

Extract from record by UK Ambassador Terence J O'Brien of his call in Rangoon on the Bangladesh Ambassador to Burma Khwaja Mohammed Kaiser on 23 December 1975. Ambassador Kaiser was later Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN and President of the UN Security Council for the month of October 1979:

Transcript

"5. He [Mr Kaiser] admitted that there were upward of ½ million Bangalee trespassers in Arakan whom the Burmese had some right to eject. He had implored the Burmese authorities not to press this issue during Bangladesh's present troubles [coups of August and November 1975] and had been pleased that the Burmese had not taken advantage of his country's misfortunes in this respect. He denied that there had been any fresh exodus into Burma." National Archives: Folio 35 on File FCO 15/2041. [A copy of the original 3 page record of the conversation is obtainable for a fee from National Archives.]

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D.A.TALK WITH MR K.M. KAISER, BANGLADESH
AMBASSADOR IN RANGOON

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1. I called on Mr Kaiser this morning to discuss recent developments in Bangladesh, his part in them and their bearing on Burmese foreign policy.

2. Mr Kaiser's own future. As we all know, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had appointed Mr Kaiser in July as the Permanent Representative for Bangladesh at the U.N. Following the bewildering succession of coups in Dacca, that appointment was cancelled and Mr Kaiser was nominated as Ambassador to Peking instead. There has been a hitch to this plan owing to Begum Kaiser's heart complaint. This is of long standing; she had been advised against surgery in 1967 but medical opinion now recommends a sophisticated cardiac operation. Mr Kaiser had doubted whether this could be performed in Peking and had obtained Dacca's consent to a delay in finalising his move to Peking. The Chinese have been sympathetic but claim they can perform the operation in Peking at their Cardiac Centre which they say has been newly equipped with the latest American surgical aids. Mr Kaiser has sought American confirmation that this is so. He is awaiting their verdict.

3. Mr Kaiser's recent activities. He gave me a dramatic account of his part in the safe conduct of the Colonels responsible for the coup in which Sheikh Mujibur was assassinated which had taken them through Thailand and thence to asylum in Libya. Although a loyal admirer of Sheikh Mujibur himself, he had been greatly disturbed (if not convinced) by the Colonels' story of the deterioration in conditions in Bangladesh which had prompted them to take drastic action. He wryly observed that the Thais had demanded their pound of flesh for accepting the Colonels in the form of the release from Bangladesh of six fishing trawlers which had been taken into custody for illegal entry into Bangladesh territorial waters. Continuing his story, he deplored India's reactions to these events and told me that he had been telephoned from Dacca with instructions to fly to Pakistan and enlist President Bhutto's support for a case that he

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PAGE

CONFIDENTIAL

to make before the U.N. in protest against India's threatened military intervention. He had the good sense to fly to Dacca first in order to obtain a coherent briefing. By then Indian pressures had eased and he was despatched to Delhi instead in order to talk things out with the Indians. He found it an unsatisfactory experience.

4. Bangladesh: External Posture. Mr Kaiser believed that the anti-Indian feelings which had been aroused in Bangladesh were almost wholly spontaneous. Small countries like his reacted strongly to external interference in their domestic affairs. By the same token, the Soviet Union had come in for harsh criticism. He stoutly denied any direct Chinese involvement in recent events or in the present popular mood in Dacca. But he did admit that the Maoists, who had gone to ground during Sheikh Mujib's time, were now openly showing their hand.

5. Bangladesh and Burma. He admitted that there were upward of a million Bangalee trespassers in Arakan whom the Burmese had some right to eject. He had implored the Burmese authorities not to press this issue during Bangladesh's present troubles and had been pleased that the Burmese had not taken advantage of his country's misfortunes in this respect. He denied that there had been any fresh exodus into Burma of refugees from Bangladesh. The recent troubles had scarcely affected the ordinary Bangalee who was now happily anticipating a bumper rice crop. Mr Kaiser's Consul in Akyab had, in fact, spent an unusually quiet late summer and autumn.

6. Burma and China. I asked if he had seen President U Ne Win recently. He said he had; first in August when U Hla Hpone, the Foreign Minister, was in Peking. The President had volunteered at that meeting that he would like to follow up that visit himself if the Chinese would invite him to do so. Mr Kaiser took credit for passing this on to the Chinese. The second meeting took place three weeks ago shortly after the President's return from Peking. The latter had said he was entirely satisfied with the results which had brought Burma into a closer relationship with China. The President denied having made any attempt to talk about the Burmese Communist insurgents with the Chinese but said

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that he was hopeful that Chinese support would tail off while the two countries were digesting the results of the visit. I asked if Mr Kaiser had heard anything about a return visit to Burma by Mr Teng Hsiao-ping, the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister. He had not and would discount any such stories; this was no moment for the next-in-line to go travelling while such big question-marks overhung Chairman Mao and Chou En-lai.

7. I do not regard Mr Kaiser as an entirely reliable source of evidence. I have found his views in the past highly subjective and sensational. Today, however, he was in a more subdued mood and seemed anxious to talk in a relaxed manner about the alarming developments which had engulfed him during recent weeks. He has also been keeping close to the Chinese and his comments on them should not be disregarded out of hand.

T J O'Brien

23 December 1975

cc: Chancery, Dacca
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