



Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I held this up until after  
CHOGA and Atten. but you  
may like to read it before you

London SW1A 2AH

16 November, 1983

Dear John

working supper with Tony Luce  
on Wednesday. 16 Nov 83.

Policy on the Middle East: Jordan

In your letter of 12 September to Brian Fall, you recorded that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had been invited to prepare a paper on ways in which we and our Allies could help to ensure that the integrity and stability of Jordan were preserved in the coming years.

I now enclose a paper, with which the Foreign Secretary is in general agreement. It takes account of the Prime Minister's discussion of the problem with President Reagan in Washington on 29 September. We have held the paper up to enable Mr Luce to consider it further following his visit to the region earlier this month. It now reflects a number of points made by Mr Luce on his return.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Jordan of King Hussein appears an oasis of relative stability in an unstable region. However, Jordan's existence has been precarious ever since her Independence. A front-line state in the dispute with Israel, but lacking oil wealth or the military resources of Egypt or Syria, Jordan has always been vulnerable to pressure from more powerful neighbours. King Hussein has successfully weathered a series of crises, notably those provoked by the hostility of Nasser in the 50s and 60s, the loss of the West Bank to Israel in 1967 and the PLO's attempt to unseat him in 1970/71. Recent developments in the region have disturbing new implications for the longer-term stability of Jordan. Israel's invasion of Lebanon showed how far the Israeli Government were prepared to go in the name of security, and sent shivers down Jordanian spines.

2. The future of Jordan is inextricably tied up with that of the West Bank. Jordan has a majority (57%) Palestinian population. West Bankers tend to look to Jordan for assistance and expect King Hussein to play a role in the peace process. If, as seems likely, the PLO becomes more hard-line after Arafat's latest setback in North Lebanon, this tendency will probably grow. Jordan is concerned by the immigration of Palestinians driven or edged out of the West Bank by the Israelis. Furthermore, the possible recall of the Jordanian parliament (see paragraph 8), would require, under the Jordanian constitution, that the West Bank be represented. Because of this strong link with the West Bank, and Jordan's pivotal role in the US Peace Plan, the continuing failure to make progress towards a comprehensive Arab/Israeli settlement leaves Jordan uncomfortably exposed.

THE THREATS TO JORDANInternal

3. Internally, the King maintains a tight grip. The economy remains sound, although heavily dependent on payments from the Arab oil producers under the Baghdad Summit arrangements. Jordan's share of these payments is nominally \$1.25 billion per year, but in 1982 there was a shortfall of \$345 million, and Jordan was obliged to cut her development programme and to raise \$200 million on the Euro dollar market. If Arab funds were ever cut off, the effect on Jordan's economy would be disastrous. But this is most unlikely unless circumstances change dramatically. Nor is there any immediate sign that fundamentalism or Palestinian frustration pose a threat to him. But he is closely identified with US policies in the region (especially after the Reagan Plan), and would therefore be particularly vulnerable should this or a successor US Administration abandon serious efforts to reach an Arab/Israel settlement. The specific steps which the King identified in his message (see Annex C) to President Reagan after the collapse of talks with Arafat on 10 April, and on which he said the US should be more flexible, were association of the PLO with peace negotiations; full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon; and a settlements freeze. If the peace process continues to stagnate, for whatever reason, a resurgence of radicalism among the Palestinians in Jordan could once more threaten internal stability. There is also the ever-present threat of assassination. (The extremist Palestinian group led by Abu Nidhal has recently begun a terrorist campaign against Jordanian diplomats). Jordan's success over the past thirty years has been so much a function of King Hussein's own success that his death would pose a real threat to the regime, despite the apparently loyal but not so charismatic Crown Prince Hassan waiting in the wings.

Syria

4. Jordan's traditionally poor relations with Syria could degenerate to the point of conflict as they almost did in November 1980; or Syria could encourage Palestinian attacks on Israel through Jordan, thereby provoking Israeli retaliation against Jordan. The two states are deeply divided on Arab/Israel policy, and support opposite sides in the Gulf War, where King Hussein has allied himself with President Hussain. As a result, a decisive defeat for Iraq would probably have implications for the stability of Jordan (but such an outcome does not seem likely).

ISRAEL AND 'JORDAN-IS-PALESTINE'

5. King Hussein himself considers that the principal threat to Jordan in the longer term comes from Israel. The Jordanian Armed Forces are largely successful in preventing the infiltration of guerillas from their territory into Israel. As long as they can keep the border secure, the threat of major Israeli retaliation, or full scale invasion on the Lebanon model, is some way off. The Jordanians are now concerned about the promotion of the idea that 'Jordan-is-Palestine' by senior Ministers in the Likud Government and their supporters, with its implication that the continuation of a moderate Hashemite regime in Jordan is not necessarily in Israel's interests.

6. At one level, the Jordan-is-Palestine thesis is merely a convenient propaganda line to deflect pressure on Israel to accommodate Palestinian nationalism by territorial concession. Jordan, the argument runs, is already the Palestinian state: it has a majority Palestinian population and represents 75% of mandatory

Palestine, having been arbitrarily hived off by the British in 1921-22 as the Arab territory of Transjordan. Proponents of this view (aspects of which we would dispute on historical grounds alone see Annex A) conclude that there is therefore no reason for a second Palestinian state to be established west of the Jordan. Some Israelis go a stage further and argue that Israel should put the theory into practice, by encouraging Palestinian emigration from the West Bank to Jordan, possibly as a prelude to annexation, and by acquiescing in or even encouraging the downfall of the Hashemite monarchy to make way for the establishment of a Palestinian state in its place. They believe that the existence of such a state, particularly if it turned out to be radical and Syrian or Moscow-oriented, would remove much of the international pressure on Israel to meet Palestinian aspirations West of the Jordan, and enable Israel to absorb the West Bank without endangering her relations with the US.

7. The idea that Israel could take a hand in implementing Jordan-is-Palestine has so far been largely confined to the right of the Israeli political spectrum and is particularly associated with General Sharon. Apart from him, there is probably nobody in the present Israeli Government who believes that it could be put into practice in the short-term. But both Mr Shamir and Mr Arens are on the record as supporting the theory (recent statements quoted at Annex B); and, more important for the Jordanians, some Israeli policies already point in this direction. Israel's economic and social policies in the Occupied Territories, together with the harsh security regime there, have produced a high and sustained level of emigration, particularly of young educated Palestinians, for whom there is little work. If the present Israeli Government's preferred

solution to the Palestinian problem, autonomy, continues to be blocked, then support in Israel for a more radical solution on Jordanian territory could grow, particularly if violence in the Occupied Territories continues to flare up, as at present. The advent of a Labour Government in Israel could of course change the picture. But the Labour Alignment's policy of territorial compromise is looking increasingly obsolete in the face of the expanding network of settlements, and the Jordanians think it prudent to plan on the basis of worst-case assumption. The King is ever looking for reassurance, especially from the Americans, that the basis of any negotiation remains Israeli withdrawal from Occupied Territories, as prescribed in Security Council Resolution 242.

#### POSSIBLE RECALL OF JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT

8. King Hussein is deeply concerned about recent developments in the Middle East, and anxious to see the peace process revived. He is worried about the US position on withdrawal (para 7 above) and has little hope of fresh impetus coming from the Americans before the new President takes office early in 1985. He is therefore contemplating taking a lead himself and has spoken, to Mr Luce and publicly, of the possible recall of Jordan's parliament. There are two main problems with this. First, half the seats in the previous Jordanian parliament belonged to the area now under Israeli occupation - the West Bank. Secondly, and more important for Hussein, representation of West Bank Palestinians in the Jordanian Parliament would put him in breach of the 1974 Rabat agreement by the Arab League that the PLO should be recognised as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hussein's enemies would make great play with this and could use it to turn moderate Arab countries against him. Hussein is, however, fully alive to this risk: he told Mr Luce that

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it was essential, if he was to take this step, that he should know where the Americans stood, (ie would they make clear their continued commitment to the need for Israeli withdrawal, as spelt out in Security Council Resolution 242).

STEPS TO PRESERVE JORDAN'S STABILITY

9. The best guarantee of Jordan's territorial integrity and stability is firm and consistent Western support to deter those who might try to undermine her. The Americans showed in 1971 and 1980, as we had done in 1958, that they were willing to back up their political support with military supplies or assistance when Jordan was threatened. We retain a particular role in refuting the Jordan-is-Palestine argument in view of our former responsibility and actions as mandatory power. But Western support must also take account of Jordan's need to remain firmly in the Arab camp. Jordan's dependence on Arab funds puts limits on her flexibility over Arab/Israel policy. The King is well aware that the West could not match these funds, and he would for this reason alone have been imprudent to risk them by accepting the part assigned to him in the Reagan plan without Arab cover. The West, particularly the US, must beware of trying to push King Hussein further or faster in the peace process than he feels he can go, or of urging closer identification with the West than he believes his relations with the Arab world will bear.

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10. Western financial assistance to Jordan is relatively modest. US aid for 1982/83 was \$98 million. Our own aid programme provides for capital aid and technical assistance of £10.5 million for the period 1983/7. While these sums do not in themselves go far to help Jordan meet the threats she faces, they are an important demonstration of our political commitment (Jordan would not usually qualify for aid on strict developmental grounds). The proposal that we should be doing more to support the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza both bilaterally and through the Community (which formed one of the recommendations in the paper for the recent informal Ministerial discussions) would, if implemented, help to take some of the strain off Jordan's budget, as well as being a significant political gesture which would hearten the Jordanians and strengthen her arm in the Arab world in arguing for moderate pro-Western policies. Arms supplies are of greater practical significance. Jordan buys mainly from the US, France and the UK, although she has recently gone to the Soviet Union for low-level air defence missiles. Her largest purchase from the UK was 274 Khaled tanks worth £266 million: delivery was completed last year. She has expressed interest in acquiring 25 Hawk aircraft in the medium term, although the Jordanian Air Force is at present short of funds.

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11. We have a close defence relationship with the Jordanians which has evolved over the years as the King's armed forces have matured. We provide a lot of training assistance, mostly in the form of courses in the UK. There may be projects in the future for which the Jordanians would like more substantial help eg seconded UK personnel for a Jordanian Air Force Staff College. We should be ready to offer such assistance if requested, and in some cases British help may be preferred for political reasons to American. A comparison could be made with Oman and the Gulf, but this is not a straightforward one. We created the Jordanian armed forces as we are now creating Oman's, but that stage was completed nearly thirty years ago when the King expelled Glubb Pasha. While we could offer a commitment to consult in time of threat (consultation is constant anyway), we should have to accept that in the King's view the main threat is from Israel. In the event of an Arab (eg Syrian) threat the King would only call for British assistance in the very last resort. We clearly could not commit ourselves to Jordan's security as we have committed ourselves to Oman's.

12. Against this background, we should take the following specific steps:

(i) In order to contribute to the maintenance of the stability and identity of the Occupied Territories, we should continue to oppose settlements and examine ways in which, without substantial new financial commitments, we can contribute to the economic and social development of the West Bank;

(ii) We should follow up the Prime Minister's remarks to President Reagan in further discussions with the US Administration

underlining the threats to Jordan, supporting King Hussein's call for changes in US/Middle East policy to enable the peace process to re-start and, in particular, urging the US not to go ahead with 'strategic cooperation' with Israel.

(iii) We should at an appropriate moment raise the subject in the Ten and consider whether there are any joint steps the community might take to underline the need to preserve Jordan's stability;

(iv) Ministers should make clear in public our rejection of the Jordan-is-Palestine argument, (with its implication that the Hashemite monarchy should be replaced by a Palestinian regime in Jordan); and ventilate the subject with the Israelis in bilateral Ministerial discussions;

(v) In Jordan itself we should back up our political support by practical steps, including maintaining our aid programme; promoting arms sales and defence cooperation; and keeping up a programme of high-level visits in both directions;

(vi) We should make full use of the State Visit to Jordan in 1984 to underline our close relationship, and consider a short stop-over by the Prime Minister, eg. on the way to or from Malaysia, to reinforce the message;

(vii) To survive Jordan needs not only Western support but that of moderate Arab Governments. We should therefore encourage the Saudis and Egyptians to play a more active role, but without exaggerated expectations of either;

(viii) If King Hussein takes the risky step of recalling the Jordanian parliament, we should publicly welcome the return of parliamentary democracy to Jordan.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

17 NOVEMBER 1983

## Annex A

## Jordan-is-Palestine: Historical Argument

1. Proponents of the Jordan-is-Palestine argument allege that HMG "partitioned" historic Palestine in 1921-1922 and handed 78% to the Emir Abdullah. This became Transjordan and eventually the (Palestinian) state of Jordan. They also claim that HMG arbitrarily withheld the provisions of the Palestine mandate relating to the establishment of a Jewish National Home from applying in Transjordan, thereby denying Jews the right to settle in what had historically been part of Palestine.


2. The history of the period is complex, but does not support these assertions:

(i) It is not the case that there was historically a well-defined geographical entity known as Palestine covering both banks of the River Jordan. As late as 1922 the League of Nations in approving the Mandate document entrusted to Britain "The administration of the territory of Palestine, which formerly belonged to the Turkish Empire, with such boundaries as may be fixed by them";

(ii) The area which became Transjordan was part of the territories in which HMG undertook to "recognise and support the independence of the Arabs" in an exchange of letters with Sharif Hussein in 1915. It was always treated separately for administrative purposes from Palestine proper West of the Jordan.

(iii) The Balfour Declaration of 1917 in which HMG confirmed that they "viewed with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people" gave no geographical definition of Palestine. But it would have been inconsistent for HMG to have intended that this provision should apply to the area in which they had already undertaken to support Arab independence;

(iv) The San Remo Conference of 1920 which assigned Palestine



Mandate to Britain left the question of borders open. Far from partitioning historic Palestine, HMG decided, at the Cairo Conference of 1921 called by Churchill to review administrative arrangements in the area, to add Transjordan as "an Arab province or adjunct of Palestine" while at the same time "preserving the Arab character of the area and administration". Hence Article 25 was added to the mandate document providing for the exclusion of Transjordan from the provisions of the mandate relating to the Jewish National Home. In approving this document in 1922 the League of Nations accepted that Transjordan was to be treated as separate from Palestine proper, although nominally covered by the mandate for Palestine.

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## Annex B

Quotations from leading Israeli politicians on the Jordan-is-Palestine theme.

Mr Shamir

Question: What would be the attitude of Israel if the PLO were to overthrow King Hussein and to take control of what you call the Palestinian state across the Jordan River?

Answer : For us, it is not important by whom will be ruled this state of Jordan, which is a Palestinian state. It can be ruled by King Hussein as now. It can be ruled by others. It doesn't matter for us. For us, it's important, the basic fact that this state is a Palestinian Arab State.

Mr Arens

''...certainly Jordan is a Palestinian state. There is no Jordanian nationality: when it was born, where did it come from? One could even say that King Hussein is not a Palestinian, in the sense that his family came from what is today Saudi Arabia, but the population in Jordan is Palestinian to all intents and purposes. Therefore there is a Palestinian State.''

(Israel Radio, 9 September 1983)