

A

RECORD OF CALL BY MR ANTHONY MARLOW MP AND OTHERS ON MR HURD  
AT 4.30 P.M. ON 10 FEBRUARY 1981

Present:

Rt Hon D Hurd CBE MP  
Mr S R Sherrington

Mr Anthony Marlow MP  
Mr Ernest Ross MP  
Mr Peter Temple-Morris MP  
Mr Nicholas Winterton MP  
Mr Richard Alexander MP  
Mr Robert Parry MP

1. Mr Marlow and five of the nine MPs who had recently visited the Middle East under PLO auspices called on Mr Hurd to discuss the visit.
2. Mr Marlow said that the group had been impressed by everyone they had met on the West Bank. He felt that the PLO spoke for most Palestinians there including the professional classes, and that there was a general feeling that Camp David was a sell-out, but the Jordanians did not want a 'Jordanian option' which would isolate them just as Camp David had the Egyptians. Arafat was a moderate, describing himself as 'conservative', who wanted a diplomatic solution. The Arabs were looking to a European initiative.
3. Mr Winterton said that the Israelis were strangling Palestinian efforts by establishing settlements, some of which were not even occupied. He said that he had embarked on the trip as a sympathiser of Israel but that he had changed his position. He stressed that pressure, if necessary in the form of the Arab oil weapon, should be put on the United States to use its financial influence upon Israel to agree to a Palestinian state. He asked that Mrs Thatcher and Lord Carrington press the point on their forthcoming visit to Washington.
4. Mr Ross said that he had a long conversation with Arafat and promised Mr Hurd a record of it. He was concerned that Arafat would be swept away by the extremists in the PLO if he recognised Israel. He believed that the solution was the formation of a Palestinian state, whereby Israel would be recognised by implication. He spoke of strains within the PLO which would break out unless progress were made, and said that HMG must make clear that the PLO were not terrorists. He was not convinced that Mr Peres would be an improvement on Mr Begin. Mr Winterton thought that the PLO should be brought to the negotiating table with the Israelis and Americans, initially at least, under the Jordanian flag, since King Hussein was respected across the world. Jordan should take over suzerainty of the West Bank pending a plebiscite over its future. There should be a joint Jordanian/Palestinian army, which would allay fears of a 'spare' Palestinian army in the area.
5. There was a general feeling among the group that the mayors were becoming a focal point on the West Bank and that they had a considerable role to play in its future. Mr Ross mentioned that Mayor Shaka'a would be visiting Dundee in the first week of July in connection with its twinning with Nablus.

6. Mr Marlow said that a UK/Palestinian Parliamentary Group had been set up and that it now had about forty members; Mr Ross stressed the need to maintain a constant flow of exchange between Britain and the West Bank.

7. Mr Hurd said that the impressions brought back by the group were very much the same as ours. We might face a complication because of our tenure of the EC Presidency e.g. in the Euro-Arab dialogue, while the PLO held the Chairmanship of the Arab League. Something more, however, was needed from the Arab side if we were to make progress. Mr Hurd agreed that only the Americans could exert pressure on the Israelis, but this would not be easy. He said that he did not agree with those who described Arafat as a Soviet stooge.

8. There was gratitude and admiration from several members of the group for the efforts of posts in handling what had been a badly organised visit on the part of the PLO.

9. Mr Marlow brought up the refusal of a UK visa to Miss Khatib. Mr Hurd explained that this was a matter to be taken up with the Home Office.

13 February 1981

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