

SPRING 2003

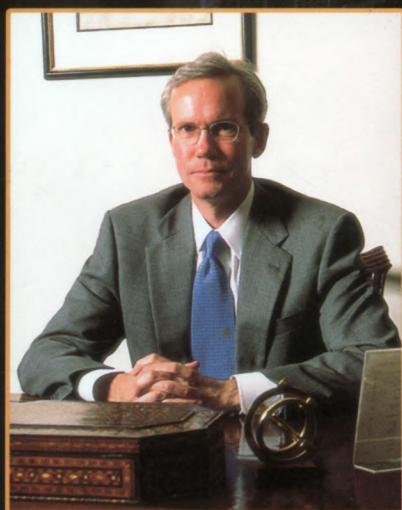
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Featuring
Mohamed Mounir
Raghda
Fathy Salama
El Sakia Center

Hotel Executives
Speak Out

Banking in Egypt
Second in Series



Exclusive Interview with
U.S. Ambassador Welch

Dr. Mostafa El Feki: In-depth insight into the political situation



he Magazine

Volume 5 • Number 2 • Spring 2003

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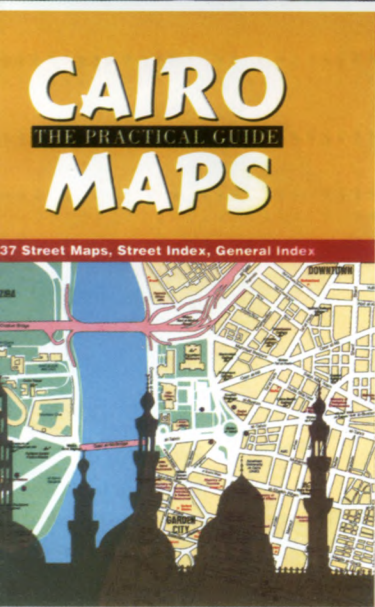
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The Voice of Reason

Mostafa M. el Feki is a National Democratic Party Member of Parliament and as chairman of that august body, the Committee of Foreign Affairs is a vital cog in the foreign relation's apparatus of Egypt. At the time of the interview, the war between Iraq and the American led coalition had been raging for eight days, so it was obviously uppermost in his mind. His opinions on the subject of the war are concise and well considered as they were for all of the situations that were discussed with him and that currently disrupt the Middle East

Mostafa el Feki is definitely a man under pressure and obviously, the events of the past few weeks have taken their toll, yet his analysis of the Iraq War was incisive and ranged from the strategic to the diplomatic.

"The situation has not been clear since the start, and there have already been some surprises. The Iraqi reaction to the aggression is much stronger than the American, British or even the Arabs expected. I don't believe they were fully aware of the Iraqi's ability to resist to the extent they are doing now."

The northern front is also not as effective as was originally thought, as the Turks have not been decisive

with regards to their role in the war. This is why both the American and British troops are attempting a breakthrough from the southern front but the northern front is not as active as it should be.

El Feki did not express surprise at the Turkish government's decision to not allow the coalition forces to utilize their territory, restricting their cooperation to allowing use of their air space.

"The Turks have mixed interests, they wish to aid the Americans as they are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but in the meantime they don't want to be used in the establishment of a separate Kurdish identity. They want to be full partners when it comes down

to deciding the future of northern Iraq but the Americans want to use them as sub-contractors."

In el Feki's opinion, the Kurds are a tool that have constantly been used by the Turks, the Iraqis, the Iranians and the Syrians as it suited them. Now they are a card that is being played primarily by the Americans and the British.

"This is a chronic problem and one that will never be solved because no one agrees with the idea of an autonomous Kurdish state, they will never be allowed their own identity."

El Feki, however, is a firm believer of self-determination for any nation on earth.

"In general, the Kurds are

The Kurds

The true origins of the Kurds remain an enigma but many historians believe that they are the result of frequent layering of cultural and genetic material supplied over a period of up to eight thousand of years of internal migrations, immigrations and cultural assimilations by diverse groups of people from all over the region. The first mention of the Kurds in historical records was in cuneiform writings by the Sumerians in 3,000 B.C, who wrote of the "land of the Karda".

The Kurds have made their own contributions to history in the past as well as now. El Feki reminded us that Salah el Din was the most famous Kurd in history emerging as the greatest military mind on either side of the Crusades. Salah el Din was born into a prominent Kurdish family in 1137 in Tikrit, ironically the same birthplace as Saddam Hussein. In Egypt, he is reknowned for keeping the country out of the First Crusade. He died in 1193, and historians agree that he is one of the world's towering figures.

"Egyptian born Ahmed Shawky, the prince of poetry, was also a Kurd."

Shawky (1868-1932), poet, playwright and translator wrote songs for Umm Kulthum and in 1924 took on Mohammed Abdel-Wahab as a student as well, and enhanced his musical education.

Muslims and they have lived in this part of the world for a great deal of time."

El-Feki has great admiration for the Kurds and feels they have never received the respect and understanding they deserve.

"I have never seen the West being sincere about giving them an independent state."

The only concession, el Feki believes could be made is the formation of a Kurdish federation within the state of Iraq.

El-Feki went on to reiterate his view that the war has not developed as had been expected.

"It is a though we are in a jungle where it is a question of the survival of the fittest"

"Of course, in the end the regime will implode because of the power of the coalition but it will be said afterwards that the collapse occurred after determined resistance. There is a great difference between surrendering immediately and being overpowered after an unequal struggle."

This will result in the Iraqi layman tolerating an Iraqi dictator rather than allowing himself to be subjugated by a foreign power.

"The psychology of the people needs to be understood, especially as we feel that this war is not justified for it is outside the realm of international legality. The war could have been avoided, and we are not saying that because we like Saddam Hussein, of course not, for we know what he has done."

The basis of the current war is dif-

ferent; the two prior wars that Saddam has engaged in were nationalistic and initiated by Iraq. The Iran-Iraq War lasted from 1980 to 1988, permanently altering the Iraqi status quo. This war was closely followed by the Gulf War, which resulted in tough economic and political sanctions. If this was not enough, the Iraqi people themselves suffered unspeakably at the hands of the ruling regime during both of these military adventures.

"Now, we are faced with a multi-purpose war. It is not just a question of oil but other strategic reasons as well, mainly the security and stability of the backyard of Israel because the American want a new Middle East. It is also a means to observe what is going on in Iran and Syria. The Israelis are behind what is going on, for Israeli interests are paramount in America's Middle Eastern policy and they feel that the regime of Saddam and a powerful state like Iraq is always a danger to Israel."

Not only does el Feki question the stated motives of the coalition in initiating this war, he is concerned about the future impact of ignoring world bodies and treaty obligations. He feels that by-passing the UN will create a world with no rules, a world that no one wants.

"It is a though we are in a jungle where it is a question of the survival of the fittest. Egypt has to respect its commitments for it is better to have a "cold" peace with Israel. Any violation of the borders will cause a new war in the Middle East, for if we are involved the whole region is involved."

On June 7, 1981, Israel bombed

Iraq's nuclear power plant at Osiraq and totally destroyed it. The attack was loudly condemned by the United States, United Nations and other world governments and bodies at the time. Israel claimed vindication when a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq 10 years later, warning of the danger of Saddam Hussein's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction, a scenario repeating itself now.

“Power is stronger than courage and there is no comparison in the level of power between the Americans and the British on one side and the Iraqis on the other”

“In 1990 and 1991, there were two theories. The first one suggested a change inside Iraq to enable a peaceful withdrawal from Kuwait without a war but the other theory, mainly supported by the Israelis, called for the destruction of the infrastructure of Iraq.”

Not only does el Feki question the motivations for the war, he questions the conduct of it as well. The world was led to believe that the war against Iraq would be over in a matter of days but it very quickly became clear that the strong resistance had been grossly underestimated and that would not be the case.

“Power is stronger than courage and there is no comparison in the level of power between the Americans and the British on one side and the Iraqis on the other. The Iraqis may be able to resist for some weeks but in the end, with the cities

surrounded, a population bombed day and night and people deprived of water and electricity, it is inevitable that they will collapse. However, this does not mean you (the coalition), have won the war.

“If fact, they (the coalition), have lost the war for the Iraqis are still in good shape. There is solidarity amongst the people and they are not panicking and reacting calmly. This comes as a big surprise because it was expected that the moment the war started, the Iraqis would welcome the invaders and revolt against Saddam Hussein. This is not the case.

“Not all Iraqis are in favor of Saddam Hussein but they wish to

maintain their dignity in their own land.”

“Not all Iraqis are in favor of Saddam Hussein but they wish to maintain their dignity in their own land.”

When asked his opinion of the widely held belief that the Americans have no intention of leaving the area, el Feki said: “They will not leave until they are sure that they have reorganized the region to suit their interests and political strategy and their attitude towards Iran and Syria is a silent ultimatum.”

“The stability of the entire region

Mostafa M. el Feki

Mostafa el Feki was born on November 14, 1944 in Egypt. He attended school in Cairo and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Cairo University.

He began his diplomatic career overseas with an assignment as vice-consul and diplomatic secretary at the Consulate General and Embassy of Egypt in the United Kingdom from 1971 until 1976. During his time in London, he also earned the Ph.D. in Political Science at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

His assignment in London was followed by the post of counsellor at the Embassy of Egypt in the Indian capital, New Delhi, postings interspersed with critical executive postings at the Foreign Ministry in Cairo. On the diplomatic side, his major assignment was as ambassador to Austria and the many international organizations such as International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (U.N.I.D.O.) based there.

In the Foreign Ministry, he rose from secretary of information and follow-up to the president of Egypt in 1985, through many challenging positions to first assistant foreign minister in 2001, followed by his present post of chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs in 2002

He has also found time to participate and take a leading role in the development of the policies of his political party, the National Democratic Party (N.D.P.), and numerous academic activities including teaching at the university level.

is the key. The argument always revolves around the role of Egypt in the future. Some are saying that the new Iraq, the democratic state, will be the model for the region and that it will attract other Arab states to make changes, which will divert attention from Egypt as the leading state to Iraq.”

“The effect will be similar to a world war for it is an open war against another country, which will create a new international legal system.”

It is also said that the Arab world will not be the same as it has been since the establishment of the Arab League in 1945. Dramatic changes in policies will also alter the role of the United Nations.

“The effect will be similar to a world war for it is an open war against another country, which will create a new international legal system.”

There have been anti-war demonstrations around the world, and on a scale never seen before in certain countries, as the emotions of ordinary people run high. When asked how he analyzed this situation, el Feki said: “In Egypt in particular the people are not the same as they were in the '60s or '70s because they are much more mature but of course, they are in total sympathy with the Iraqi people.”

In his opinion, people are greatly affected by what they see on television because of the explicit graphic images that bring viewers so much closer to the reality of war than the

newspaper coverage of the past could. The polarizing of the population of Egypt is a concern.

“You see victims arrested, injured, killed and this is increasing the anger, sadness and criticism of the Egyptian people but still they are mature enough not to destroy their relationship with America. Egypt is a balanced and responsible state by nature. We act according to our commitment to our Arab origins as well as our duty to the international community, which is why we are constantly and strongly criticized. Egypt is not just any country because we are the leading state in the Arab world, and have to think, long and hard before important decisions are made.”

Egypt is a balanced and responsible state by nature. We act according to our commitment to our Arab origins as well as our duty to the international community

El Feki cited the reproof of Syria, who agreed to U.N. Resolution 1441, but has accused Egypt of betraying the Arab world by encouraging the coalition forces to attack Iraq.

“The bigger and stronger you are the more you are criticized because you are always under scrutiny. We cannot afford to proceed blindly, simply led by our emotions like some other Arab nations, and neither can we follow the international trend, ignoring our Arabism.”

El Feki pointed out that the demonstrators in Egypt realize that their country is doing a great deal

and is not in a position to do more.

“We are committed to a peace treaty with Israel, we have strategic and deep relations with America that we have to maintain, the only differences have to do with regional policies such as Iraq and of course, Palestine. In 1945, Egypt was one of the states selected to have a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, India was also considered, for both countries had supported the allies during World War II.”

An overseas state was considered necessary on the Council and Egypt was favored because of its multifaceted identity. The country's strategic location giving the state a Middle Eastern, African and Mediterranean dimension, as well as a society comprised of both Muslims and Christians.

“At the last moment it was said that France could not be ignored because it was an integral part of the European-Christian civilization, so the seat was awarded to them.”

The war will result in an economic loss to Egypt and will pose tremendous problems. Tourism will be badly affected, there will be

“We are committed to a peace treaty with Israel, we have strategic and deep relations with America that we have to maintain”

fewer ships passing through the Suez Canal and Egyptian workers will return from the Gulf States, reducing remittances and exacerbating the unemployment situation.

“Being deprived of our exports to Iraq is also serious as we were averaging \$1 billion per annum.”



Dr. el Feki with his wife and two daughters

Dr. el Feki is a 2001 recipient of the Silver Cross High Honor from the Republic of Austria. Present at the ceremony to bestow the honor were distinguished Egyptian religious, political and scientific personages, including Nobel prize winner Ahmed Zewail.

Family Man

El Feki, father of two daughters and proud grandfather, met his wife, Nagwa Metwally, when they were both members of a youth organization.

“I was studying at the Faculty of Economic and Political Science of Cairo University but Nagwa was still a secondary school, prior to studying at the Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Arts.”

In 1966, they became engaged but did not marry until 1970, shortly after which the couple moved to England where el Feki took up his post at the Egyptian Embassy in London.

As with her husband, Nagwa leads a very busy life. She is president of the Diplomatic Wives' Association (D.W.A.), which is actively engaged in cultural and social, charitable activities as well as the exchange of ideas. It is a very challenging role as there are around 300 wives in the association at any one time, who are, of course, constantly coming and going.

She is also a member of the High Council of Healthcare, a body under the patronage of First Lady Suzanne Mubarak.

“There is now an important connection between the two positions as I am also taking care of one of the government maternity hospitals and it is the main charity project in which the D.W.A. is involved.”

The aim of the group is improve the standard of the hospital for at present it lacks many vital facilities.

“What makes our goals more difficult to achieve is that there is a serious lack of finance. We are trying very hard to raise funds because a lot of medical equipment is urgently required, particularly for the new-born child, such as incubators, which are very expensive. But there are many other things we can do to help, such as encouraging a better relationship between the medical staff and the patients. We also focus on bonding between mother and baby.” The hospital serves a large area.

“Every single day there are between 80 to 100 new patients, making for very hard work.”

What better contribution could Nagwa and her fellow volunteers make than give the next generation a better start in life?



The Arab people are angry for they believe there has been a conspiracy to make them a target because of Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq. They feel the whole world is against Islam and the Arabs.”



Dr. and Mrs. el Feki with their grandsons, Moustafa and Selim

The moment the war is over, el Feki believes that America will move very quickly to begin a p.r. exercise that will change their image and win back support in the Arab world.

“It will take a long time but they will concentrate on making a breakthrough with regards to the Palestinian crisis. Don’t forget that despite all the mistakes committed by the administration of George W. Bush, the announcement through the Security Council of a state of Israel and a state of Palestine is a step forward. It was never mentioned in Clinton’s time or by any other previous president.

“It means that Israel will have fixed borders and if we can build on such a breakthrough it will improve the image of the Americans and the British. The Arab people are angry for they believe there has been a conspiracy to make them a target because of Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq. They feel the whole world is against Islam and the Arabs.”

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, has just begun his second term in office and el Feki stated that that is not encouraging, describing Sharon’s policies as dumb and gloomy.

“President Mubarak congratulated him on his re-election but the invitation to visit Egypt was refused. He is not giving us the opportunity to do anything, for every day he is under more pressure from the Palestinians. I do not think he will be able to deliver. We had hoped that he would be like Menachem Begin, one of those people who want to improve their image at the end of their life, but it seems that a man like Sharon

does not care.”

On the other side of the coin, Yasser Arafat finally submitted to intense international pressure to appoint a premier and 67-year-old Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), the number two in the Palestinian National Authority was confirmed in the position in March. The creation of the post of prime minister should be seen as a positive step towards the renewal of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, but Arafat tried until the last minute to limit the powers of the new position.

In theory, el Feki feels the appointment of a prime minister

under Yasser Arafat is a step in the right direction, but he still holds doubts of its ultimate success.

“Arafat will keep interfering. However, the Palestinian cabinet believes in a true parliamentary system with a prime minister who is in a position to make decisions. It seems that in the Palestinian case, Yasser Arafat will not relinquish any of the power he has grown accustomed to enjoying.”

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enough to cause concern. Israeli has nuclear capability and the stated cause of the current war in Iraq is the alleged possession of chemical and biological weapons by the government. This brought up the question of whether a state such as Egypt should also possess such unpopular “deterrents”.

“The issue of nuclear weapons is irrelevant now for we have made our commitment. Egypt signed the N.P.T. in 1968 under Abdel-Nasser and it was ratified by the Egyptian parliament in 1972 during the time of el Sadat.”

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.) was a landmark international treaty that opened for signature in 1968, and went into force in 1970. The objective was to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and finally unilateral disarmament. 188 parties signed the Treaty, including the five nuclear-weapon States. More countries have ratified the N.P.T. than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty’s significance.

“Encouraged by the Atomic Energy Agency and other organizations, everyone is using nuclear power for peaceful purposes. But with regards to armaments it is an Egyptian initiative to ask the entire Middle East to become a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction.”

El Feki then referred to the arsenal at Israel’s disposal.

“Last November, at the opening

session of parliament, President Mubarak said that we wanted the same criteria applied to Israel as had been exercised in Iraq.”

“Last November, at the opening session of parliament, President Mubarak said that we wanted the same criteria applied to Israel as had been exercised in Iraq.”

Recent events have also spurred criticism aimed at the League of Arab Nations with the public asking about the practicality of an Arab coalition.

“It is impossible for us just to stand up and say that we want integration and unity. No, it needs polit-



ical good will and determination to prove we are ready to accept concessions, that we are ready to understand others. This is completely different from fighting for what we want in the literal sense of the word.”

El Feki admitted that Egypt is facing a number of internal problems, the most serious of which he sees as unemployment and the economic difficulties that will increase

because of the regional situation.

“The Supreme Council of Policies recently circulated a questionnaire aimed at different social sectors to obtain a representative opinion from groups at varying levels of wealth and education. We were expecting them to say that unemployment, the lack of liquidity or transportation problems were their major concern. However, what proved to be the greatest concern to the Egyptian people was the Palestinian question.

“This was number one for we have common borders, so Egyptians feel they have a responsibility towards the Palestinians who do not deserve the predicament they face.”

El Feki’s views and opinions will not be popular with everybody. However certain things are evident-

ly clear; el Feki has a safe and prosperous Egypt firmly in his sights. An Egypt that can proudly take its seat in the commonwealth of nations because it respects, and is respected by its neighbours, allies and even its opponents. El Feki’s respect for the law and open dialogue to solve problems is refreshing in this time of hidden agendas and one hopes his approach is contagious.

Jacqueline Burrell he