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JORDAN: Relations

(2)

FROM: THE RT HON. JULIAN AMERY M.P

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112, EATON SQUARE,

SW1W 9AA

TEL: 01-235 1543
01-235 7408

Confidential

Prime Minister

MS

You will want to read the letter but probably not the Annexes, 31st August, 1984.

Dear Margaret, ^{though I have} *underlined the most interesting points.* ^{ack 31/8} *A reply is in hand.*

CDP 31/8

I came back last weekend from visits to Jordan (August 14 - 17 and 22-24) as the guest of King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan (they share a guest house so I am never quite sure who is host) and to Iraq as the guest of President Saddam Hussein (August 17 - 22). Bill McLean came with me and it is largely owing to him that I can give a reasonably comprehensive account of our different talks.

Despite rumours about his health King Hussein seemed to be in excellent form. When I saw him, at the end of my second visit, he was just about to do some helicopter practice before flying down to Aqaba to celebrate Queen Noor's birthday.

I enclose a note of my main talk with the King which I think you should see. He told me he was coming to London in September so may well ask to see you.

The main points emerging from this talk seem to be the following:

1. The King is deeply disillusioned with the U.S. He respects Reagan but has little time for Schultz and, I gather from others, the same applies to Macfarlane.

I tried to suggest to him that things might be different after the Presidential elections. He was sceptical about this, knowing that the Democrats would probably be stronger in the Senate after the elections. He had hoped for a Peres victory in Israel which at least would have created some possibility of manoeuvre but sees little chance of much negotiation with any foreseeable Israeli Government. His relations with Arafat and the Saudis appear to be at a low ebb. Syria is hostile; Egypt and Iraq his only friends.

2. The King considers that Iraq cannot now be defeated and that the most serious problem concerning us all will be the consequences inside Iran of Khomeini's failure to win the war. He considers it essential that the West should have a contingency plan so that if anarchy breaks out in Iran we should get in first ahead of the Soviets. He regards a General Azhari (now in London) as the best bet for this purpose but sees some force in the Iraqi view reported in the notes of my talks in Bagdad that we should work to squeeze out the hawks and encourage the doves within the present Islamic regime.

The President of Iraq's invitation was made at the suggestion of King Hussein. I enclose notes of my talks with the President and his Foreign Minister. You may not have time to read these in detail. The main points emerging from them seemed to be:

1. The two Iraqi leaders (and their subordinates in talks outside the meetings) went to unusual lengths to explain
 - a) that Iraq had not started the war
 - b) why their troops had not gained more success at the beginning of the fighting
 - c) that they had no territorial claims whatever on Iran and were not concerned with the nature of the Iranian Government.
2. While confident of their ability to defend themselves they were nevertheless keen that peace should be reestablished within months if possible, otherwise there might be "unpleasant surprises". The President did not elaborate on these but evidently they are anxious to restore peace while their present military ascendancy lasts and before unforeseen developments in the Middle East or elsewhere distort the present situation.
3. The President and the Foreign Minister were both very critical of any European encouragement of the Iranian regime. They were particularly critical of Andreotti's Libyan initiative. Genscher's statements about his visit to Teheran

and our own decision to sell landing craft to Iran. They doubt whether the West could overthrow the Khomeini regime by conspiratorial tactics. Instead they want us to squeeze Teheran by all available economic and political pressures so as to encourage the doves within the regime who seem to want peace and discourage the hawks who don't. They would like us to make any economic or other deals with Teheran conditional on progress towards peace.

There may be some significance between some of the rather anti Soviet remarks made by the Foreign Minister and those of the President which are rather more balanced in favour of Iraq/ Soviet understanding. (I have side-lined both passages). Knowing the Baathist proclivity for committee meetings, I suspect that a Committee was called after my meeting with the Foreign Minister and that the President was advised or decided to modify the Foreign Minister's line.

Two omissions in the talks struck me as significant.

While King Hussein spoke very warmly of President Saddam Hussein, the President did not reciprocate though he had ample opportunity to do so, seeing that I brought him greetings from the King and said how strongly the King supported him. When I mentioned this to the King on my way back through Amman he dismissed it as "Baathist boorishness". I wonder.

The Iraqi President like the Syrian Vice President showed no interest in the Palestinian problem. King Hussein remains, of course, very concerned about it but even in Amman it seems to be, for the time being at least, on the backburner.

I also attach some general notes on our visit to Iraq. I do not expect that they add anything to what is already well-known at the FCO, though the story of our visit to the shrine at Najaf is curious. The Governor was clearly anxious to show that he had the Shiah well under control.

The evening before we left Jordan, Crown Prince Hassan had just had a very encouraging report of an oil strike in Jordan. It was as yet unconfirmed. By way of a corrective, however, he told me that a similar report had reached President Numeiri of the Sudan just as King Khalid was about to sign a large cheque in the Sudan's favour. Numeiri, alas over confident, told him not to bother about the cheque but to bring him a cup of tea instead (a reference to the fact that the Saudis mainly employ Sudanese servants)! Prince Hassan thought what fun it would be to be in a similar position though with better reasons!

I am copying this letter to Geoffrey Howe and to Michael Heseltine.

I am sorry not to come up with some constructive suggestion as to what we should be doing. A successful initiative to end the war would probably be something of a triumph but I can't yet see the key to open that particular door. I wonder if President Zia might provide it.

Yours,
Julian

Julian Amery

The Rt.Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, MP