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23

24 January 1980

● Extract from PM's Meeting with King Hussein

at 10 Downing Street 1630 hours

Subject copy filed on Jordan (June 1979) 'Visits to London by King Hussein'The Arab/Israel Problem

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he agreed with King Hussein about the threat to the unity of the region posed by the continuing failure to find a solution to the Arab/Israel problem. Everyone he had spoken to on his tour confirmed that this issue bedevilled everything. It affected the attitude of the countries in the region to each other and to the United States since they believed the United States was unwilling to use its muscle to force the Israeli Government to reach an agreement. The Camp David process was clearly going to prove inadequate in satisfying Arab opinion, still less that of the Palestinians. In a Presidential year American Administrations tended to have two Middle East policies: their real policy and that which was advanced for electoral purposes. It was important for other Western

governments to bear this in mind <sup>and</sup> to avoid undermining the position of the American Administration by reacting to the second policy. If they did so and if President Carter was re-elected, the willingness of his Administration to pursue a constructive policy in future would be undermined. On the other hand, if other governments did nothing, the position in the Middle East would deteriorate.

Against this background, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked whether King Hussein thought there would be any future in a European or British initiative in favour of a Security Council Resolution which:

- (a) recognised the rights of the Palestinians; and
- (b) involved recognition by the Palestinians of Israel's right to exist.

It would not be easy to produce such a Resolution because the spectrum of opinion within the European Community was so wide. It stretched from the French, who might be said to have a view not dissimilar from that of Iraq, to the Dutch who tended to support the Israelis. Nonetheless, perhaps the effort should be made. King Hussein said that it would be extremely helpful if one or more

**SECRET**

SECRET

European Governments were able to get the process moving. He had tried a similar initiative himself in the autumn. But the decision of Arab Governments at Tunis has fallen far short of what he had hoped for. They had failed to evolve a united position. Commenting on the significance of the Arab/Israel issue for the region as a whole, King Hussein noted that it did not make it easy for him to respond quickly to appeals from President Carter for help in dealing with the Afghanistan situation or the situation in Iran. Jerusalem was also a matter which affected the emotions and beliefs of the people throughout the Arab world. As regards the hostages, one million Arabs had been living in occupied land since 1967.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that a European initiative would enable the governments concerned to maintain an appearance of active involvement in the region. This would be the more important since the Camp David process was likely to run into the sand in March or thereabouts. Mr. Moberly commented that the

President might well attempt to extend the period of negotiation for electoral reasons but that there was no reason why there should not be negotiation on a European initiative going on in parallel with the Camp David process. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that neither Mr. Vance nor Mr. Brzezinski had ruled out the idea of a European initiative when he had mentioned it to them. The difficulty in getting anywhere would be that Israeli policy had become completely ossified.

#### Iraq and Syria

The Prime Minister asked about the situation in Iraq and Syria. King Hussein said that he was in close contact with the governments of both countries. The situation in Iraq was good at present. In Syria it was not. President Asad was facing difficulties there. He had reacted by adopting more radical, left-wing policies. Paradoxically, though pursuing an anti-Islamic course within Syria, he had succeeded in maintaining good relations with Ayatollah Khomeini.

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