

SUBJECT

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS MAJESTY KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN, AT 1655 HOURS ON THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY AT NO.10 DOWNING STREET

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Present:

Prime Minister	King Hussein
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Mr. Taher Masri
Mr. Coles	

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The Prime Minister asked how the King's visit to the United States had gone. We lost no opportunity to press upon the Americans the importance of Jordan.

King Hussein said that President Reagan appeared to be determined to proceed with the commitments in the "Reagan plan". Jordan wished to establish what the United States was able to do in an election year. He felt very strongly that the situation in the Lebanon had put the United States in a trap. They seemed unable to find a way out. They would face mounting pressure to their detriment. He wondered whether they should not change their emphasis and return to their original objectives of removing all foreign forces from the Lebanon and promoting a process of reconciliation, leaving aside the political questions relating to relations between Israel and the Arab world until these could be dealt with in a comprehensive settlement. Every day saw further deterioration in the Lebanon. The two belligerents were backed by two super powers. In the circumstances the President of Lebanon was helpless. The United States policy of building up the Lebanese army could not work because that army reflected the divisions among the Lebanese people. The US must continue to concentrate on the Lebanon but should change emphasis so that the Palestinian problem, the root of all the difficulties, was settled.

The United States had many friends in the area. It should establish good relations with them and thereby reduce the Syrian problem to its proper size. It was humiliating to see the United States dealing with people like Jumblatt.

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He had appraised the US Government of Jordan's recent moves on the Arab/Israeli problem. He planned to meet with the PLO to see if they could make progress towards an agreed concept of the future. He would tell the PLO that the first need was for the Jordanians and Palestinians to reorganise their relationship. Then they could move onto other problems. The/<sup>other</sup>Arabs would be told that the Jordanians and Palestinians were the people directly involved in the problem. He wished to move away from the debilitating practice in the Arab world of operating by consensus and instead to work on the basis of a moderate majority.

President Reagan was a decent man who kept his word. The State Department were less clear and Mr. Weinberger had appeared far more realistic than they. He/<sup>(Hussein)</sup>had made it plain that he did not want the United States to act simply as an ally of Israel but to rise above such a position and become an even-handed peacemaker. He had told them that action was needed to stop Israeli settlements. There had been two worrying developments recently - first, the Israeli plan to redirect people into the West Bank (the first step towards crossing the river Jordan); and secondly, the attempt to apply Israeli land legislation to the West Bank.

The decision to recall the Jordanian Parliament was based on the concept of a balanced relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians. The PLO now had an opportunity to justify its existence by talking to Jordan. If it failed to meet Palestinian aspirations, it would wither away.

Since the recall of the Jordanian Parliament, the Israelis had been preventing persons of influence, e.g. the Mayor of Gaza, from leaving the West Bank. But these people were important. It was they who could persuade the PLO to change their approach. He had therefore asked the US to use its influence with the Israelis to allow West Bankers to come out.

The Americans had said that they needed time. They wished to study matters carefully with the Israelis.

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The Prime Minister said that everything appeared to be crumbling in the Lebanon. Agreeing, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary observed that the United States, and certainly Mr. Shultz, were still insisting on sticking to the 17 May Agreement. King Hussein said that a Saudi eight point plan was now emerging. The idea was that it would replace the 17 May Agreement. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the plan appeared to be more a list of objectives. But Syria remained unwilling to move. With regard to the main Arab/Israeli problem, US reluctance to move was one problem. Another was the lack of a single presentation of the Arab case. If he went to Israel, as he must do one day, the Israelis would say that it was impossible to talk to the Arabs because there was no single interlocutor. It was to be hoped that from the present contacts between Arafat and Mubarak and Arafat and King Hussein a clearer presentation would emerge.

King Hussein said that the Syrian and Soviet game in the Lebanon was a waiting one. They aimed to inflict as much humiliation as they could. It was not at all clear what the huge United States naval force could do. When they withdrew this would be tantamount to complete US withdrawal from the area.

Syria like Israel, was becoming a base for terrorism. It had also decided both to infiltrate people into Jordan and to hit Jordanian targets directly. Syrian-inspired terrorists had been instructed to engage the Jordanian army while the Syrian Government gave them cover. There was a danger of recreating the 1980 situation.

He had pointed out to the United States certain Jordanian military needs which he wished to meet. The Americans had promised to consider these but he could not get a clear political view from them as to what they would do in the future. The Americans remained wedded to UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and argued that these must be accepted by the PLO. They were doubtful whether they could get Israel to a negotiating table at which the PLO were present. All in all, he had not got very far.

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The Prime Minister then referred to the Iraq/Iran conflict. We understood that there was a new Iranian offensive today. We were very concerned about the possibility of further escalation. King Hussein said that he saw no possibility of ending the war in the foreseeable future. In answer to a question from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, he confirmed that the recent US shift of support towards Iraq was helpful. Iraq had been discussing the idea of a pipeline through Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea. This would take five years to build. Jordan was discussing with Bechtel the idea of a new pipeline following the route of the old IPC pipeline and a further line from Aqaba to the IPC terminal. This plan could be implemented within 15 months. The Iraqis were very keen to co-operate. But they wanted the United States to be involved so that Israel would be discouraged from attempting to wreck the project. Another interesting development was a possible pipeline from Saudi Arabia to Tripoli in Northern Lebanon. Bechtel had suggested that the Kuwaitis should buy this pipeline, thus furnishing themselves with an alternative to the Gulf route. In effect, the idea was to create a new network of strategic pipelines to lessen reliance on the Gulf.

The Prime Minister asked what we could do to help with the United States. King Hussein asked that we should maintain our present pressure. He had given to the United States Government a draft Security Council Resolution on Israeli settlements which was based on previous US positions. The Americans had promised to study it though Mr. Shultz had expressed scepticism about the value of UN Resolutions. He had told the Americans that if they could not propose such a Resolution perhaps other friends such as the United Kingdom could help. King Hussein handed over the text and the Prime Minister promised to study it.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that there were two problems. The first was how we could move the United States to apply the right kind of pressure to Israel. The second was the shadow cast by Syria. President Assad had told him that Arafat

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was finished. Was it therefore possible for Assad to have effective control of the PLO? King Hussein replied that Arafat now had a chance to secure that control; depending on the moves he made he would have the support of Palestinians on the ground. He expected to see Arafat soon. He would avoid seeing him alone; the hope was that Arafat would be accompanied by a group of PLO advisers. Mr. Masri commented that Arafat was aware that there were other potential representatives of the Palestinians. The Israelis knew that too which was why they stopped them leaving the West Bank. The Prime Minister said that this Israeli attitude was particularly disconcerting, given their position on the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union.

Reverting to the Lebanon, King Hussein said that the 17 May Agreement was totally out of place. It gave Syria and the Soviet Union the opportunity to maintain their presence and exploit the situation. President Gemayel had become progressively weaker. It was difficult to see what could be done. To repeat, the only way the Americans could get out of their trap was to change the emphasis of their policy.

The Prime Minister commented that in a situation where there was very little movement, one or two UN Resolutions might be helpful. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that it could also help if, where our position was different from that of the United States, we clearly asserted this. He asked how much influence the Soviet Union had over Syria. King Hussein said that at times he sensed that the Soviet Union was suspicious of Syria.

He was very relieved that the recall of the Jordanian Parliament had been so successful. There was now a new spirit in Jordan. Mr. Masri said that when Arafat visited Jordan, West Bankers would make it plain to him that he must reach agreement with Jordan and that if he did not do so Jordan would look elsewhere.

The discussion ended at 1740.

A.J.C.





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 February 1984

*Dear Peter,*

CALL BY THE KING OF JORDAN

King Hussein called on the Prime Minister today. I enclose a copy of the record of conversation.

*Yours ever  
John Major*

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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