

SA - Reliance

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NE - Mr. Kopper

March 10, 1952

NE - Mr. Awalt

Conversation with Prince Saud .

Recent reports have indicated that the Crown Prince is somewhat anxious regarding security of his succession to the throne. These fears seem to be based largely upon frequent sarcastic jibes by the King about the Crown Prince as the future ruler in the presence of the court. The frequency of these comments in recent months have caused Saud to fear that his father may, in a fit of pique, try to settle the succession on some one else.

It is believed that these fears have very little to substantiate them. In the first place the King's derogatory comments are a constant practice which he has levelled at nearly everyone in his court from time to time whenever they attract his momentary displeasure. There is, moreover, no likely candidate other than Prince Saud. All the Princes renewed their pledges of loyalty to him late last year, including both Feisal and Mohammed the two most likely competitors for the throne. There seems to be a complete meeting of the minds between the two senior Princes while Mohammed, who was at one time thought to be a serious candidate, has done nothing in recent years to strengthen his position. Recent reports of Sheikh Abdullah's efforts to groom Prince Abdullah Feisal for succession and the complete agreement between Feisal and Saud have given rise to an interesting conjecture that there is an agreement that Saud will succeed but that the next Prince in line for the throne will be Feisal's son Abdullah Feisal. Such an arrangement would not be outside the bounds of reason and it would be a development which we might well welcome since Saud's sons are not especially outstanding and are all born of Negro mothers. Abdullah Feisal on the other hand is well thought of and intelligent and his succession would help a great deal in healing the breach between the Hejaz and the rest of the Kingdom.

Renewed rumors of possible abdication of the King were circulated with reports that an important announcement would be made within a month or two. If any real substance lay behind such rumors, any success of the medical mission in strengthening the King or alleviating his discomfort might be expected to cause him to delay in this step toward abdication.

Prince Saud has been very active and successful, according to reports, in obtaining pledges of loyalty from the various tribes. He has been cultivating them for many years and the imminence of his succession has prompted him to renew activity in this connection. Abdullah bin Khair told me that

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the Prince had long since put in an order for elaborate press equipment which will be set up in Riyadh in the near future. He said the purpose of this was to weld public opinion in the Nejd more firmly behind the Crown Prince and to get out news periodicals and eventually perhaps a newspaper to keep the people better informed of national and international affairs. At the outset, however, the work of the print shop would have to be devoted to religious tracts in order to win the approval of the Ulema who scrutinize so closely every new step taken in the Nejd. Early plans for the shop called for publication of the Koran which had never been done before in Saudi Arabia.

Abdullah bin Kheir also told me that the Prince was planning to establish a broadcasting station in Riyadh. The principal purpose seemed to be to create a means of direct approach by the Crown Prince to all the people which he could use to advantage when succession occurred. He has asked Arasco to procure the equipment. It was pointed out to him that having the station was not enough, that it could not reach people unless they were accustomed to tuning into it. Therefore, the sooner he could start it operating and get the people accustomed to listening to it over a particular wavelength the better it could serve his purpose. It was suggested that at the outset the reading of religious material would probably be the best means of introduction.

At a private meeting with the Crown Prince on the evening of February 29, he told me that he wanted me to understand that Saudi Arabia's friendship for the United States was very firm and nothing would shake it. He foresaw the possibility of many differences in points of view as was true even among members of a family. He even thought there might be instances where one party might wrong the other in small things. But this was also to be understood and that nothing would disturb the solid foundation of friendship which existed between the two countries. He said Saudi Arabia was making some progress but it needed to make much more. It needed to spread its educational opportunities, to improve its standard of living, develop commerce and bring order to its finances. These were all things which he hoped to attain and he stressed that he wanted nothing from us now but when the time comes he would need moral and technical assistance. He added that Saudi Arabia was a leader among the Arab states because of two things; the presence of the Holy Cities within the Kingdom and the enormous prestige enjoyed by the King. He said that even Iraq acknowledged Saudi Arabia's leadership. Some day, he said, he was going to give more tangible form to this leadership. He said he had plans which he did not wish to discuss in detail now to spark a pan-Islamic movement. He said it could do a great deal of good in the Muslim countries by causing them to work together as a unit but he again repeated that he was not ready to discuss the plan in detail.

I thanked His

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I thanked His Highness for his words of friendship which I knew to be sincere. I assured him that our feelings for him and his country were no less genuine. I also remarked that we were very happy in the King's wise decision to leave the succession on the shoulders of his oldest son, that the progress he had already encouraged in Saudi Arabia was a happy auger of great strides which would undoubtedly be made in future years. I also told him that his information about Islamic unity was very interesting and we would be very glad to know more about it when his plans were more clearly formulated. In general, however, I told him that we would welcome such a movement under his leadership because we could be sure that it would be friendly and wisely led in the field of cooperation which would be best designed to advance the welfare of both the Muslim and Western nations.

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