

**June 15, 1981**

**Report of the Hungarian Embassy in Egypt on the  
evaluation of the Israeli bombing of the Osirak  
nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981**

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**Summary:**

This report by the Hungarian Embassy in Egypt describes the Egyptian government's surprise at the Israeli bombing of the Osirak nuclear site in Iraq in 1981 and concludes that peace in the region must come through international cooperation and conferences.

**Original Language:**

Hungarian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

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 Frigyes Puja  
 Comrade Foreign Minister  
 Budapest

Political and diplomatic circles are unanimous in their opinion, according to which the Israeli attack against the Iraqi nuclear plant did not only shock the Egyptian leadership but also caused such embarrassment for which there had not been an example for a long time. Although nobody considers it seriously that, at the summit held in Sharm el Sheikh three days before, the Israeli Prime Minister could have informed Sadat about the action or could have made the slightest hint at it, both Cairo and Tel Aviv refuted this most categorically and almost at the same time.

The confusion of Egyptian diplomacy is proved by the fact that for only one day after the Israeli action the foreign officials appearing at the receptions made statements full of

anxiety and they answered all the questions openly. Later on they gave evasive answers, then they were wrapped in silence. At the receptions held a week after the terrorist attack they did not even appear.

The political leadership preparing the action carefully also became pressed for time and they could not act harmoniously. A series of official declarations were published/Presidium, People's Assembly, Consultative Council/, which were phrased in a style unusual since Camp David. At the extraordinary session of the People's Assembly on the 9th, where the Vice-Premier, Foreign Minister Kamal Hasan Aly described the government's position, in the following debate the speaking representatives - both the supporters of the government /NDP/ and of the opposition - gave voice to such demands almost without a difference in tone that were unacceptable for Sadat staking everything on the single card of Camp David.

Although none of the numerous articles released in the press exclude the possibility that the Israeli Prime Minister made this step to increase the chances of his re-election, they see the real causes in the following /at the same time expressing the anxiety felt by Egypt/:

- Begin wanted to provoke Sadat to make such a step which could be an appropriate pretext for Israel to withdraw from the "peace process", to go back on her obligations undertaken in Camp David, to suspend the complete withdrawal from Sinai for an indefinite period of time. They think Begin considers he could bear the

consequences of this in case of his re-election if Egypt provided a pretext;

- By this terrorist action, Begin wants to block the way for other Arab states who would like to join the peace process, because this is the only way he can achieve that he would not have to withdraw from other Arab territories /West Coast/, thus he can maintain Egypt's isolation, postpone the settlement of the Palestine question and maintain the present division of the Arab world;

- he wanted to deal a blow on the forces of the Israeli society wishing peace by dramatically intensifying the atmosphere of endangerment, and he wanted to strengthen demonstratively the notion of the often voiced military superiority. According to another view, the Israeli public opinion does not have to be won over for aggressive politics, as it has supported this kind of politics from the beginning by nature, and the peace process up to now has been a mere bluff; -he wants to raise doubts in the Arab oil-producing states of the Gulf concerning the United States whether she is capable at all of reaching a long-lasting and just settlement in the region;

- he wants to prove that in fighting off the so-called Soviet danger, the United States has only one ally she can count on in the region, namely Israel - not Egypt - if she gets large quantities of modern weapons and economic help further on as well;

- he warned Western Europe opening up to the Palestinians and experimenting with independent initiatives that the settlement of the problems in the region would be possible only together with Israel and not against it even if their oil interests dictated the opposite.

Our Egyptian talking partners do not exclude these motives at all, moreover they add that in case of his re-election, Begin will surely endeavor to realize if not all but some of these goals.

Egyptian foreign officials phrased their opinion in a less speculative way. They emphasized that Egypt had already paid such a price at Camp David that they did not have any other opportunity but to follow the prescribed forced course. They had to hold on until April of 1982, then a lot of things would change. The Baghdad action came at the worst possible time for them, because, as a result of Egypt's diplomatic efforts, in the coming weeks they would have had the opportunity to partially break through their isolation. After the third military supplies agreement signed with Iraq about two weeks before, the settlement of the relations between the two countries had seemed closer. Moreover, they add, they had hopes that more than half of the Arab countries would settle their relations with Egypt.

At the same time, they are not certain about how Israel really thinks. They would like to believe that Israel will fulfill its obligations laid down in the separate peace treaty and will evacuate the part of Sinai still under occupation.

Begin's political environment pollution action [sic] is extremely unpleasant for them. It turned out that the USA, which was forced to show its true colors before time, had not changed its commitments toward Israel to the benefit of Egypt or the Arabs, and the "impartial partner" was rather partial as a matter of fact.

They are afraid that American politics striving for strategic consensus by exaggerating the Soviet danger will be a failure in the Gulf-region as Israel itself has proved by its action that the real danger comes from the Israelis.

In case of the USA's silence, Begin will achieve the creation of such a precedent that could have unforeseen consequences in the region.

According to my evaluation, the crisis resulting from the Israeli action has put more serious obstacles in the way of the realization of the separate agreement reached at Camp David than ever /the sabotage of the talks on Palestinian autonomy, the annexation of Jerusalem, the Lebanese rocket crisis/. At the same time, it may lead to the realization that the settlement of the Near-Eastern situation can be achieved only by international cooperation, within the framework of a Geneva-type conference.

István Fodor

charges d'affaires ad interim