

Opening Address
By
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Patron and Founder Member
Of
The British-Egyptian Society

In
Celebration of the Life
Of
The Late Ambassador Dr Mohamed Shaker

Organised
By
The British- Egyptian Society
At
The Institute of Directors
On
12th September 2018



Ambassador Dr Mohamed Shaker

Your Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, Dear Friends

For almost 30 years I stepped on the platform of the British-Egyptian Society since its foundation. I was asked to deal with variety of matters, to address many issues, to give lectures, to deliver speeches, to launch conferences, to moderate debates, to represent the Society, and many other assignments that cannot all be listed accurately.

However, there is one occasion I can recall so vividly that is relevant to my involvement in today's event. In June 22, 2006, Sir Michael Weir died, at the age 81. He was one of the most distinguished Arabists of his generation. The product of the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies in Lebanon, having served mostly in the Arab World, including two tours of Cairo, where, from 1979 until his retirement in 1985, he was British Ambassador to Egypt.

Upon his return to the UK he continued to show his very keen interest and involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, in general, and particularly Egypt. In September 1988 Dr Mohamed Shaker was appointed as Ambassador of Egypt to the United Kingdom. Both Sir Michael Weir and Ambassador Shaker shared many views and interests. However, amongst many matters, what was so connecting between them was their special admiration of two countries, that played many roles in their lives. Sir Michel's love of the country he belonged to, Great Britain, and another country that ranked highest in his admiration and affection, Great Egypt. Dr Shaker's deepest love and pride to the country he patriotically belonged to, Great Egypt, and another country, Great Britain, that stood in his highest estimation with a shared long family root relationship.

With two leading eminent stars in one place, both sharing love and admiration for their two countries, something significant relating to the two countries was bound to occur, and without delay.

A group of Egyptians and British in the UK came into the scene. They shared the British-Egyptian Paradigm of the very: Special, Meaningful, Historical, Geopolitical Pivotal, Nation's Uniqueness, and more. As it happens, I was one of those who had, and remains to have, a solid conviction about the Uniqueness of those two countries. I, the humble person, who has been known for describing his love for the two countries as:

Egypt: The Heart of the World, and
Britain: The Brain of the World

And summing up their world role in one paragraph:

“When the Heart of the World, Egypt, and the Brain of the world, Britain, are in synchrony, prospects of World Peace and Stability are much higher, under the rational leadership of the Muscle of the World”

With the two loving and admirers British-Egyptian, or Egyptian British leaders, Weir and Shaker, and an active group of Egyptians and British of similar conviction, the process of establishing the British-Egyptian Society started. My role was to work with a group of Egyptians and British in dealing with the formalities of incorporating the Society, which ultimately acquired Charity Status.

Ambassador Dr Shaker’s achievements during his Diplomatic role between 1988-1997 went well beyond the establishment of the British-Egyptian Society. Amongst many of those achievements one can say without hesitation:

- The British- Egyptian Relationship had never been any better, politically, economically, militarily and culturally up to 1997,
- In fact, the strength of the said cooperation between the two countries formed the foundation for the continuity of what might be called a Special Relationship, historically and geopolitically,
- The relationship between the Egyptian Community in Britain and the British Society continued to strengthen, on many fronts,
- The British-Egyptian Society proved to be a great success, in many ways, and
- What became a Special Relationship between the Two Countries seemed to be going through a new phase, that had put behind the differences that existed in the fifties between the two countries.

During Ambassador Dr Shaker’s period of diplomatic service:

- The first Official State Visit of an Egyptian Head of State to the United Kingdom in 38 years, occurred on the 21st July 1991. Ambassador Shaker played an admirable role in the success of this visit,

- During this Official Visit, Ambassador Shaker played a very important role in solving a Protocol problem, in which the British-Egyptian Society played a key role,
- The BES sponsored a Banquet on behalf of the Egyptian Government at the British Museum, in return for the Banquet of Her Majesty the Queen which was given in honour of the President of Egypt. The Banquet at the Museum was attended by 16 members of the Royal Family, headed by Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana. Ambassador Shaker's role in this event was unmatched,
- In 1990, Egypt was included in the World Cup. I sponsored the Team at the time, and arranged some matches for them in the UK, as a preliminary to the Official games in Italy. Without Ambassador Shaker's important role, this visit of the Team would not have taken place. I can recall how happy he was when the Egyptian Team won the game against Scotland,
- During Ambassador Shaker's Service in the U.K, the world was going through a very significant challenging stage. For example, in the 2-4 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and it was followed by the Desert Storm. On the 26th December 1991 the official end of the Cold War was formally in place. Ambassador's Shaker's significant role in ensuring Egypt's key position and strategy was taken seriously into consideration.
- Needless to say that Ambassador Shaker had to pursue a very special delicate, so-to-speak, diplomacy in the first two years of his role as Ambassador to the UK. It coincided with the most difficult two years of Mrs Thatcher eleven years as a Prime Minister. The two years that marked the beginning of the within the Conservative Party's conspiracies to remove her. However, at the time I was truly honoured to know how much respect she had for Ambassador Shaker.
- She repeatedly recalled the fact that Ambassador Shaker's father was the man that managed the Egyptian Railways, regarded at the time as the most important Railways in the world, after the British. When he honoured us, Ann and myself, by visiting our Egyptology Library, we presented him with an antiquarian book about the Egyptian Railways during his father's management.

- Moreover, Ambassador Shaker and his highly respectable wife arranged many events at the Embassy. All the events served many specific, purposes that related to important events for both Egypt, and Egypt and Britain. The Embassy events aimed to interact with the Egyptian community in the UK, and to strengthen the British-Egyptian relationship between the two countries.

My personal experience with Ambassador Shaker was so varied, interesting, controversial, constructive, but, always enjoyable. Amongst many, there were four specific events I can recall, with pride:

- Upon invitation by the British Ambassador to Egypt at the time, I gave a talk in Cairo on the 25th March 1990 to Egyptian graduates of British universities. In this talk, I predicted Mrs Thatcher's leaving office by the end of the year 1990. Upon return, she was very upset with me, and the Foreign office informed Ambassador Shaker that my prediction had no foundation of substance. Ambassador Shaker questioned me on whether my prediction was based on any confidential information I had in my possession. I informed him that it was only my analytical prediction. As it happened Mrs Thatcher left Downing Street by the 28th November 1990!!
- Another event related to a BBC interview, when I predicted Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait specifically on the first Thursday of August 1990. During this interview the British Ambassador to Egypt was called by the Foreign Office to discuss the Iraq-Kuwait crises, and he met with me afterwards and informed me that the Foreign Office took a different view. He asked Ambassador Shaker to advise on my prediction, which he did.
- The third event was to ask me, diplomatically, to slightly modify one statement I used to make at the end of the BBC Arabic Radio programme, I regularly made at midnight every day relating to Iraq invasion of Kuwait. The statement related to Dictatorship in general in the Middle East. Though we differed, we remained good friends.
- The fourth event was when Ambassador Shaker asked me to attend the formal farewell departure of President Mubarak after his official visit to the UK. I told him that I never took part in any such formalities, and I was reluctant to do it. However, he diplomatically asked me in a friendly

way to do it this time. He hinted that it was to do with the amazing performance of Egypt's Football Team during their visit to the UK. I did attend, and, as expected it was highlighted in the coverage of the Egyptian TV at the time!!

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends

What I recalled and said does not, in any way, cover the late Dr Shaker's uniqueness, not only as a patriotic loving Egyptian very proud of his country, or an amazing diplomat, or a very impressive man of world reputation and achievements.

Above all else, he would be a man that will always be remembered as an example to be followed.

My dear honourable Friend I miss you, but will always remember you. I am sure you are now in a better place in the company of Allah's favourites.

May God bless you for all your kindness and service to humanity, at large.

Thank you,

Ahmed M. El-Mokadem
Institute of Directors, London
11th September 2018

Post Writing of The Address

- Over a week ago, I wrote this address. I never thought that between writing and delivering this, something so traumatic would occur.
- Last Saturday, San Diego California time, and early Sunday, Switzerland Time, my dearest, my almost twin unique brother passed away, after 14 years of suffering from Bone Marrow Cancer.
- The pain he went through in the last few hours of his death was so immense. Only people as brave as my brother could have put up with it. But, as always, God was there and listened to his repeated wish of transporting his life to the company of God's Favourites.
- All I can say is to quote to Dave Branon, in his proposed Prayers of Sunday the 22nd July 2018:

"The passage of time may dull the ache, but nothing takes the pain away completely. Time cannot heal that wound, but here's something that can help: Listening to, meditating on and savouring the solace promised by the God of all comfort.

Listen: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for compassion never fail" (LAMENTATIONS 3:22).

Meditate: "In the day of trouble He will keep me safe In His dwellings" (PSALM 27:5)

Savour: "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your Promise preserves my life" (119:50)

Life can never be the same again when someone we love is gone. But God's promises bring hope and comfort.

Thank you, God, you are near. You are always by my side. I am grateful for Your comfort in my pain and for Your peace. Amen.

Ahmed M El-Mokadem
The proud brother of
The Late Mohamed El-Mokadem
12th September 2018
Institute of Directors, London, UK

Meditate: "In the day of trouble he will keep me safe