

SECRET

of Master Set
Afghanistan (Pt 3) 'Situation'
Middle East (Pt 2) 'Situation'
Saudi Arabia (Nov 79) 'Relations'
Yemen (Jan 80) 'Int. Situation'
Oman (May 79) 'Policy towards'
Iran (Pt 4) 'Situation'
Energy (Pt 3) Oil Prices'

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND
KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN AT NO. 10 DOWNING STREET ON
WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY 1980 AT 1630 HOURS

Present:

The Prime Minister

King Hussein

The Foreign and Commonwealth
Secretary

Mr. J.C. Moberly

Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander

* * * * *

General

King Hussein said that the Arab, and indeed the entire Muslim, world was facing the risk of a serious split. The danger had been, with difficulty, kept under control since the Camp David Agreement but was now re-appearing. He had been trying to keep in touch with all parties but the situation was deteriorating. There were differences in attitude towards the Soviet Union. The effect of events in Iran, which initially had been positive, was now increasingly unhelpful and on an expanding scale. The situation in that country was entirely unpredictable. The leaders there had no experience. They were acting in a way that was alien to Muslim traditions and to the interests of the area as a whole. What had happened in Afghanistan showed that the Russians were moving. They were trying to get closer to the oil producing regions. The Prime Minister asked whether, in King Hussein's view, that was the basic reason for the Soviet action in Afghanistan. King Hussein confirmed that that was his view.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary noted that it was misleading to think of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan as purely military. Initially there had been a campaign of subversion. This was then followed by military action. King Hussein agreed and the Prime Minister noted that one could expect to see the pattern repeated. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the problem which now faced the area was that there was a puppet Government in Afghanistan and the Russians had established a centre

/ from which

SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

from which they could operate throughout the region. (King Hussein described it as a wedge dividing the Muslim world in half.) If the Russian advance was to be contained certain things were necessary:

- (a) The Islamic reaction, which had been very good so far, must be sustained. It would not be enough for the Islamic Conference to meet at the weekend and to think it would suffice to issue a single condemnation. There had to be a continuing process in which outrage would be expressed and action taken;
- (b) Pressure from the non-aligned world would have to be sustained;
- (c) The dangers of Communist subversion would have to be brought home to the countries of the region, notably Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. The leaders whom he had met on his recent tour of the area had a worrying tendency to accept that subversion happened in other countries but not in their own. Moreover, they tended to take a simplistic view of the threat and to under-estimate the sophisticated nature of subversion today. Saudi Arabia, for instance, was "ripe for plucking".

The Arab/Israel Problem

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he agreed with King Hussein about the threat to the unity of the region posed by the continuing failure to find a solution to the Arab/Israel problem. Everyone he had spoken to on his tour confirmed that this issue bedevilled everything. It affected the attitude of the countries in the region to each other and to the United States since they believed the United States was unwilling to use its muscle to force the Israeli Government to reach an agreement. The Camp David process was clearly going to prove inadequate in satisfying Arab opinion, still less that of the Palestinians. In a Presidential year American Administrations tended to have two Middle East policies: their real policy and that which was advanced for electoral purposes. It was important for other Western

/ governments

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

governments to bear this in mind ^{and} / to avoid undermining the position of the American Administration by reacting to the second policy. If they did so and if President Carter was re-elected, the willingness of his Administration to pursue a constructive policy in future would be undermined. On the other hand, if other governments did nothing, the position in the Middle East would deteriorate.

Against this background, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked whether King Hussein thought there would be any future in a European or British initiative in favour of a Security Council Resolution which:

- (a) recognised the rights of the Palestinians; and
- (b) involved recognition by the Palestinians of Israel's right to exist.

It would not be easy to produce such a Resolution because the spectrum of opinion within the European Community was so wide. It stretched from the French, who might be said to have a view not dissimilar from that of Iraq, to the Dutch who tended to support the Israelis. Nonetheless, perhaps the effort should be made. King Hussein said that it would be extremely helpful if one or more European Governments were able to get the process moving. He had tried a similar initiative himself in the autumn. But the decision of Arab Governments at Tunis has fallen far short of what he had hoped for. They had failed to evolve a united position. Commenting on the significance of the Arab/Israel issue for the region as a whole, King Hussein noted that it did not make it easy for him to respond quickly to appeals from President Carter for help in dealing with the Afghanistan situation or the situation in Iran. Jerusalem was also a matter which affected the emotions and beliefs of the people throughout the Arab world. As regards the hostages, one million Arabs had been living in occupied land since 1967.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that a European initiative would enable the governments concerned to maintain an appearance of active involvement in the region. This would be the more important since the Camp David process was likely to run into the sand in March or thereabouts. Mr. Moberly commented that the

SECRET

/ President might

SECRET

- 4 -

President might well attempt to extend the period of negotiation for electoral reasons but that there was no reason why there should not be negotiation on a European initiative going on in parallel with the Camp David process. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that neither Mr. Vance nor Mr. Brzezinski had ruled out the idea of a European initiative when he had mentioned it to them. The difficulty in getting anywhere would be that Israeli policy had become completely ossified.

Iraq and Syria

The Prime Minister asked about the situation in Iraq and Syria. King Hussein said that he was in close contact with the governments of both countries. The situation in Iraq was good at present. In Syria it was not. President Asad was facing difficulties there. He had reacted by adopting more radical, left-wing policies. Paradoxically, though pursuing an anti-Islamic course within Syria, he had succeeded in maintaining good relations with Ayatollah Khomeini.

Saudi Arabia

King Hussein said that he was deeply worried about the situation in Saudi Arabia. Shortly before the events in Mecca, Prince Abdullah had visited him in Amman and had asked for his views on the position in Saudi Arabia. He had been very frank in reply. He had told Prince Abdullah that the Saudi Arabian Royal Family was not playing its proper role in uniting the people or building up support for the Saudi Government in the country as a whole. Nor was it doing all it could in the Middle East generally to improve the chances of other governments to resist the threat to which they were exposed. He had criticised the Saudi Arabian Government's failure to support the Yemen Arab Republic. (On this point Prince Abdullah had replied that the Saudi Government had spent millions but had incurred only resentment. They wanted to strengthen the Yemen Arab Republic but were not afraid of the consequences of doing so.) King Hussein had criticised the blatancy of corruption in ^{Saudi} ruling circles. He had said that although the Muslim faith ought to be a source of strength to Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Government had allowed subversives to penetrate the country in the name of religion. The Soviet Union were known to be training people to do this.

SECRET

/ King Hussein

SECRET

- 5 -

Paragraph deleted and closed, 40 years,
under a FOI Exemption.

Wayland

30 August 2011

The Prime Minister asked who were the most competent members of the Royal Family. King Hussein said that Prince Abdullah was a good man. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he had been favourably impressed by the Foreign Minister, Prince Saud. However, he was a young man and in the hierarchical atmosphere had to do what he was told. As regards the others, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said he had the impression that Prince Fahd was running the country but that he had deteriorated in recent months. He gave no signs of having a grip on the situation.

SECRET

/ Prince Sultan

SECRET

- 6 -

Prince Sultan also seemed less effective than previously. King Hussein agreed. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked about Prince Saud. King Hussein said that he did not have much influence. Indeed, he had not long ago been on the verge of resigning because of his lack of access to the King and the Prime Minister.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the difficulty was to know how the outside world could intervene. He asked whether there was anyone else in the Arab world apart from King Hussein himself who could speak frankly to the Saudi Arabian Royal Family. The Prime Minister said it was clear that nothing would happen unless they could be spurred into action. It was no good having a Prime Minister who was cut off from his people and his advisers. The Government should be loved or feared rather than the object of indifference. Saudi Arabia was, after all, the key to the area. King Hussein wondered whether the Americans could not say something. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the difficulty for any Western intermediary was, in sum, that he was the wrong colour. It was not an easy thing for any outsider to tell the Government of Saudi Arabia that they should pull themselves together. The only person who could influence the Saudi Royal House was, in his view, King Hussein. King Hussein did not dissent.

Yemen

The Prime Minister expressed concern about the reports that the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic was turning to the Soviet Union for arms. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the Saudi Government had played the hand poorly and that relations between the Saudi Government and the YAR had deteriorated. King Hussein confirmed that events in the Yemen were developing in an unfavourable direction and that this was the result of Saudi clumsiness. It was important for the West to deal directly with the Government of the YAR. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that this would have to be a task for the Americans. The last time they had worked through the Saudi Government. Unfortunately much of the equipment supplied had never been passed on to the Yemenis by the Saudis. The Prime Minister said that it was essential the situation should not be allowed to deteriorate further. If

/ the two Yemeni

SECRET

SECRET

- 7 -

the two Yemeni states got together and fell further under Soviet influence, the whole of the free world would be placed at risk. King Hussein, agreeing, said that a united Yemen might well turn on Oman. He had recently told the Americans that they had to help the YAR. The Americans had indicated that they would be taking action soon. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary added that he had given the same message to Mr. Vance. Moreover, Congressman Solarz, who had recently visited Sana'a, took the same view as King Hussein and was also in touch with Mr. Vance.

Oman and The Gulf

Commenting on the situation in Oman, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he had the impression that there were too many white faces there. Sultan Qaboos had a bit of time in hand, but perhaps not a great deal. Some of the other Gulf Emirates seemed ripe for trouble. King Hussein agreed. Mr. Moberly commented on the absence so far of effective coördination among the Gulf States for their own defence. The Prime Minister said that if there were no improvement in the defences in the Gulf, the whole area was bound to become extremely vulnerable. She wondered whether, if the EEC/Gulf dialogue could be developed, it should not contain a security as well as an economic element. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he thought the dialogue would take time to gather momentum. Mr. Moberly said it would be important to work bilaterally with the States in question.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked King Hussein for his opinion as to whether US bases, about which Mr. Bartholomew was currently holding exploratory discussions, would be acceptable in the area. King Hussein said that would depend on progress on the Arab/Israel problem. If progress could be made, there would be no difficulty. The Arab world could assume its natural place as part of the free world. The Arab states could work together with the West gathering strength through proper planning for the future. The danger, however, was that there would be no progress on the Arab/Israel issue and that divisions within the Arab world would make cooperation impossible. If the Omanis gave the Americans a base in the absence of such progress, there might well be trouble. It might be less difficult for Oman to offer the Americans the

SECRET

/ prospect of

E. R.

SECRET

- 8 -

prospect of facilities at a time of crisis. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he had had the impression during his recent visit that Sultan Qaboos would agree to facilities for the Americans. King Hussein repeated that he was sure that the Omanis would not give the Americans a base though they might offer them facilities. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary wondered whether an offer of facilities would not in the event be represented as an offer of a base.

Iran

King Hussein said that he, in common with many other Arab leaders, had been deeply angered by the taking of hostages in Iran. As he had already noted, the Iranian Government was acting in a way alien to Muslim traditions and their own interests. The Prime Minister said that the difficulty for the West in finding a solution was that the foreign policy considerations were not necessarily the same as those relating to the hostages. Events in Afghanistan had altered the situation completely. The problem was a terrible one for President Carter. HMG had been anxious to demonstrate their support lest the Americans, in the absence of such support, should adopt a more extreme course of action. But it was difficult now to know how to help. Iran must determine her own destiny: at present there seemed to be no rhyme or reason there. King Hussein, agreeing with the Prime Minister, said that everyone in the Middle East was confused about where to take their stand on the Iranian issue. The Prime Minister said that once the problem of the hostages had been resolved it would be possible for the Governments of the free world to unify their policy towards Iran and Afghanistan.

Oil

King Hussein said that another very serious problem in the area, which was of course connected with the situation in Iran, was that of the uncertainty in the oil market and the instability of oil prices. The Iranian crisis had driven up prices and he was now concerned about the consequences if the Soviet Union entered the oil market in a more substantial way. The Prime Minister agreed about the need for greater stability in oil prices. At present there was, in fact, a surplus in oil production. But purchases of oil for stock-piling purposes was driving up the price. If

SECRET

/ Iran were

SECRET

- 9 -

Iran were to break up, it might be impossible to re-establish stability in the oil market in the foreseeable future. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that he was ^{not} convinced that a number of oil producing states would ^{not} limit production if it became apparent later this year that there was a surplus.

Conclusion

King Hussein commented at the end of the discussion that he thought there was an awareness and an alertness in the Middle East to the crisis that faced the area. Governments realised that the identity and the future of their countries were at stake. There was a deep desire to address problems carefully. The Prime Minister said that the British Government, if asked, would do as much as they could to help. There would have to be a continuing process of coordination and action.

The discussion ended at 1740.

AmA
-

23 January 1980

SECRET

SECRET

✓ Master Set
Saudi Arabia (Nov 79)
'Saudi/UK Relations.'

RECORD OF PART OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND
KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY
1980 AT 1630

Present:

The Prime Minister

King Hussein

The Foreign and Commonwealth
Secretary

Mr. J.C. Moberly

Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander

* * * * *

Saudi Arabia: Counter-Subversion

In the course of the discussion (recorded separately) about the situation in Saudi Arabia, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that Saudi Arabia needed help in the sphere of counter-subversion. King Hussein said that there was little time left and what time there was should be used effectively. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the PDRY Government owed much of their stability to a very efficient East German who ran their intelligence service. If Prince Fahd were prepared to employ someone similar in Saudi Arabia to build up his intelligence machine, the situation in the country might be much improved. In reply to a question from the Prime Minister as to whether there was someone suitable in this country, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that even if there was not, one or other of the Western Governments could surely produce someone. He asked whether King Hussein would be prepared to put this suggestion to Prince Fahd. King Hussein said that he would do so.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked whether there was any organisation at present in existence. King Hussein said that there was and that the Saudis possessed a good deal of highly sophisticated equipment. The difficulty was that there was no-one who knew how to use it effectively or who was prepared to act on the information produced. For instance, he had been told that the Saudi Arabian authorities knew about the intention to occupy the Great Mosque in Mecca two months before the event but had failed to take any effective counter-action. Mr. Moberly said that a further

/ problem would

SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

problem would be to persuade the Saudi Government to accept an outsider. The Bahraini Government, for instance, already had someone performing the kind of role envisaged by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. But the Saudis were notoriously xenophobic. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that nonetheless it ought to be possible for them to accept one or two people. The Prime Minister said that she was reluctant to accept that nothing could be done. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that one thing that could be done would be to maintain the flow of intelligence reports about Soviet intentions which were being passed to the Saudi authorities. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that precautions would be taken to ensure that information passed to the Saudis did not fall into the wrong hands. Mr. Moberly said that action was in hand. The information would be passed through our Ambassador in Saudi Arabia.

Am.

23 January 1980

SECRET

SECRET

Jordan

21
4

24 January, 1980.

Call by King Hussein

I have sent you under a separate letter the main part of the record of yesterday's conversation between the Prime Minister and King Hussein. I enclose herewith a record of the exchanges on the possibility of our offering the Saudis help with counter-subversion. This is, clearly, of particular sensitivity.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

G.G.H. Walden, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

KRB

SECRET

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 January, 1980.

Call by King Hussein

King Hussein of Jordan called on the Prime Minister yesterday evening. I enclose a copy of the record of their discussion. Given the sensitivity of much that was said, e.g., about the position in Saudi Arabia, I should be grateful if the record could be given a particularly limited distribution.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence), and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. OD. B. ALEXANDER

G.G.H. Walden, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

KRAF

3