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LIBYA

AL-QADHDHAFI SPEAKS OUT ON VARIOUS ISSUES

Beirut AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI in Arabic 24 Feb 86 pp 12-17

[Interview with Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi by Walid al-Husayni: "Al-Qadhafi Warns Gulf Countries: If Oil Quotas and Prices Are Not Adjusted, Gulf War Will Spread to All Oil-Producing Countries in the Region"; in Tripoli, date not specified]

[Text] You come upon the Libyan Sea from the air or from the Surt-Tripoli road and you see a calm, quiet sea. Meanwhile, people and radio stations are saying and the news agencies and the world press are reporting that the Sea of Surt is the event-filled region that can lead the area to the brink of war.

You enter Tripoli and find scores of progressive world leaders and American groups who chose to visit Libya during its confrontation with Reagan to underscore the fact that Reagan's ban on American travel can be defied in the same way that Libyans have defied his fleets and aircraft carriers.

You look for al-Qadhafi amidst this hectic climate warning of a military confrontation with the greatest power in the world and you find him atop an agricultural tractor tilling the land or on vacation in the desert with his wife and children. You miss him here only to find him suddenly in a meeting with the pan-Arab leadership of the Arab revolutionary forces or in long meetings with Palestinian and Lebanese national leaders. You watch him on Libyan TV at his tent receiving envoys and delegations only to hear that he was in Algeria on a unionist mission with Chedli Bendjedid and, upon expecting to see him returning from Algeria, you suddenly find him on a military boat at the farthest point he declared out of bounds to the American navy at a time when American maneuvers had reached their highest level.

You try to steal a little of his time, but French involvement in Chad takes him away from you.

And just when you think that he is most busy, he suddenly expresses a wish to talk to you, and exciting and serious surprises start following one after the other through this interview.

[Question] How do you perceive the end of the American-Libyan conflict?

[Answer] I do not perceive an end to this conflict so long as there is an American imperialist policy striving to contain the world and seeking to bring all regions under its influence. Basically, the conflict is not between Libya as such and America as such or between an American president and a Libyan president. What we have between us is a clear and glaring example of the kind of relationship that is inevitable between America, with its imperialist orientation, and between every country in the world seeking liberation and a safe and peaceful existence. There is a great contradiction between America and the countries of the world which can only be resolved through a broader conflict and, consequently, more intensive popular resistance to American ambitions.

This must not hide the fact that the conflict is ultimately between the superpowers; namely, the socialist camp and the imperialist camp, or the Soviet Union and the United States. The victims of this world conflict, however, are the other peoples, because the superpowers cannot clash without passing through areas inhabited by weaker peoples. America believes that it cannot surround the Soviet Union unless it occupies the Arab Nation and controls the Mediterranean Sea, thus extending its bases from West Europe across the Mediterranean to the Arab countries, all the way to its chief base in occupied Palestine, and its bases in the Indian Ocean, the Philippines, and the Pacific Ocean.

It is a strategic encirclement that can only be achieved by subjugating all the people in this region, from the Philippines to the Arab countries, and all the way to those countries that have not entered into alliances with it, such as West Europe, and those who refused to be one of its bases, as Israel has become. The United States believes that these regions must come under its influence and that is why it brandishes all kinds of weapons, from provocation to terrorism to force.

In Libya we mean more than that to the United States. We are the force that awakens Arab zeal through our progressive unionist concept. America believes that Arab unity represents a real blow to its interests and influence which it has realized through divisiveness and its agents in the Arab nation. Therefore, in its conflict with us, it tries to destroy the serious unionist liberationist endeavor in the Arab nation.

Dialogue with America Is Useless

[Question] With the exception of provocative maneuvers and the concentration of fleets and aircraft carriers, are there contacts between you and the United States?

[Answer] Several countries have tried to mediate between us and the United States, such as Yugoslavia, Greece, Malta, Algeria, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. The United States has rejected such efforts, however, insisting on realizing its ambitions by threats, force, and economic warfare.

From the outset, we have been of the opinion that dialogue with America is useless and that confrontation is the only solution. When we accepted

mediation, we really did not want it. Our acceptance was meant to confirm to our friends and Arab brothers America's real objectives in its confrontation with us. We wanted friendly and fraternal countries to see for themselves that America's pretenses are different from its goals.

We are more determined to bring other elements into our conflict with the United States which, should it persist in its provocations, will force us to take the battle, through revolutionary forces and our allies, to America itself and to the heart of its military bases. We will keep up this action until America adheres to its borders and leaves us, as Arabs, alone to liberate ourselves, unite, and build our future.

We Are Prepared for Air Strikes Against Israel

[Question] Arab sources told AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI that you prepared for a naval strike in the Israeli heartland to preempt a military action Israel had threatened to undertake against Libya following the Vienna and Rome operations. Did you really prepare for such a strike and what led you to cancel this action?

[Answer] It is true. But we prepared for an air and not a naval strike. We gave up this option at the last moment, however, because it was limited retaliation and this is what we do not want. We were hoping that Israel would attack Libya because that would have meant war which would have given us the right to undertake military operations that would only have ended with destruction of the Zionist entity itself.

We wanted the Zionists to carry out their threats so as to surround them everywhere and attack them from everywhere, thus declaring a state of war and bringing everything in this region under the law of war.

America Obstructed World Decision

[Question] Do you believe that the American "veto" of the Security Council bill to condemn Israel for hijacking the Libyan plane has accorded international legitimacy to your decision to go after Israeli aircraft?

[Answer] Of course. This is true. Precedence is one of the sources of law. Therefore, my decision to go after Israeli civilian aircraft was not announced until after the United States permitted such an action by using the right of veto in the Security Council. We waited for world conscience to have its say in this regard, but America had rendered the world callous so we had to follow their example.

[Question] Did you pave the way for your decision to go after Israeli aircraft with Arab and international contacts?

[Answer] We informed our allies and friends of our decision before making it public, but we did not consult with them. We told them that we were going to adopt such a decision and were informing them prior to making it public, but we did not ask for their advice.

[Question] How long will the decision remain in force?

[Answer] We will not tire and will not let up. The day will come when we will definitely triumph over them.

[Question] Does your position as commander of the Arab revolutionary forces mean that any operation undertaken by an national leadership faction is subject to your prior approval or can certain operations be carried out on the sidelines as part of the faction's own program without checking with you?

[Answer] Leadership does not mean going into details and approving everything. This is the job of the field command whereby the commander approves each individual operation. My command is not a field command, but rather a political, revolutionary, national one aimed at mobilizing the political, revolutionary, and national effort for the sake of liberation and unity. As for the means of implementation and target selection, they are part of the private program of each organization and may be part of its secrets, and therefore we cannot ask the organizations to tell us about them, nor do we give ourselves the right to know about them.

Suicide Teams' Mission

[Question] During the session of the popular conference, a heated and intense discussion occurred about the formation of suicide teams. Will such teams operate in the shadow of the current level of tension, or will this role be limited to missions in retaliation for American or Israeli aggression against Libya?

[Answer] The fact is that the role of suicide teams will depend on aggression against Libya or any other Arab country, be it by America or Israel. We, as a national command, represent the entire Arab nation. Therefore, any Israeli or American aggression against the Arab nation will mean, by necessity, the unleashing of suicide teams to counteract such aggression.

[Question] Despite the popular outrage generated by the American-Libyan confrontation throughout the Arab nation, reaction by Arab labor federations and unions has been cool insofar as their failure to adopt severe measures against American planes and ships in retaliation for the American boycott of Libya. To what do you attribute this attitude?

[Answer] This is because the federations and unions have become state-controlled. While we are proud of the massive demonstrations staged all over the world by labor and popular organizations in support of Libya, it is regrettable that such action was not undertaken in the Arab nation because of the official character of such organizations.

Workers and organizations demonstrated around American embassies in many places, clashing with their own police, except in the Arab nation where the governmental theory is supreme; hence, our struggle is to replace it with the popular theory.

No Mediation, No Truce with Egypt

[Question] How true are the news reports about a Sudanese role between Libya and Egypt?

[Answer] No, no, they are groundless. We are not looking for any kind of mediation with Egypt. Meeting with Egypt is conditional on a one-point agenda: to discuss its departure from the [Camp] David stable. This must be made perfectly clear.

We will not accept mediation and will not accept a truce. We will tighten up our boycott measures against it and will make all those who try to lift the blockade pay the price, be they individuals or countries.

Any individual or state that invests in Egypt to help it counteract the effects of the Arab boycott imposed by the Arab League is considered to be working against the Arab will and the sacred national cause.

[Question] Then how do you explain Libyan support of the new Sudanese government that has maintained its special relations with the Egyptian regime?

[Answer] Everything in Sudan is temporary now. There is no fixed policy because there is no fixed authority.

The 6 April revolution has been put on hold temporarily because a temporary military council has come to power and has set up a provisional government. In other words, everything in Sudan now is provisional, based on the triumph of the 6 April revolution and the people. Consequently, we will naturally be on Sudan's side at this stage, because we are on the side of its popular revolution which has created the present situation. But when the temporary situation comes to an end and the people's authority is established, it is certain that there will not be any kind of relations with any regime that recognizes the Israeli enemy, be it Egyptian or any other rule.

We will be on Egypt's side when it assumes its leadership of the liberation and unity battle, as it did in 'Abd-al-Nasir's time. But when it leads apostasy and defeat, we will not support it, neither in Sudan nor in Libya nor anywhere else in the Arab nation.

This Is Our Position on Events in Aden

[Question] Libya's position on events in Democratic Yemen has not yet been classified. Can you shed some light on this matter?

[Answer] Information we have received so far says that the fighting has actually stopped, but the country is still sitting on a time bomb.

Unfortunately, there is a possibility that the fighting will resume and this will be regrettable and painful.

We have regretted the outbreak of fierce fighting in Aden that claimed thousands of victims whose blood would have been enough to liberate Palestine or fully liberate the area surrounding Yemen.

It is not easy, however, for anyone to respond to people who have destroyed their country in such a fashion. What kind of assistance can be offered so long as they have recklessly destroyed their civilian targets with strategic missiles?

In general, the new forces in Yemen are unknown to us. We have heard one or two names we know, such as 'Ali Salim al-Bid. The fact is that he is a young revolutionary and our friend. I met him personally at the summit conference which was held before 'Abd-al-Nasir's death. The man has come to Tripoli several times, and I have come to know him well through these visits. I consider him a personal friend, and he is the only second- or third-line leader whom we in the Libyan leadership know and consider a friend. Nonetheless, we are not sure whether he is actually running the show or whether he is merely a figurehead because the names we know are gone. 'Ali Nasir is out of power, and 'Ali Antar, Salih Muslih, and 'Abd-al-Fattah Isma'il have been killed. These were the leaders we knew, but the new names are unknown to us. We hope that the brothers in Yemen will keep Yemen as a revolutionary country opposed to reactionism and imperialism and serious about realizing Yemeni unity, liberating Muscat and Oman, and not betraying the revolution.

If there is a danger of resumed fighting, I call upon all sides to negotiate. We in Libya declare our readiness to mediate between 'Ali Nasir and the rest of the brothers so that they will not once again turn to arms to settle their differences.

Oil War, Gulf War

[Question] The Jamahiriya has witnessed massive movement at the oil price level. Have you arrived at a plan to deal with this situation?

[Answer] I view the subject of oil as a matter of a real war which is very destructive. It is no less significant than the war of planes and warships that destroy factories and the economic effort of any country.

This war is directed against Libya, Iran, and Algeria. These three countries have suffered great harm. Those who have declared the oil war on these countries are as bad or worse than those who have declared military war.

Before I shed light on the most serious point in this question, I would like to go back to some of the beginnings. We know that Saudi Arabia was not responsible for this matter in its early stage because the excesses that have created the current oil situation were committed by other Arab countries, notably Iraq, and some OPEC members such as Nigeria at earlier times, and some Arab emirates such as al-Shariqah and Abu Dhabi; I exclude Dubayy. These countries acted outside the organization, exporting their oil at the whim of the rulers in any quantities and at any price.

These countries are the ones that violated the production level of no more than 16 million barrels a day. Saudi Arabia had warned repeatedly against the dangers of such practices on the future of the oil market, but no one paid heed. Now it has absolved itself of this commitment and has begun flooding the oil market.

Now, Saudi Arabia is responsible for everything that is happening, but the reason was that those countries failed to abide by the set quotas. Saudi Arabia, by its recent behavior, is committing the same sin, even though I exonerate it and stand by it because it always used to cry out against production and price manipulation, but the others used cunning to sell above their quotas at low prices. But the Saudi step has had serious consequences on countries such as Libya, Algeria, and Iran. If Saudi Arabia does not return to its quota of 3 million barrels or less, the situation will deteriorate. Here I would like to reveal an important secret which is that the recent stage of the ongoing Gulf war was in reply to this situation. I warn the Gulf oil-producing countries that this war will spread and escalate unless all parties reduce production to the allowable levels.

We in Libya, Algeria, and Iran cannot face the oil war against us with silence. Therefore, the Gulf war will escalate through new outbreaks unless prices and quotas are honored.

I had predicted this to the Italian newspaper, STAMPA, but they neglected to publish it. Before Iran crossed the Shatt al-'Arab, I said that if prices were not adjusted and excessive production was not halted, a serious escalation in the Gulf war would take place in a few days.

Today I predict through AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI that the war will escalate and spread to include all oil-producing countries in the area if the Gulf oil-producing countries do not stop the price and production war, because this war against us is very dangerous. They are waging a war against our livelihood, the health of our elderly, and the education of our children. This we will not allow.

American Looking for Bases in Chad

[Question] Once again, Chad has returned to the limelight. What is your position following France's compliance with Hissein Habre's request for French troops in Chad?

[Answer] I concluded a friendly agreement with Mitterand in Crete based on the following points:

1. Libya and France would abstain from sending military troops to Chad, regardless of the developments.

We expected Goukouni and Habre to keep up their struggle because struggle in Chad is tribal, sectarian, and racial, and regardless of the duration and intensity of the conflict, Libya and France must abstain from sending in their troops.

2. Should French or any other foreign troops enter Chad, Libya would have the right to return its troops to Chad.
3. France and Libya would make every effort to find a peaceful solution to the Chadian problem and to push the warring parties to negotiations.

Since that time, we have made exhaustive efforts to solve the Chadian problem by peaceful means and by urging the parties to negotiate. We have succeeded in convincing some of our friends to negotiate with Habre, such as General Jibril Juko and others. They have, in fact, negotiated with Hissein Habre, but we were surprised by the sudden outbreak of fighting since we in Libya were preoccupied with the sea and our confrontation with America.

We learned later that Goukouni had uncovered an imperialist ploy to establish Habre firmly in Chad and a plan to build American bases in the heart of Chad.

The United States has informed France of its desire to set up military bases in Chad in view of the fact that France has bases in the Cameroon and Central Africa, around Chad, in addition to its bases in Gabon and the Ivory Coast, and therefore does not need bases in Chad. Its troops in its African bases are capable of operating inside Chad at any time.

The fact is that the United States is now building a base in Niger and is getting ready to build another one in Chad. When Goukouni discovered that his country was going to be sold and that Line 16 was a permanent line dividing Chad into two countries, and at a time of tense relations between us, he undertook to attack at his own risk.

The attack was launched at a time Goukouni considered to be ideal for him following his success in unifying the political front after exhaustive meetings held in Benin, Brazzaville, Algeria, and finally Barday. The unification of the political front led to the formation of a new government and the organization of forces to an extent that prompted Boukouni to believe that continuation of political inaction meant surrender to Habre and subjugation to America and France. Such was his conviction which he based on documents and information he had obtained from Ndjamen, so he relied on himself and waged his attack of which we became aware after it had happened.

This is what prompted us not to support him in any way in this war. We called upon all sides to return to peaceful negotiations, but France at this point surprised us with an air attack on the Doum Airport, which is far from any military positions and has nothing to do with the war effort. The Doum Airport is the only civilian airport in northern Chad used to receive medicine and food. It is common knowledge that most of the aircraft that use this airport belong to the Red Crescent and the Red Cross and that it has a large number of civilians and engineers who came under a treacherous French attack.

Worse yet, this attack was said to have been ordered by Mitterand himself. I am surprised that Mitterand would issue an order to hit a civilian airport used by the Red Crescent and the Red Cross to receive food supplies for famine victims in northern Chad.

I did, in fact, try to find an excuse for the French president, saying that perhaps he was the victim of misinformation about the purpose of this airport and perhaps he had regretted his action after receiving confirmed reports that the airport was a civilian one. He was misled once again when he was informed that the airport had been totally destroyed, while in fact it had not, and the raid was a failure, as evidenced by the fact that Red Crescent planes have not stopped using it, even though some Red Crescent personnel are hesitant to use it for fear that France may commit the same hideous mistake.

Moreover, everyone knows that Goukouni a short time ago received fighters and held a graduation ceremony for his pilots. Here they are, today at dawn, retaliating against the French raid with a successful raid on the Ndjamea Airport because the Doum Airport is this airport's counterpart. There is a government in the north and a government in the south, and so long as France has given itself the right to try to destroy the Doum Airport, Goukouni has the right to destroy the Ndjamea Airport.

We Will Go On Working for Unity

[Question] We come to your eternal concern, unity. A few days ago, talks about unity were held with Algeria, and there have been news reports about successful discussions with Damascus. What is new on this front?

[Answer] I expect the Algerian talks to culminate in a declaration of unity in the next few months.

[Question] Do you not think that unity with Algeria will reflect on your unity with Morocco?

[Answer] On the contrary, the two unions complement each other, and I perceive in them a confederation among Arab Maghreb countries.

[Question] But don't you think that unity with Algeria will lead to some kind of contradiction with Morocco?

[Answer] No, this will never happen. The Arab-African Federation with Morocco has achieved significant successes and has the strength to go on. The Oujda Agreement allows Morocco and Libya to unite with other countries. Our unity with Algeria, besides our unity with Morocco, will be, as I have already mentioned, a step toward a confederate union among the Arab Maghreb countries. We hope through the two unions to arrive at a solution to the Saharan problem so that we may direct all our weapons at the Zionist enemy.

[Question] What about the Syrian side of the union?

[Answer] The Union of Arab Republics, which includes Libya, Syria, and Egypt, will be modified to make it more effective. I expect to meet with President Hafiz al-Asad soon here in Libya to announce a kind of advanced unity within the framework of the Arab Republics Union.

[Question] Where will Egypt fit in this union?

[Answer] Constitutionally, we consider Egypt to be a member of this union, and we will fulfill our obligations toward Egypt in accordance with the Union's constitution which was approved by the Egyptian people through a referendum.

[Question] What do you mean by fulfilling constitutional obligations toward Egypt?

[Answer] I repeat what I have just said, Egypt is a member of the Union of Arab Republics, and the Union's constitution set forth certain obligations towards Egypt which we will fulfill in accordance with constitutional principles.

[End of interview]

I thanked the leader of the September Revolution for giving me the chance to interview him and for singling out AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI to divulge serious information and significant points. I took leave of the man who is always full of surprises because he always sticks to clarity and hangs on to the dream.

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