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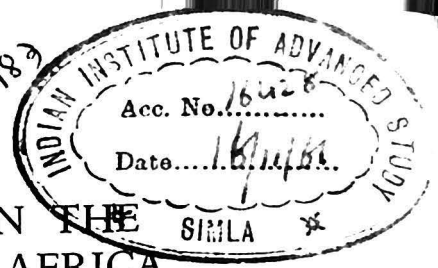
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CONFLICTING PRESSURES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

By THE RT. HON. LORD BIRDWOOD, M.V.O.

Report of a lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, July 2, 1958, Sir Hugh Dow, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Very few words are needed from me to introduce Lord Birdwood to you. He has for long been a member of this Society and well known to most of those present now. Since he retired from the Indian Army some dozen or so years ago he has travelled widely in the Middle East and neighbouring lands and, as you all know, has established for himself a considerable reputation as a lecturer on these subjects. Lord Birdwood has recently made a prolonged journey through North Africa, and is now about to give us some of the impressions he gained in the Middle East and North Africa.

You will notice that we keep on extending the bounds of Central Asia. We extend from Turkey in the west to Formosa in the east, from the North Pole, I believe, down to Malaya, so far our farthest south. Maybe we shall eventually get on to the equator!

THE speaker who begins with an apology in my view is rightly under immediate suspicion from his audience. I would like to have avoided the familiar apology: "there will be many present who know more about the subject," etc. But when I started to go into the implications of the rather pretentious title of my talk I came to the conclusion that, after the recent journey I undertook, I had little to say which had not been said many times before with greater authority. In the circumstances, it seemed that the most useful approach would be to relate some personal impressions of my recent journey to some of the old wisecracks about Arab nationalism, Communism and other "isms" and perhaps in that way give a new look to the stresses and strains of which you are as aware as I am.

What kind of impressions did I gain during the journey? Quite ordinary small superficial impressions. Here, for example, are certain actual moments I remember as of some significance. A small boy running alongside the car on the track outside Mukalla, 350 miles east of Aden, shrilly shouting "Gamal Abdul Nasser." One asks why, only to be told that it is of no significance whatsoever; the boy knows of Nasser because all the other little Arab boys at school with him know of Nasser. One enquires further and discovers that every exercise book at every school—apparently throughout the Middle East—carries on the back of it a blurred representation of Nasser with his historic dentures smiling through the blur. They appear to be the only exercise books available. Thus the small boy's reaction becomes more comprehensible.

In Libya an oil man enters the café-bar of the hotel in Benghazi at ten a.m. shouting his head off, still drunk from the night before, and making an unpleasant background to one's breakfast. One wonders what is the significance of that incident. I hope to offer my own view before I sit

down. The process of cashing a traveller's cheque in a bank in Tripoli, a process which took about half-an-hour. Irritating; but one cannot be upset because they are such a friendly people. One would like to jump over the counter and in an equally friendly way assist the young man to fill in the rest of the form of which one has completed one's own part. But that might create a precedent open to exploitation!

Then the friendly help given when we were changing trains between Rabat and Tangier, with eight small pieces of luggage being carried off in different directions by porters whose help had not been sought; help from a youth to whom I was grateful for putting me on the right train with my scattered luggage reconcentrated. That youth turned out to be a Moroccan Jew. Quite significant. There are many who would have you believe that Arab unity stretches all the way from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, but you suddenly realize that Algeria and not Israel is the focus of attention and that on some line as you cross Libya you step from a world obsessed with emotions about Israel and all the stresses and strains of the United Arab Republic and the Iraq-Jordan Federal Union into a world in which people like to believe that they have their own culture. Those in North Africa do not like to be tied up with that other world. Those are the kind of deductions which seem to me can be legitimately drawn from these rather small superficial impressions.

Libya as I saw it mirrored some of the problems not only of national but of international immaturity. Supposing myself to be in the position of an observer looking down on the Earth from, say, Mars, I can imagine the observer saying: "Those humans on the sister planet have made the most extraordinarily astonishing decisions. They have tried to create a State out of people in the east with tribal feudal traditions and separated by 600 miles of desert and, in the west, people with a settled urban tradition. Surely that is bound to lead to doubt and disturbance in the years to come?" The attempt might be logical if it had sprung from the people themselves, as happened in Pakistan, but when such a thing is imposed by an authority which claims to represent the will of the family of nations, then the Martian is quite justified in despairing of human intelligence on the international plane.

It is, I think, a fact that the British are popular in Libya. That may sound an odd claim in these days but, by and large, it is true. To elaborate that, the British are more popular in the east of Libya than the west; more specifically, they are more popular with the King and the Court than with the rest of Cyrenaica. Nevertheless, there are real bonds of friendship based on Army association. It is, therefore, sad and somewhat curious to note that we are abandoning the one place in the Middle East in which it can be said that our physical presence is welcome; that is in Cyrenaica. Probably by now only one company of a British infantry battalion is left, at the King's behest, in Tobruk. The King has apparently put forward a proposal to build yet another capital at Baida to the east of Benghazi, which if it goes through will make the journey for Deputies from Tripoli over 1,000 miles. I imagine that the issue was soft-pedalled when recently the Libyan delegation came to London to negotiate the continuance of the £3½ million British subsidy. For the moment one can say

that that particular negotiation confirmed the friendly relations existing between our two countries. From the viewpoint of solid old-fashioned practical interest it is—for some time to come—comforting to believe that in the centre of North Africa there is an area where not only British technical assistance is appreciated but British influence is welcome.

I think here it is appropriate to define more precisely the stresses and strains which I have in mind. I would say that there is Egyptian influence and Soviet influence and the two are difficult to separate. There is an American influence, a British influence and a French influence, and across these rather individual stresses and strains there are the strands of the wider rather less tangible movements at work. Arab nationalism, more correctly defined by Elspeth Huxley as racialism; a general western influence which takes the form of thinking in the western way rather than sympathizing with the West; and the intellectual appeal of Communism. I say "Communism" because in the Middle East, as I saw it, I concluded it is the abstract ideological attraction which means rather more than any particular affection for the Soviet Government as manifested in the vastly inflated Soviet Embassies distributed round the Middle East. There is nothing very new in all this. But perhaps some of the manifestations of some of these cross-currents which came to my notice may provide a slightly new look.

The Soviet technique seems to be to use the Embassy as the nerve centre. In Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Beirut, these inflated Soviet Embassies seem to work in fairly close touch with the Egyptian Embassies. In the Soviet Embassies there are extra housemaids, cooks, chauffeurs, and, of course, their interests spread far beyond the kitchen and the making of beds. The technique seems to be that the Soviet Embassy contacts the neighbouring Egyptian Embassy. The Egyptians appear to be used as contact men. Trade Unions are contacted, student groups are contacted, also innocuous women's organizations, the Red Crescent and the Girl Guides, are contacted. And, of course, sooner or later up springs the book-stall, situated conveniently near the local University, smothered with Communist literature. An interesting feature is that this activity seems to be concentrated in the main towns, usually in the capital cities. So far as I know, in the Sudan there are no restrictions on the movements of the Soviet Embassy staff. Yet the Soviet Ambassador himself had only once moved outside Khartoum to visit the hill station Erkoweit at the invitation of the Sudan Government. The activity of the Soviet Embassy is occasionally supplemented by outbursts of hospitality. In November, 1957, they celebrated their fortieth anniversary with a tremendous party of which Khartoum is still talking, with vodka flowing and doves, both cardboard and real, and so on.

The Sudan is under the direction of a Prime Minister who seem to thrive on situations of difficulty demanding decision and a firm hand. Pending a final Constitution and the appointment of a President, a supreme Commission of five exercise nominal supreme authority. But the visitor is impressed by the sense of stability deriving from the personality of the Prime Minister himself, Abdullah Khalil. As to the various influ-

ences, I would say that so long as Abdullah Khalil is in charge Communism will receive short shrift.

At the risk of insulting some of my audience may I place the historic position in Sudan in perspective? You will recall that when in 1953 the Condominium Powers, Egypt and Great Britain, gave Sudan the choice of either Independence or Union with Egypt, that choice was to be made within three years; and lest it should be said that Englishmen lingered on in the administration to influence that choice, every Englishman had to be out of the administration within three years. The result, of course, was a stampede around Europe to find experts; and Danes, Germans, Frenchmen, Swiss and Americans poured in, many far more adventurous than expert. One discovery of a practical nature since made by the Sudan has been that, after all, the Englishman, the devil they know, is perhaps preferable to the devil they do not know. In other words, Englishmen were the best material available, and there is definitely a desire to see them back. But a more profound claim could be made, and it is this: The National Unionist Party under Sayed Ismail el Azhari came into power pledged to a Union with Egypt. During subsequent years the whole climate of opinion in the Sudan changed and the National Unionist Party had to change with it. The comment of the *Economist* at the time was that Azhari had "very sensibly bought Sudanese Independence with the money Egypt had given him to sell it." That was a completely wrong assessment. Egypt certainly gave him the money, but Azhari switched to Independence because he knew that the tide of popular opinion was against him; and he wanted to swim with the tide. But the real point, I feel justified in making, is that whereas the British physical presence had been removed, the British influence lingered on to effect its distant impact on the minds of the Sudanese. That may sound a rather dreamy sort of conclusion, but the point was put to me in that way by people on the spot.

The Sudan has only one policy, and that is the interest of the Sudan. In so far as positive neutrality serves its interests, positive neutrality is adopted; but the emphasis is purely on what suits the Sudan, and it is not a bad policy. There seems little prospect of an understanding with Egypt emerging for quite a long time. At the time of the Suez crisis the Egyptians, as usual, overplayed their hand. They expected Sudan to break off diplomatic relations with Britain, and had Azhari been still in power we could have expected that to happen. We were lucky, with the result that Egyptian pressure on the Sudan only further hardened the attitude of the Government under Abdullah Khalil. Moreover, the issue as to the Nile and its waters remains unsettled, and unless and until that issue is settled we may expect the Sudan to be prepared firmly to resist Egyptian-Soviet penetration. I must, however, in honesty qualify that statement. A peculiar feature of present Sudanese affairs seemed to me to be the fact that the Foreign Minister had ideas about foreign policy which hardly appeared compatible with the policies of his Prime Minister. You will have noted that the initiative for barter trade and economic assistance from Soviet Russia came recently from the Sudan Foreign Minister. The Sudan, incidentally, is extremely touchy in regard to the business of foreign

aid. While I was in Khartoum, Mr. Kitchin, the American, had just concluded an agreement on American aid. The *Sudan Times* published the details and in their columns emphasized the fact that only eight Americans will have diplomatic status and that their privileges will be less than those of ordinary diplomats. No American technicians will join the programmes of work without the prior approval of the Sudan Government. Little hints of that nature suggest that although the Government accept the aid they do not necessarily want to accept a large number of Americans with that aid.

One further feature of Sudan's foreign policy deserves mention. It came as a surprise to me to realize the very close understanding now existing between the Sudan and Ethiopia. I am no expert on the problem of the "Horn of Africa," complicated as it is by the very difficult situation on the border between British Somaliland and Ethiopia and the issue of the reserved areas in the Haud. I would say only this much: that if in our commendable eagerness to keep apace with the stirrings of Somali nationalism and not be left at the post when the Italians next door surrender the Mandate in 1960, we make a move which is viewed with suspicion in Ethiopia, we will also risk damaging our firm relationship with the Sudan at the same time. The Sudan-Ethiopian axis, as one might term it, may be regarded as an element of sanity and stability; to put it simply, friendly rather than hostile. We should wish that friendly understanding to be preserved. The most helpful solution would be for Ethiopia freely to recognize Somali ambitions, and one trusts that British diplomacy is constantly being exerted to further that kind of development.

Switching to Aden there is little new to say because it is now nearly three months since I was there. More than elsewhere it seemed that in Aden there was an understanding of the broadcasting technique and the potentiality of that new weapon. I was assured that the new Aden station was, in fact, being listened to by three out of four of the population. The Adenese will usually deny that he listens but, of course, there are ways and means of discovering whether he is listening or not. The rival voices are the "Voice of the Arabs" from Cairo and the Yemen station, I think in San'a. The latter is ineffective for one reason: that women are not allowed to broadcast from the Yemen and, in contrast, Cairo has its cluster of stars and starlets who are eagerly anticipated and recognized; so that if for no other reason, the Arab world listens. But Nasser frequently tells what are recognized as lies and to that extent harms his own cause. For that reason and for the reason that jamming is regarded as an admission of failure, the Aden station has not yet jammed. But when the new station at Hodeida, in Yemen, being erected with Soviet assistance, comes into commission, then, the officer in charge of the station at Aden told me, they might have to reconsider the decision not to jam; jamming, in any case, is an expensive business; it would cost in Aden £200,000 a year.

I was struck by the similarity of the relationship between the little kingdoms of the two Aden Protectorates and the Governor to that of the feudal India of the Princes and the Viceroy as representative of the Crown. In Aden one noted that the little kingdoms, the sheikhs and sheikhdoms looked to the Governor, and there was the same solicitude for

their independence, the same guarantees of protection and, indeed, the same vagueness in some of the treaties.

The situation in Aden is particularly complicated by the position of the Sultan of Lahej, with his territory stretching like a wedge from the Yemen frontier down to the Colony itself. The Sultan is a young man who is mistrusted both by the British and his own colleagues; he is, in fact, a complete misfit. He claims to have a close friendship with the Imam of Yemen and would therefore have us believe that it is up to us to ask him to act as mediator in future negotiations, as between Yemen and British authority in Aden. He is in a difficult position and one has to admit of mild sympathy for him; for while the little sheikhs perhaps stand still in regard to matters of social and constitutional progress, he at least looks forward, though perhaps not quite in the right direction. It may be that the Sultan of Lahej sees himself as the first President of a South Arabian Republic under benevolent Yemeni patronage. We do not know exactly what he wants. We do not know what relationship to the Yemen the advocates of an independent South Arabian Republic contemplate. All we know is that Yemen claims the whole area and that, with the probable exception of Lahej, the last thing the other sultans and sheikhs desire is to find the Protectorates under Yemeni control.

I suggest that the recipe for a policy in Aden is still a blending of strength and sympathy. There may have been a time when we could have dangled as a kind of political carrot in front of the Aden intelligentsia the concept of an autonomous Aden territory in which, perhaps, the federal element of the sheikhs, by then federated, would have, in turn, federated with the Colony and that the whole would be in some relationship within the British Commonwealth. I would like to think that the time when we could still dangle that carrot has not passed. Bearing in mind the simplicity of winning goodwill by merely supporting nationalist tendencies, it is in my view something which should not be set aside. It seems that at last the initiative of Federation is to come from a strong group of the sheikhs themselves. If so, then the stage is most certainly set for a new scene. In days when the technique of publicity can either make or mar a policy, I would only wish that we do not neglect the power to steal some of the thunder of the enemy. We have not seen the end of this drama. Undoubtedly the Yemenis, pushed from behind by the United Arab Republic, are never going to abandon the claim for the physical possession of the Aden Colony. The future is obscure with difficulties. When the next round takes place it will more than ever be charged with an international potential.

Finally, in this somewhat illogically arranged gallop around the Middle and Near East, let me come to Tunisia and its surrounding problems. Much has happened since over two months ago my wife and I climbed on to the 'bus at Tripoli and set off in a dust-storm for Tunis, stopping a night in Gabes, the French garrison town in Southern Tunisia. Here a Gilbert and Sullivan situation seemed to govern the conditions in which the French garrison were huddled behind their wire in a game of shadow boxing with the Tunisians. The troops surrounded by wire and protected

by sandbags, the sentries and their Sten guns at the alert, looked very *beau geste* indeed; but their women folk and children were around the town shopping without any worry, and in the evening the soldiers in civilian clothes turned up at the local restaurant and drank their wine quite happily.

At that time there were some 22,000 French troops scattered about in six garrison towns with, of course, the big base in Bizerta as the focus. When in 1956 the French recognized Tunisian independence there was a loose understanding that French troops would be withdrawn, with the exception of those at Bizerta. Naturally the Tunisians said the French troops were kept there for the obvious reason of conducting operations against the Algerian resistance. Well, it has taken the Fascist, de Gaulle, two weeks to solve that problem which had not been solved in two years by successive French governments. It remains to be seen whether de Gaulle will now complete the process and bring peace and contentment to North Africa. In order to do this, one condition is essential, and that is that he should have a clear understanding with President Bourguiba. The sooner they can meet the better. President Bourguiba is a formidable man. He has looks, energy, charm and a remarkable power of oratory. He also fully understands and appreciates the functions of publicity. He has little time for files, which makes things difficult for his ministers and his secretaries. When I attended one of the famous Press conferences he holds about once a fortnight, he spoke for ninety minutes, and although I can understand very little Arabic my attention was completely held. He spoke with astonishing power of expression. His people give him the same adulation as the Egyptians give to Colonel Nasser. But while President Bourguiba may be a demagogue and something of an actor, he is also a statesman. I would say that so long as Western policies permit him to do so, he will resist Soviet-Egyptian penetration.

There is no Communist party in Tunisia and *L'Humanité* is the only French newspaper not for sale there. As a Tunisian nationalist Bourguiba has suffered at the hands of the French, but he would be the first to admit that the French have achieved much, economically, socially and culturally in North Africa. He hopes that North Africa will finally find its way of independence, into a firm alliance with the West. If he and de Gaulle together can see that final consummation of our hopes, then they will most certainly have served the cause of international peace.

But there are many obstacles ahead. I would, in analysing a very difficult situation, hold fast to a principle and say that whatever problems Algeria may have posed for France in the past (and we certainly within our colonial experience have never had such an experience as France has had in Algeria) it is surely the simple truth to assert that no one can turn Algerians into Frenchmen merely by passing legislation which says that they *are* Frenchmen. Many who have never been to Algeria might be puzzled by the extraordinary manifestations of friendship as between Algerians and Frenchmen which took place on May 13 and the following few days. Having visited Algeria for a short time in 1956 I did not attach much significance to those manifestations. As I see it, the Muslims

as a whole are heartily sick of the war and that, as in Cyprus, they long for release from intimidation; and intimidation in Algeria has to be related to the terrible crimes that Algerians have committed against Algerians in their country. This, together with the prospect of equality of status with Frenchmen rather than *becoming* Frenchmen, with some careful organization by the Committees of Public Safety, accounted for the popular fraternal demonstrations.

And so when de Gaulle repeatedly spoke passionately of ten million Frenchmen (and remember, he never used the word "integration") we were, I think, witnessing an interesting psychological conflict within the General's mind. On the one hand, was the passionate patriotic Frenchman in a visionary rather than a practical way, thinking of Algeria as a creation of France, and so speaking of ten million Frenchmen. On the other hand, there was the unsuspected statesmanship which appreciated the force and logic of Algerian "nationalism"; therefore, hints were thrown out about a North African Federation of the three African territories in loose association with France with, perhaps, the precedent of the British Commonwealth at the back of the General's mind. "Integration" in so far as it is inferred is an integration within Algeria rather than integration of Algeria with France.

The danger seems to be that if too long a time is allowed to elapse before de Gaulle declares in far more definite terms his Algerian policy, then Colonel Nasser will enter the lists, and compete more forcefully and aggressively for control of the Algerian resistance movement, the F.L.N. The fear when I was in Tunisia was that French policies in Algeria would force Bourguiba to a choice. Either he would continue his open support of the Algerian resistance movement, maintaining his position and precipitating a war with France from which no one could profit; or he could abandon that support and fall, in which case control of North African nationalism would pass to Cairo. Popular though the President is with his people, they, if faced with the choice of abandoning support for Algeria or abandoning their President, would undoubtedly abandon their President.

The development we should all hope to see now would be the firm control of the Algerian resistance passing to Tunis; and already de Gaulle's liberalism has done much towards encouraging that. Whereas after the Tangier Conference the Istiqlal, Neo-Dastour and F.L.N. seemed to have the firm intention of setting up an Algerian Government in exile—which I believe was the last thing President Bourguiba wanted—that idea seems to have been abandoned. But Nasser's influence is never far away. Nothing could have been more mischievous than his recent declaration that the United Arab Republic would support Algerian resistance up to the hilt, that declaration coming at the one moment when the tide had turned and de Gaulle's liberal ideas seemed to be fastening on to North Africa.

As I see it there are many surprises in store in Algeria. It would seem that General de Gaulle has his own peculiar form of "League of Empire Loyalists" to contend with. The Committee of ex-Service men in Algeria have several cards yet to play. The withdrawal of French troops to Bizerta

(in Tunisia) has thoroughly upset the Public Safety Committees in Algeria. Tunis, so far as the Committees of Public Safety are concerned, has always been regarded as French territory.

But the climate does seem due for a change. The emphasis on equality of rights of French and Muslims, at the expense of "integration," by M. André Malraux, the new Director of Information, is a sign that North Africa—which, as I have said, takes pride in its own particular way of life—may yet be preserved for co-operation and friendship with the West. If so, we in the West, particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, will be free to devote more time and thought to the real Imperialism in the Kremlin.

Which brings me back to the point at which I listed the various influences. I have tried to paint a picture of British influence which may be less evident on the ground but is far more certain in the minds of men and their governments; of French influence, which is not so much on the wane but is rather undergoing transformation; the French are being brought to face up to the experiences which we have, of our own choice, left behind us. I have not referred to United States influence except in so far as I told a significant story, indicating the position which seems to me to be that, with the best will in the world, the policies in the State Department are over and over again defeated by nothing more formidable than bad manners. America does not yet seem to have learnt how to mix-in unobtrusively yet effectively. One of the most vivid examples of their methods is the vast installation at Wheelus Field. 12,000 United States citizens were put down on the Libyan coast, bringing with them the life and resources of the Middle West. There was a township of clubs, theatres, cinemas, and stores and food imported in millions of tins—all from America. I found myself pondering this extraordinary phenomenon, and its social effect on the Libyan countryside. As a crude contrast to the specious promises of a rival system the effect is disturbing. It deprives us of the arguments which we would like to use, and should use, when we try to defend the free democracies and compare them with Soviet Imperialism. Nothing, after all, could be more cynical than the Communist's enthusiasm for "Nationalism" in the Middle East and his complete refusal of it in Hungary and the captive European nations.

I suggest that while in no way neglecting the positive, active measures which apply to what is appropriately called the "Cold War"—whether in the Middle East or anywhere else—such measures will fail if they are unsupported always by the process of the Western communities of free nations continuously putting their own house in order: and that involves building up a new and individual relationship as between ourselves and a Middle Eastern nation, based not so much on the common hopes and fears which govern "bloc" relationships, as on the intrinsic merit which we have to offer as an individual people who are never content to rest on our laurels.

The CHAIRMAN: We have a few minutes left and I have no doubt Lord Birdwood will be willing to try to answer any questions which may arise out of his address, which has roamed over a fairly large field.

Dr. ROLAND BRAMLEY: What puzzles one is the fact that the Soviet

open bookstalls opposite the Universities. Why cannot the British do likewise and sell the people better literature?

Lord BIRDWOOD: We take the view that so long as the "Hot War" is not declared it is illogical to conduct normal diplomatic relations with a power, on the one hand, and at the same time allow that same official agency to put up hostile bookshops and so on. We believe that to be the democratic way in which to proceed. So it is left to unofficial agencies to put up the bookstalls. Unfortunately, they are not up to their responsibilities in the matter. If some firm with interests in the Middle East, an oil company for instance, came forward prepared to finance anti-Communist literature it would be welcomed. But while we take the attitude that it is not playing the game to adopt the same methods as the Soviet—they having adopted methods which apply to a "Hot War" rather than a "Cold War"—the provision of bookstalls, etc., must be left to private enterprise, and as yet private enterprise has not caught up with the task.

Mr. CONNOR: When Glubb Pasha spoke to the Society on the Middle East he had recently returned from Russia and he mentioned the same subject: he said he had approached H.M. Government time and time again. The point he made was that it does not mean going against democracy, but if there is an uneducated Bedouin and all he reads is the Russian angle, that is all he knows. Unless we can put up something else for him to read, he will listen to and adopt the Russian views.

Lord BIRDWOOD: The actual Communist propaganda is not aimed at the Arab in a general sense because, after all, he is not sufficiently literate to understand. But, of course, pure nationalism which takes the form of a bitter attack on the ways of the West is something which the Bedouin can understand; and in so far as that is the message, the Egyptians put it over with Soviet support. The actual message of Communism is aimed at the intelligentsia, particularly young students in the Universities. The contact is first by Egyptians and then discussion groups get together in the evening.

Dr. ROLAND BRAMLEY: Lord Birdwood said we have to play the game, but there will be no game for us to play in the future: others will win because we do nothing about the matter now.

Lord BIRDWOOD: I would not put it quite in that way. There is much being done to influence the foreign Press. Nevertheless, I agree that there has to be more positive direction, but it is difficult to formulate in terms of an actual plan what form that positive direction should take. I believe the B.B.C. technique is extremely effective at the higher level. The B.B.C. year after year have adopted the objective approach of giving facts and undoubtedly that has been very effective. One hears over and over again in Damascus and elsewhere of Arabs who own their own wireless sets checking up on what is happening in their country by listening to the B.B.C. That should be supplemented by something which has a more vivid appeal for the café audience. But one cannot get away from the fact that so far as the vivid appeal to café audiences is concerned Nasser will always be one jump ahead because there is his pledge to satisfy national aspiration. It is necessary to face up to that. The solution is here and there to get in ahead of Nasser when there is something that can be promised. There is the chance at Aden, with a new Constitution being

introduced next December with, for the first time, an elected majority in the Assembly. Let us get in on that straight away and broadcast it to the Protectorate day after day. There is another chance, as I understand it, in Somaliland where elections are coming on. Somaliland will be a happy hunting-ground for Colonel Nasser if we do not do something to get one jump ahead.

Mr. WHITTEREN: Have the Russians trading interests, quite apart from stirring up trouble, in the Middle East?

Lord BIRDWOOD: Yes; I would say that their object is always to use trade as a means of putting across the political message because so far Russian offers in the Middle East are such as they could not expect to make a trading profit on them. They offered ten million pounds to Libya as a gift; they offered to build a hospital in Libya. I would say that the object of Soviet trade in the Middle East is to slip in Commissars amongst the technicians in order to spread the message, but one imagines that they hope one day to get a dividend.

Colonel ROUTH: Lord Birdwood's description of the position of the F.L.N. and the French was very clear. I would like to know whether in his opinion the F.L.N. are prepared to forego their claim to independence in favour of working with the French?

Lord BIRDWOOD: Put that way, I would say "No," but there are difficulties in regard to independence. With pressure brought to bear on them from Tunisia and Morocco I feel the F.L.N. would be prepared to dilute their demands in regard to independence to a very great extent. It is something which should be represented as a bargain as between what the French would accept and what the F.L.N. would accept. In other words, the F.L.N. have definitely abandoned the idea of an independent Algeria out of relationship with the French—at the moment.

Mr. PHILIPS PRICE, M.P.: Is there any hope of getting a body of opinion in Aden itself on the British side as against Nasser? Is there, on the whole, a friendly feeling within the area governed by the Governor?

Lord BIRDWOOD: Yes, but unfortunately it is not articulate. There is a large Indian community and the last thing they would wish is to see the Yemeni ambition satisfied. They would wish the British to remain just as the Turks, it seems to me, would like us to remain in Cyprus. Then there is a mixed community of Somalis and those who do not feel strongly one way or the other. It is complicated by the enormous numbers of Yemeni labourers who drift into the Colony all the year round knowing they can get good wages. As to whether local members of the South Arabian League can ever be "won over," I would not feel competent to express an opinion. It is difficult to establish relations with people who want to remove you. The South Arabian League have not yet defined what they see as their future relationship with the Yemen...

The CHAIRMAN: It now only remains for me to thank, on your behalf, Lord Birdwood for what I think we all agree has been an extremely interesting and stimulating lecture. He has roamed over a very wide field and if I were not on the platform there are a number of questions I might have asked. I am left with the rather uncomfortable feeling that the British are perhaps, in the absence of any very definitely policy, inclined

to leave things a little late before taking action, particularly in the matter of propaganda and so on. Here we are in the Yemen apparently hogging at the fact that it will cost £200,000 to start jamming. We are going, apparently, to wait until the situation will be much more serious and this new and powerful instrument has been erected with Russian aid. Then we shall embark on spending the £200,000. In fact, there could not be a clearer case of having no jam today or yesterday but jam tomorrow! It seems to me it would be much better in this instance if there were jam today. Lord Birdwood, we thank you very much indeed for your lecture. (Applause.)



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