

A Postscript

Mr Cameron solemnly warns the television cameras, and by their means, he hopes, the British electorate and Colonel Gadaffi, that the arm of the international courts is long and that he, Colonel Gadaffi, will be held responsible for any breaches of human rights reported from Libya. We British are much more proactive than the USA and the other NATO powers in calling for a “no fly zone”. As the Americans pointed out, this would require the destruction of the Libyan airforce and air defences. At the Nuremberg Tribunal the charges faced by the leading Germans were to do with waging aggressive war, not with infringement of human rights. The principal original aim of the United Nations Organisation was to outlaw aggressive war.

Whatever the state of the internal affairs of Libya, whether or not it was ever right to befriend the Gadaffi régime, an unprovoked attack on the airforce of a state is aggressive war. If Mr Cameron gets his way *he* should be the one put in the international dock.

The no-fly zone being at present impractical, we British have begun trying to encourage whoever is in control of eastern Libya. In the media, these people were for the first week or so unanimously referred to as “the opposition”, and often still are. Parliamentary institutions, including an opposition, are supposed to make civil war unnecessary: we have elections instead. Armed uprising is not “opposition”: it is rebellion. The reasonable element in the cries of horror from the West concerns the apparent callous shooting of civilians by the Gadaffi forces, which if true is indeed atrocious. But the real media-outrage seems to be that any government should resist insurrection. If a million people marched along Whitehall demanding the end of our coalition, would Mr Cameron resign? Should he? And if some of the million were firing guns would he order the armed forces not to resist?

Messrs Cameron and Hague’s interventions are doing no good. To send the SAS on a Hollywood-B-spy-movie mission has done nobody any good—including the SAS—except the Libyan “Opposition”. Did it not occur to our Foreign Office that a landing by helicopter, by night, by an armed group equipped with weapons, false passports an’ all, in a land in turmoil, might arouse suspicion? The “Opposition” were exemplary: they intercepted, disarmed, and arrested (rather than shot) this odd group of people then sent them home. Their diplomacy was much more mature than ours.

In Libya a civil war is being fought, of some obscurity. There is at present no good reason for the UK to take sides in it.

The impression given by our Coalition is reinforced. It has some good intentions, but they can be childish, based on schoolboy notions of justice (not one of their words), and ignorance of history and (much the same thing) of the basic principles of the limits of a state’s authority and of what is sensible in the conduct of foreign affairs. A few years ago Mr William Hague seemed to have some considerable intelligence. To serve in the coalition he has had at least to disguise it. The thing wrong with the Cameron-Clegg coalition is that it is just bloody stupid.

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