

# **Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man**

## **Part II**

**By Amir Iskander**

Translated by Hassan Selim

### **CHAPTER 18**

#### **The Gulf and the Western Desert**

With these practical stands, Saddam Hussein was merely expressing his deep-rooted belief in the future development of the Arab nation and the weight of its potential provided by the movement of Arab struggle.

He was also voicing his firm conviction in the importance of ideological independence, and its deep import in relation to both the progress of the nation and the development of its abilities. His relations and dealings with all nations, irrespective of their regime or ideological expressions of their national interests, are based upon this independence so closely related to the national character of his nation and its openness to all international and human trends. His eye is always on the great nation, but his feet are firmly planted in Iraq. His friends are those of this nation, and his enemies are its enemies. Anyone who tries to mar its Arab essence is to him a mortal foe.

Concerning the events in Iran, which are causing chaos in the whole area, and the possibility of intervention in the Gulf by the Americans and Egyptian forces under Sadat, Saddam Hussein said to Francois Deneux:

"We are keeping an eye on matters, but the Americans should not become foolishly involved. For instance, they are making it easy for Sadat to send troops to Oman.

This means provocation in the area, and we are the first to be provoked, and the first to resist. This will facilitate the entry of other troops into the area. There is no danger to the Gulf States. You know we have no expansionist ambitions. If we did, we would now be able to achieve them, but we do not. No foreign or local force enters the Gulf area without our consent. So what danger is there to Qabus that he calls in a force to stir up unrest in the area? (1)"

This determined independent Arab stand does not only apply to the Gulf, but to all parts of the Arab World.

When Saddam Hussein met the Algerian president's personal envoy to Iraq, Muhammad Salih Yahyawi, in August 1979, he said the following about the conflict between Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania over the Western desert:

"We are careful to show our point of view to our Arab brothers without being influenced by personal considerations. We have always made it clear to Morocco and Mauritania that we must not be understood to stand with Morocco and not Algeria. We clearly told their ambassadors that Algeria is closer to us, and shares some of our characteristics, even though we are all Arabs. We are therefore extremely concerned not to offend you, and sanction any stand you think will serve you. We agree with any stand you believe will serve yourselves and the Arab nation. We always follow the same national course, and whoever has the cause close at heart must make a finer appraisal. We are on common ground, and so must voice our opinion. Consequently the brother closest to the cause must have an opinion, and if we fail to devote our full attention to the question of the Western desert, the colonialists will use it to harass you. We take any stand you believe will serve you, the Arab nation, and the matter of its unity (2)."

This determined independent Arab stand, however, is not only applicable to both practical policies, and the assessment of the political directions taken by the Arab countries. It equally applies to all ideological endeavors undertaken by the Arab regimes. Let each regime take the course it chooses, provided its choice is independent and linked to the objectives of the Arab nation and the future of its struggle.

When Saddam Hussein met the President of North Yemen, Abdul Aziz Ghani, in June, 1979, he clearly stated: "We must make any endeavors we can, but not by taking instructions beyond limits, as this will be at the expense of the nation. Human thought has benefited from the Arab conviction, and in its revival stage, the Arab nation will naturally benefit from the experiences of the age (3)."

Furthermore, this determined independent Arab stand is also embodied in Saddam Hussein's vision of relations between the Arabs and Africans. Afro-Arab relations must remain just that, and there must be no intervention from any third party to exploit them to its advantage or direct them according to its interests.

In his 1979 meeting with al-Shazli al-Qubayli, Secretary General of the Arab League, Saddam Hussein said:

"The French proposed the idea of having a European-Arab-African dialogue, but we believe this to be a pompous formula owing to the imbalance of power between the three parties. We are agreeable to a European-Arab dialogue, a European-African dialogue, or an Arab-African dialogue. We told the French that although they may be thinking of isolating the Soviets from Africa, this is not our concern, and we have no part or interest in it. We are not prepared to act as an international police force. We support an Arab-European dialogue in the overall context of politics and economics. The overall framework of Afro-Arab relations, however, must be based on more than pure business and trade. It must be within a comprehensive strategic view, such as how the Arabs can help the Africans along the road to liberation, and vice-versa. Iraq will make a generous contribution towards Arab aid for Africa (4)"

#### **Notes**

- 1) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Francois Deniau, The French Minister for Foreign Trade, 20-2-1979.
- 2) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Muhammad Salih Yahyaw, Coordinator of the Algerian Liberation Front Party, 2-1979.
- 3) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Abdul-Aziz Abdul-Ghani, Prime Minister of North Yemen, 4-6-1979.
- 4) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with al-Shazli al-Qubayli, Secretary General of The League of Arab Nations, 21-7-1979.