



FROM: THE RT. HON. JULIAN AMERY, M.P.

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SECRET

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*Dear Margaret,*

Sultan Qaboos came to lunch yesterday. I have always found him frank over the years but on this occasion he was unusually outspoken considering that others were present. He made two points which I understand he has already made to you and Francis Pym. He also asked me to reinforce them to you.

1. The Sultan believes that the essentials of the Reagan Plan can still be saved but on two conditions.
  - a) The Western powers should pay no further attention whatsoever to the PLO. If Yasser Arafat seeks to approach the West he should be told firmly that the proper post office for any approach is "King Hussein, Amman". The PLO are militarily and politically bankrupt. It is important for all concerned to make it clear to the Arab World that this is the Western view.
  - b) Ways must be found to enable the silent majority on the West Bank to show that they want King Hussein to be recognised as their representative. The Sultan considers that we should keep in very close touch with the King of Jordan about how to bring this about. He believes the Jordanians have several suitable West Bank personalities who could be relied upon to express themselves in this sense. If the West and the Jordanians fail to bring this about the West Bank will be lost.

The Sultan said that he had put these views very clearly to the President of the US and to the State Department. He believed they had been well understood in both quarters. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Butros Ghali, who had been received at the White House and at the State Department after the Sultan, had told him that his - the Sultan's views - had made a considerable impact on the Americans.

The Sultan judged that King Hussein could not have risked "going it alone" at this stage without Saudi support. It was essential that the Arab world should first be convinced that the PLO was now wholly discredited in the eyes of the West since only the West (i.e. the US) could bring pressure to bear on Israel. Time here was clearly of the essence since the American election campaign would open soon. Asked if Reagan ~~would~~ bring pressure to bear on Israel, the Sultan said that the President could hardly be expected to pressurise the Israelis until King Hussein was in a position to put his cards on the table. To pressurise the Israelis before this had happened would probably be counter-productive where Mr. Begin was concerned. It would also only encourage weaker elements in Arab opinion to hold back from supporting the Reagan plan.

2. The Sultan said that the crisis arising from the Iran/Iraq war was, of course, much more serious than the Palestinian crisis. In spite of extensive Soviet rearmament the Iraqis were in considerable danger. If they were defeated Iraq itself and the rest of the Middle East would be wide open to a dangerous spread of Shia fundamentalism which could spill over into Islamic fundamentalism generally. If, on the other hand, and this was less likely, the Iraqis prevailed in the fighting, the ensuing chaos in Iran would open the door to deep Soviet penetration of that country. The West should put all its efforts into achieving a compromise, or failing that, a stale mate. He even ventured the view that if the Iraqi position should weaken sufficiently it might conceivably be in the Soviet interest to co-operate with the West over this.

I am copying this letter to Francis Pym. I have marked it Secret in view of its fairly dangerous repercussions in the Arab world if its contents should leak.

*to sum,*  
*Julian,*

Julian Amery

The Rt.Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, MP

PS. 1(a) of this letter rather puts in question the wisdom of Douglas Hurd's opening to the PLO in Tunis; but I suppose this was agreed between Francis and the Saudis before the breakdown in Amman.