



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 June 1979

file V16
Top Copy on: Jordan,
Prime A,
King Hussein

Dear Paul,

THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSION WITH KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN
AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON 18 JUNE 1979

The Prime Minister entertained King Hussein of Jordan at a working lunch at No. 10 today. The King was accompanied by his Foreign Affairs Adviser, Sharif Abdul Hamid Sharaf; by the Commander in Chief of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Sharif Zeid bin Shaker; and by the Jordanian Ambassador. The Secretary of State for Defence, the Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Douglas Hurd and Mr. John Moberly were present. The following is a summary of the main points which arose in discussion during the meal.

The Prime Minister gave King Hussein an account of her conversation with Mr. Begin over lunch at No. 10 on 23 May. King Hussein commented that the US had in his view given away all the cards which would have enabled them to bring pressure to bear on Mr. Begin, including the possible withholding of military equipment and of oil supplies. Mr. Sharaf expressed the view that the Europeans should adopt a stronger position with regard to Israeli policies which would, in turn, help the US to stiffen its stance on the issues of withdrawal, Jerusalem and Palestinian rights. King Hussein said that he had taken up with the Israelis the question of withdrawal and the implementation of Resolution 242 on numerous occasions but had always been given a negative response, even before Mr. Begin took office. The Prime Minister told King Hussein what Vice President Mubarak of Egypt had said to her about Mr. Begin's brinkmanship at Camp David and said that it might be necessary for the negotiators on the West Bank issue to go to the brink before Mr. Begin would move. The Prime Minister went on to say that, as she had told Vice President Mubarak, it was very important for all those concerned to keep close to Saudi Arabia although she recognised that President Sadat had made some ill-considered remarks about the Saudis. Mr. Sharaf recalled that King Hussein had stood alone in giving a public welcome to President Sadat's original initiative, while at the same time stressing the need for an appropriate response from the Israelis; this response had, however, never materialised and President Sadat's clumsiness in handling his relations with the Arab world had contributed further to the deterioration of the situation. The Prime Minister pointed out that President Sadat was confronted with economic problems of immense gravity, including a rapid increase in the population of his country; these difficulties had spurred him on in the search for a settlement. King Hussein repeated that the Americans had now given the Israelis everything for which they could have asked and found themselves unable to influence Israel any more.

/King Hussein

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King Hussein added that, throughout the quest for a settlement, he had constantly stressed that it was essential to involve all parties in it. He had recently been in touch with the Soviet Government about the implementation of Resolution 242 and a possible return to Geneva. The Soviet response had indicated that the Soviet Union was now opposed to a revival of Geneva: they simply wanted abrogation of the peace treaty and the replacement of President Sadat. King Hussein commented that the Russians clearly thought that time was on their side, that Arab and Israeli positions would harden and that this would eventually bring the regional instability from which they would hope to profit. This was one reason why he saw the revival of the peace process as a matter of such urgency. When Mr. Hurd asked the King whether it might be possible to reopen the Geneva negotiations without the Soviet Union, King Hussein replied that if all those concerned agreed to resume these negotiations, the Soviet Union would have to do so too.

The Prime Minister said that Mr. Begin clearly believed that he had succeeded in splitting the Arab world, that he had in his pocket an agreement which would protect Israel from combined Arab attack and that, consequently, he could afford to stand pat on what he had achieved and make no effort to move on to the next stage. Mr. Sharaf said that King Hussein had been saying for years that this was the Israeli tactic. In the long term, however, the tactic was mistaken since it ruled out the comprehensive settlement which alone could give Israel security. The Camp David Agreements had reinforced Mr. Begin's divisive course while making a comprehensive settlement virtually impossible to achieve.

King Hussein said that Jordan now found herself in a difficult position since both the United States and the Soviet Union were opposed to going back to the Security Council and Geneva. The breakdown of the negotiations on the West Bank could be quite close and he therefore believed that the Arab world should before long make a restatement of its position. In preparing for this, the Arabs should keep in close touch with their European friends in order to be sure of making their move at the right time. It would not, however, be a good idea to remain inactive for too long.

When Mr. Hurd asked King Hussein whether he expected trouble on the West Bank, the King confirmed that the period of relative quiet there was coming to an end. Mr. Sharaf pointed out that, despite Israeli propaganda to the contrary, the Israeli occupation was by no means benevolent. The West Bank was subjected to chronic exploitation of its water resources and its labour: Jordan had taken the firm decision to help the West Bankers by, for example, purchasing their produce and paying municipal salaries; this constituted a drain on Jordan's resources. East Jerusalem and a growing area around it had been incorporated into Israel and the character of the city transformed. General Shaker said that Israel's "security measures" on the West Bank included the collective punishment of the local population; in a recent incident, school children had thrown themselves out of top storey windows in order to escape a search of their school by Israeli troops. There was, however, a news blackout on episodes of this kind. Mr. Sharaf said that if present Israeli policies on the West Bank continued, the whole area would have been transformed, and depopulated of its Arab inhabitants to such an extent by the time the negotiations came to any conclusion that the need for them would have disappeared. King Hussein said that before his departure people had told him jokingly in Amman that he should urge the Americans to stop making statements criticising Israeli settlement policy, since such statements invariably resulted in the creation of

a new settlement. There were large numbers of teachers and students in Jordan who had been obliged to leave the West Bank because their colleges and schools had been closed down.

The Prime Minister asked what was the best result which could be expected from the talks on the West Bank. Mr. Sharaf said that, according to Camp David, the next steps would be the creation of the self-governing authorities, the establishment of political autonomy and then a further round of negotiations about the future status of the West Bank. One of King Hussein's fundamental objections to the Camp David Agreements was that they said nothing about the future status of the Palestinians; they contained no assurance of ultimate self-determination for the Palestinians. Mr. Hurd pointed out that the Americans argued that once an autonomous community had been established the local people would quickly begin to demand sovereignty as well. Mr. Sharaf replied that Mr. Begin had said recently that he would arrest any local people who did so. Mr. Sharaf went on to say that it was now up to the Europeans and others to create an atmosphere which would compel Israel to change her policies. When the Lord Privy Seal said that it would be important for the Europeans to avoid doing anything which could undermine Mr. Strauss' efforts by casting doubts on the validity of the current negotiations, Mr. Sharaf said that the Jordanians wanted to build on the Camp David process rather than upset it but pointed out that it should be possible for the Europeans to support the negotiating process while calling upon Israel in strong terms to allow it to produce results. King Hussein said that everybody regarded Resolution 242 as the right basis for any settlement, but the Resolution itself was being eroded by the passage of time.

King Hussein said that he would be talking to the Syrians about the redefinition of the Arab position which he had in mind; these discussions would take place within a small group of Arab states and would not include all the participants in the Baghdad Conference. Mr. Sharaf explained that King Hussein believed that unless a unified Arab position could be maintained, radical opinion in the Arab world would become even stronger. King Hussein confirmed that he saw his main task as being to keep the Arab world together, which was an essential pre-condition of frustrating Communist plans for the extension of their influence in the region. A just settlement would help the moderate elements among the Arabs.

The Lord Privy Seal said that the Palestinians had moved towards at least a position of de facto recognition of Israel; it would be very helpful to their position viz a viz the West if they were to move one step further. King Hussein agreed but pointed out that Israel, too, had to make a move. Palestinians in Lebanon were now under daily attack; the King recalled arguing at the very first Arab Summit, in 1964, that the Arab/Israel conflict should not be allowed to spill over into the Lebanon. He thought that the Syrians should announce a deadline for their withdrawal, thus giving the Lebanese an incentive to find their own solutions to their problems. Mr. Sharaf commented that Lebanon had virtually been partitioned and King Hussein added that the Israelis might be pursuing a long term plan for controlling the Litani River.

/Mr. Sharaf

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Mr. Sharaf emphasised once more the view he had expressed at the outset, namely that pressure from outside would be needed to achieve acceptable results from the peace process and that there should be a demonstration of the collective will of the West to give Israel what she needed for her security but insisting that the Palestinians should be given their legitimate rights as well. In the present situation, the position of the moderate Arabs was gradually being eroded and the rejectionist case was being proved. The Prime Minister said that all that could be done for the moment was to wait and see what came out of the negotiations on the West Bank. When King Hussein asked whether consideration could be given to ways in which Europeans could help the situation, the Prime Minister said that this could indeed be discussed both in Strasbourg and in Tokyo. The Jordanian Ambassador said that any statements would have to embody a more explicit emphasis on self-determination than had previous statements. King Hussein indicated that the UK should be able to exercise a helpful and very necessary influence on the US in these matters.

In a reference to Jordan's requirement for UK Shir I tanks, Mr. Sharaf said that Jordan needed to be strengthened by her traditional allies. The Prime Minister replied that the British Government recognised that the UK was Jordan's traditional friend and supplier and that they would, therefore, negotiate the sale of the Shir tanks. The Defence Secretary confirmed that negotiations were already under way. Mr. Sharaf said that King Hussein had been telling all the Arab Governments that the UK tank was the best one.

After King Hussein's departure, the Prime Minister indicated that she would be quite prepared to ask President Carter, when she met him in Tokyo, to exert pressure on Mr. Begin to put an end to his policy on settlements and to accept the principle of Palestinian sovereignty for the West Bank. Mr. Moberly gave her a summary of current attitudes within the Nine to a possible statement on the Middle East. Mr. Hurd told the Prime Minister that it would be a mistake for the Nine to rush into a statement for the sake of making one; the time for this would be when the current negotiations showed signs of running into the sand. I should be grateful for advice on whether, in the light of the Prime Minister's talk with King Hussein, the brief on the Middle East which has been provided for the Prime Minister's use at Strasbourg needs any revision; and on the terms in which the Prime Minister might raise the Middle East issue with President Carter in Tokyo.

I am sending copies of this letter to Roger Facer (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
Brian Cawley.*

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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