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→ Saudi Arabia (Nov 79)
'Saudi/UK Relations.'

Subject copy filed on Jordan (June 79) Visits to London by King Hussein

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

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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 so 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

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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 [redacted] 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.

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● Extract from PMS Meeting with King Hussein 25 January 1980
at 10 Downing Street 1630 hours
Subject copy filed on 'Jordan (June 1979) Visits to London by King Hussein'

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.

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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.

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

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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.

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