



BRITISH EMBASSY

AMMAN

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: 28 February 1975

N C R Williams Esq
NENAD
FCO

Reply

PA

Mr 73

Mr. G. Williams

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Dear Nigel,

MRS THATCHER AND THE ARAB WORLD

1. Even before Lord Carrington arrived in Amman last Monday, 24 February, there was considerable interest among the media people here in Mrs Thatcher. Most of this interest was basically well-disposed, especially from the feminist point of view (much patronised by Queen Alia), but there is some "Arab League intelligence story" doing the rounds alleging that Mrs Thatcher was prominent in the formation of a Parliamentary Group of Friends of Israel during the October war. Lord Carrington mentioned to the Ambassador that it was indeed the case that Mrs Thatcher was the Chairman of the Finchley Branch of the Anglo-Israeli Friendship Society (or some such group). He asked the Ambassador's advice on this and was assured that such a connection, which would inevitably do much harm in the Arab world, should if at all practicable be severed. The Ambassador suggested, and Lord Carrington agreed, that Mrs Thatcher might most painlessly and with some justification get herself off the hook by resigning from all constituency obligations of this sort on the grounds of the rather wider obligations she has now had to assume. Such a stratagem might resolve the problem in Finchley but if Mrs Thatcher is indeed a prime mover in a wider parliamentary grouping of pro-Israel MPs then the difficulty would be trickier to bypass.

2. While we as Government and not opposition officials may have no particular brief on Mrs Thatcher's behalf it is presumably in the national interest to do what we can to counter Arab fears and suspicions that the leader of HM opposition is already a prisoner of the Zionists. Lord Carrington's undertaking to raise the point with Mrs Thatcher should prove a useful contribution towards the task of making her aware of the pitfalls awaiting the unwary in Arab-Israeli affairs. Is there anything else which could or should properly be done? May we have a line on this for the media?

Yours,
Michael

M L Tait

cc: D A S Gladstone Esq
Cairo
A J D Stirling Esq
Beirut

H B Walker Esq
Jedda
R L Balfour Esq MVO
Damascus

P.S. Why don't you advise
how to swap Finchley
for Westminster? Christopher
might prefer him a
change!