



15
Rmt

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

The Lord Chancellor makes some
logical points. But the object
of a European initiative later this
year would of course be precisely
to secure acknowledgement from the
P.S.O. & hence from the Arab states
in general of Israel's right to exist.
I do not see that the question of
'losing our honour' arises. There
may indeed be a hostile reaction
in the Jewish community but that
is a different kind of problem.

I agree with the
Lord Chancellor, Rmt
15/2

FROM:

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THE RT. HON. LORD HAILSHAM OF ST. MARYLEBONE, C.H., F.R.S., D.C.L.



HOUSE OF LORDS,
SW1A 0PW

14th February 1980

Prime Minister

fg. Rmd

ARAB/ISRAEL

1. Whilst I very largely share the views of the Foreign Secretary about the desirability of using the Afghanistan situation with a view to improving Arab-Western relations, and entirely agree with his assessment of the centrality of the Israel problem to this exercise, I am afraid I do not altogether share his optimism on the prospects of his initiative, unless, of course we are prepared to sacrifice things which are too important morally, and too valuable in our interest to sacrifice. I base my view on some knowledge of the physical characteristics of the country, and some knowledge of the mentality of Arab and Jew.

2. Israel was recognised without dissentience as a member of the United Nations in 1948. Were it to be destroyed by an aggressive war the devastating effects on the rule of law throughout the world could hardly be exaggerated. Although, except in the Yom Kippur war, Israel has more than once resorted to the preemptive strike as a means of self defence to ensure survival she has been driven to this course by a succession of Arab conspiracies in 1948, 1956, and 1967 to destroy her existence by military means. She has succeeded in this without assistance from the UN but with US aid and her own heroism.

3. Prior to 1967 the physical boundaries of Israel were virtually untenable militarily. South of the Jezreel valley, the geography of Israel is starkly simple, consisting virtually of three parallel straight lines running North and South, the sea, the Judean hills, and the Jordan valley. Whoever commands the hills commands the rest. Prior to 1967 the waist-line of Israel was only 10 miles broad, and its main centres of population was exposed to artillery fire as well as the prospect of devastating air raids. After 1967 Israel has enjoyed reasonably viable military frontiers consisting of the

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Judean hills (and the no less important frontier heights on the Syrian border). Jerusalem is built on the Judean hills.

4. Israel's frontiers with Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt are, for very different reasons fairly secure in the absence of war. But Syria is a frontier state, implacably hostile, and a firm Soviet satellite. Except Egypt, none of the recognised Arab states have in my view given firm signs that they accept Israel's right as a member of the UN to continued existence. If they could once be persuaded to abandon this wholly illegal stance, I believe progress could be made. But, though Hussein might do so, I do not believe that the Saudis or Iraq will do so in the foreseeable future, Gaddafi will not, and the Islamic rulers of Algeria, Morocco, Iran et al. will not.

5. The holy city of Jerusalem is sacred to Moslem and Jew. Its physical characteristics have largely changed since 1967, since there has been a massive expansion of Jewish population on the West. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which has existed since the mandate is physically situated on Mount Scopus, now ^{on} what is known as the West Bank. Under Jordanian occupation the Jews were effectively denied uninterrupted access. I do not believe myself that world wide Jewish opinion throughout the world would contemplate the total abandonment of Jerusalem to the its former divided status, and I doubt whether the abandonment of Mount Scopus is even militarily on the cards. But I would doubt whether even moderate Arab opinion would contemplate anything less.

6. We should not underestimate the importance of Jewish opinion here. It is fanatically involved in the fate of Israel. Even non-observant or non Zionist Jews take this stance. I would not have cared even to fight St. Marylebone as a Conservative candidate in the face of Jewish hostility on this issue. Manchester, Leeds, and the whole of North London would be profoundly affected.

7. If there be a reasonable chance of success without losing our honour yet again over the Balfour declaration; go ahead. But have we not enough on our plate just now not to consider leaving this hot potato alone?

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8. I am sending copies of this minute to the other members of OD and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

H. of S. M.

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15 FEB 1960

