaper al-Goumhouria on the July revolution and its secrets. As he spoke, I noticed he remembered every word I had written.

I was genuinely impressed by the men of the Libyan revolution. Accompanying Qadaffi was his associate, Abdul Salam Jallud, who was wearing simple overalls. I did not discover until later that he had been Qadaffi's second-in-command in the revolution. After dining with Qadaffi, I took my leave of him in order to board my plane and resume my trip back to Cairo. To my surprise, they all insisted that I make a second stopover, this time at the Benghazi airport, to meet their associate, Mustafa el-Kharubi, who had assumed the role Abdel Hakim Amer had played in the Free Officers' movement. Qadaffi asked me to take along a number of Libyan ministers who were on their way to Benghazi.

As it was nighttime, the plane would not arrive in Benghazi before 1:00 a.m., and I imagined there would be no more than a short stopover. The ministers who had boarded my plane at Tripoli would disembark and I would then continue my flight to Cairo. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when after the plane had landed at Benghazi, a youth boarded it and, approaching me, threw himself into my arms and embraced me. He introduced himself, saying: "I am Mustafa el-Kharubi." I laughed and said: "Hello, Abdel Hakim Amer!" He said, insistently: "You must come down with me." I objected, saying: "No, Mustafa, my son, it is late. I have an hour ahead of me before I reach Cairo. It has been a long and exhausting day."

Mustafa el-Kharubi brushed aside my objections, urging and insisting that I go down with him. In the end, I had to comply. Mustafa el-Kharubi

introduced me to the officers who stood in line, saying: <<! present to you Anwar el-Sadat, one of the heroes of the July revolution." I very quickly forgot my weariness in my genuine pleasure at meeting el-Kharubi and his men. I did not glance at the hands of my watch as they advanced to announce the break of dawn. I returned to Cairo feeling elated and greatly impressed by Qadaffi and his group. They had brought back memories of youth with what they had done and intended to do.

In Cairo, I went to see Nasser to tell him about the Libyans and their revolution, saying: "I was truly impressed by those youngsters. I was even more impressed by their nationalism and enthusiasm, as well as their devotion to the people of their country. I believe, Gamal, our part has been played. I advise you to send for two or three of those boys so that you can work with them. They belong to the future: as for us, we are finished. We have fought our battles and the time has now come for us to step down." We laughed. Gamal Abdel Nasser said: "You admire those boys to that extent, Anwar?" I replied, emphatically: "To that extent, Gamal. Soon you will meet them yourself. Then I will hear what you have to say about them."

The days passed. At Nasser's invitation, Muammar al-Qadaffi came to visit us in Cairo. In the salon at Nasser's house I turned to Gamal, saying: "I hope, Mr. President, that you will repeat to Muammar what I previously told you about him and his brothers." Addressing Muammar, Gamal said: "Anwar is a great admirer of yours. He has advised me to send for two or three of you so that we can both retire."

That was my initial opinion of Qadaffi. As I said, I was greatly impressed by him. I expected much from him and his brothers in the service

of their country and the Arab nation at large. This remained my opinion until I suddenly discovered Qadaffi had a double personality. As much as there was sweetness and kindness in the first personality, there was viciousness and hatred in the second. I can never forget what he did to us before and after the October War. We were dealing with his second personality, discovering faults rarely found in a normal person.

Following the cease-fire in October ١٩٧٣, Hilal, the Egyptian minister of petroleum, came to me and said: “Our entire oil reserves throughout the country will last only fifteen days at most.” The news was a national disaster. We had not yet reached an agreement on disengagement; there was every likelihood that the situation would flare up and the battle be resumed. I expected little good from our so-called “ally and brother” Muammar Qadaffi, for my experiences with him were leading me to distrust his every promise. He had undertaken to send us spare parts for our Mirage planes, but none had turned up. Time and time again, he had given his word but never kept it.

I knew that the Dassault factory, which manufactures Mirage planes in France, did not provide spare parts upon request. One had to wait at least six months to receive them.

That was in August, two months before the war—and the peak of the European holiday season, when factories come to a standstill, shops close, and offices are emptied of their employees. I sent a representative to France to open negotiations. I told them we were ready to spend a million pounds over and above the cost price of the spare parts. For what is a million pounds

in the context of a destiny such as ours? The representative left for Paris, and the negotiations began.

Later, on October ٤, ١٩٧٣, it so happened that Qadaffi's confidant, Abdul Salam Jallud, paid a visit to Cairo. I summoned him and said: "Abdul Salam, cut short your holiday in Egypt, return to your country, and say this to Muammar: The hour of battle is drawing very near, I shall not specify the exact date, but it is enough for him to know that the battle is imminent. All I am asking from Libya is: First: In the event that Israel should bomb the port of Alexandria, the Libyan port of Tobruk should become a substitute, so that supplies can be landed there and transported to Egypt overland. Second: We need four million tons of oil from Libya over a period of a year and a half. Third: We need spare parts for Mirage planes."

We had already taken steps to prepare the way for the first of my requests. Trucks had traveled to Tobruk and then returned to Alexandria, allowing us to calculate the distance and the time needed to get supplies through. The reason for the second request was that as we prepared for battle it was vital that we shut down our Morgan oil fields in the Gulf of Suez, as they were vulnerable to Israeli artillery. This meant that we would be unable to cover our oil requirements.

And this brings to mind a story. I knew that closing down the Morgan fields and extinguishing the flares would confirm our intentions to the Israelis. So as not to alert them, I instructed Hilal, the minister of petroleum, to put out the flares only half an hour before the battle began. Hilal reported back: "In order to carry out your instructions, we must consider two alternatives in the event that the Israelis bomb the field. The first is that we

are prepared to sacrifice the lives of the field workers; the second is that in order to save their lives, we evacuate them from the danger zone before the start of the battle.”

I said to Hilal: “Do not sacrifice the life of a single worker, whether Egyptian or foreign. Put into effect your plan to safeguard them all. But make sure you close down the field and extinguish the flares half an hour before zero hour.” To this day, nobody knows the story of how engineer Hilal, on his own initiative, flew a plane over the oil field just before the battle, as though he were on a normal tour of inspection. His plan was 100 percent successful; no workers were exposed to danger of any sort.

Which brings me back to our request to Qadaffi. I had imagined he would agree to provide us with oil for a year to come because I was preparing myself and my country for a long war. In fact, I insisted on prolonging it, because I knew full well Israel could not stand a drawn-out conflict. Qadaffi had just nationalized the British Petroleum Company—the only company with oil fields close to the Egyptian border, producing 10 million tons of oil a year, which was pumped to Tobruk for shipment abroad in tankers. I asked Qadaffi to set aside 1 million tons of that oil, to be sent to us via Tobruk.

I had already taken precautions to obtain spare parts for the twenty-five Mirage planes, but those planes used up spare parts like fire. Without a large reserve of spare parts, planes would be of no use in a battle. So I repeated my request to Abdul Salam Jallud, who cut short his holiday and returned to Tripoli, bearing my message to Qadaffi. From Tripoli came the message: “Rest assured, we have approved your three requests.”

The war began two days later. The first day went by, then the second. We received a telephone call from Qadaffi, asking us to open up the Voice of the Arabs radio so that he could make a speech in support of Egypt and its armed forces. I agreed to this, and Qadaffi made an infamous speech, hurling insults upon us and predicting our defeat and Israel's victory. Eager to see us defeated, Qadaffi went out of his way to brake our wheels. He never did carry out his promises. We sent tankers that he had promised would be returned to us filled with oil. After only three shipments, he changed his mind.

Much to our surprise, the tankers returned as empty as they had left. As luck would have it, the port at Alexandria was not hit; otherwise Qadaffi would certainly have refused to allow us to use Tobruk as a substitute. He never did send us the spare parts for the Mirage planes, as he had promised. On each occasion he had given his word but never kept it. These experiences have led me to mistrust everything he says.

While relations were still good between Egypt and Libya, Colonel Qadaffi asked me to supply him with two submarines to protect his country against danger. I complied with his request and sent two submarines from our navy. The submarines had Egyptian crews but took their orders directly from Colonel Qadaffi. One of these submarine commanders was soon to receive a very peculiar order. Qadaffi instructed him to go on a mission on the high seas and to wait there for a huge passenger liner. When it arrived, he was ordered to sink it. The commander obeyed the first part of his orders and sailed off into the high seas. According to accepted naval practice, he

reported back by radio every two hours to Egyptian naval headquarters in Alexandria.

Once on the high seas the commander of the submarine reported back to Alexandria with the remainder of his order from Colonel Qadaffi. He told them he had been commanded to sink the British liner Queen Elizabeth II as she sailed through the Mediterranean Sea with a full complement of British and American passengers on their way to Israel to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Jewish state.

At Alexandria, our naval command was astounded to hear of this frightful order Qadaffi had given. As usual when he gives these sorts of orders, Qadaffi leaves his office and retreats to his tent in the Libyan desert where no one can reach him. And there he stays until he is told his orders have been carried out. It was 1:30 p.m. on that day in 1973 when our naval command in Alexandria was in touch with me and told me of the orders that had been given to the submarine commander. They said he was on his way to the rendezvous to sink the liner in waters which were, incidentally, guarded by the American Sixth Fleet.

I asked them: "Can you contact the commander of the submarine?" They replied: "No, there is a radio blackout. We shall have to wait until he makes his next routine contact with us in two hours' time." I asked them: "Will the submarine have reached its objective by then?" They said: "No, not by then. We expect it will still be quite some distance away." I said: "Thank God! As soon as he is in touch with you give him orders from me personally that he is to abort his mission and head directly to our base in Alexandria." I asked them to inform me as soon as the submarine



commander had received my orders. After two long hours the news came through: I received confirmation that my orders had been received and acknowledged and were being acted upon. The submarine was on its way back to Alexandria.

To explain this mania, we perhaps need to go back thirty years to a statement made by Sir Anthony Eden, then British prime minister. I remember his words today as clearly as when I first read them. “Arabs are exactly like children,” he said. “When one of them screams you need to give him a tank or a gun to play with to stop the screaming.” Today, this game has become too dangerous. Try to imagine what would have happened if Qadaffi had succeeded in sinking the QEY. First of all, Egypt would have lost its submarine and her crew. The Sixth Fleet would not have allowed it to escape. Secondly, the world would never have forgiven the Arabs for committing this criminal and barbaric act, involving innocent women and children who had nothing in the world to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This would have been the shameful consequence of giving arms to a teenager—or a mad man. Qadaffi has the mentality of a small child. The tragedy is that the toys he plays with are real weapons.

This sort of action also makes me wonder about the incident in August 1981 when two Libyan planes were shot down by planes from the American Sixth Fleet. I would like to make one last remark about this incident to the Arab leaders who sent Qadaffi telegrams of support after his planes had been shot down: Do you not think of the seriousness of what this maniac is doing? Do you not think of the innocent lives that could be lost because of Qadaffi's

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