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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 December 1983

Dear John,

King Hussein's Call on the Prime Minister

I enclose briefs for King Hussein's call on the Prime Minister on 16 December at 5 p.m. The King will be accompanied by the Jordanian Ambassador and Mr Ahmad Al-Lawzi, Head of the Royal Court. As agreed, the Foreign Secretary will attend.

I haven't
checked - yet!
see separate
minutes.
OK 15/12

The King arrives in London earlier on 16 December. He met President Mitterrand in Paris on 13 December and addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 15 December. He will be staying privately in London until 21 December. The King has already visited London three times this year: privately in February and May; and as Leader of the Arab League Delegation in March. On each occasion he met the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. Mr Pym was in Amman in April, and Mr Luce saw King Hussein there during his visit last month.

The King is depressed about the situation in the Middle East. The Arabs are in greater disarray than ever: Lebanon is badly bogged down; Iraq is losing the war with Iran; and after internecine Palestinian strife, Arafat is still stuck in Tripoli. In his discussions with the Prime Minister, King Hussein is likely to express his acute concern at the stagnation in the peace process, the unwillingness of the United States to put pressure on Israel, and, above all, at the consequences of the US decision announced during Mr Shamir's visit to Washington on 29 November to resume 'strategic' co-operation with Israel. He has recently sent the Prime Minister on a personal basis a copy of his strongly-worded letter of 9 December to President Reagan about this. It must have been a particular blow to him at a time when he was considering what he himself could do to inject some movement into the Arab/Israel peace process once Arafat's position became clearer.

Fleg F.

The King will no doubt seek the Prime Minister's advice on ways of influencing the United States to take steps to help its friends in the Arab world. He may still be looking for our views on, and encouragement for, his plans to recall the

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Jordanian Parliament, which may among other things help to prepare the ground for a fresh Jordanian approach (if respectable Palestinian cover could be found) to the problem of entering peace negotiations with Israel. The Prime Minister took a cautious line on this in her letter to the King of 21 November annexed to the briefs. The King seems to have backtracked on this idea recently. It was notable that in his letter of 9 December to President Reagan he did not refer to it, and spoke instead of calling an International Conference.

The King may also wish to discuss with the Prime Minister the increased tension between the United States and Syria in Lebanon. He would no doubt be interested to have an account of the Prime Minister's talk with President Gemayel on 14 December.

King Hussein has been a firm supporter of Iraq in its war with Iran. He is concerned about the implications for Jordan of a prolonged stalemate or an Iraqi defeat. The Prime Minister might wish to thank King Hussein for his efforts to secure the release of two British subjects imprisoned in Iraq, Smith and Hagger. Although these have so far been unsuccessful, we may have to call upon the King's good offices again in the future.

Our bilateral relations are excellent and are to be marked by the State Visit to Jordan between 26 and 30 March 1984. Recent articles in The Times and other newspapers highlighting concern for The Queen's security have irritated the Jordanians, whose record in security matters is good. (Recent State Visits by the Presidents of Turkey and Italy passed off without incident.) We shall be keeping a close eye on the security situation as the Visit draws nearer.

Yours ever,

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

Peter Ricketts

A J Coles Esq
 10 Downing Street

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY KING HUSSEIN: 16 DECEMBER

Arab/Israel

Points to Make

1. What are King Hussein's latest plans over the recall of the Jordanian Parliament? What do other Arab states think about it? How would he expect Israel to react to new representation of the West Bank? (If pressed on our attitude). In principle we support any move that will break the present deadlock, but the ground needs careful preparation, and timing will be crucial.
2. PLO/Tripoli. Use of UN flag to help evacuation of Palestinian fighters purely humanitarian. If Arafat is rescued, what will he do? Go to Tunis and leave the front line to Syrian-backed rebels? Might he go to Amman for talks with Hussein? How much support will he command?
3. US policy. Ten and US differ on certain points and we regularly let the Americans know our views. US/Israel 'strategic cooperation' may have little content, but it gave misleading signals. US involvement remains crucial to any chance of peace. If Arabs could make publicly clear that they are ready to enter peace process on realistic basis, pressure will be on US to make Israel react constructively. President Reagan assures us that his initiative is still on the table. We agree that in practice this will require action to ensure that the President's call for a settlements freeze in the Occupied territories, is honoured by Israel. Jordan should not abandon the Reagan initiative unilaterally. Jordan's record of moderation impressive: polarisation must be avoided at all costs.
4. (If Raised). International Peace Conference. We do not (not) see the Arab/Israel dispute in East/West terms, as some others are inclined to do. Does King Hussein see value in involving the Soviet Union at some stage in discussions about the search for peace (rather than in propaganda)? Would he consider raising this

with the Americans? Simple calls for an international conference do not seem to us to be likely to be productive while the gap between the parties remains so wide and US/Soviet relations are so bad.

5. Account of meeting with President Gemayel (14 December).

Prospects for early progress towards reconciliation not encouraging: Gemayel hampered by intransigence of both Syrians and US/Israelis, particularly on status of 17 May Israel/Lebanon agreement. We have urged Americans not to let agreement become an obstacle and discussed with them ideas (favoured by King Hussein) on a timetable for phased withdrawals of foreign forces. Compromises must be found. Will Syrians allow this?

6. Risks to Multinational Force increased recently: suicide bomb attacks, US/French/Israeli air strikes, US naval bombardment. Natural that each contributor should want to deter attacks. But we see overriding need not to escalate tension, and where possible to lower the level of violence.

7. British contingent has established impartial reputation. Presence valued by all including Druze. No intention of following more aggressive US policy. Want to see conditions created which will allow early MNF withdrawal, ideally replaced by some form of UN force.

8. Our relations continue to be excellent. Re-affirm our commitment to Jordan.

9. State visit next March. Queen and Duke of Edinburgh much looking forward to it. Regret recent articles in The Times about Queen's safety in Jordan by a correspondent based in Israel. But little publicity ensued.

10. (If pressed) We shall have to advise The Queen at the appropriate moment. We recognise the skill of the Jordanian government in ensuring security in a volatile and dangerous area. The probability of postponement looks small.

11. Aid. Continue to attach great importance to our aid programme.

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Inspite of UK aid fund being under heavy pressure, HMG doing utmost to assist Jordan's continuing development.

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Essential Facts

1. During their meeting in Washington on 29 September, the Prime Minister and President Reagan agreed that Jordan held the key to the Arab-Israel dispute and that we should help maintain her stability. King Hussein, although pessimistic about the prospects for peace, sees no option but to continue searching for a peaceful settlement. His past identification with US policies in the region (particularly after the Reagan Plan) has worsened his relations with more radical Arab states, particularly Syria. He also faces serious terrorist threats. King Hussein has said that Jordan has irrefutable evidence that the Abu Nidhal Group with Syrian backing were responsible for the attacks on the Jordanian Ambassadors in Rome and Delhi in November as well as other bomb incidents inside Jordan.

2. Jordanians also fear that after Lebanon they will be next on Israel's agenda. They are concerned at the promotion of the 'Jordan-is-Palestine line 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.

Israel/US Strategic Cooperation

3. After Mr Shamir's recent visit to Washington (27-30 November) President Reagan announced several measures designed to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries:

i) Establishment of a joint political/military committee to meet twice yearly to examine ways of strengthening strategic cooperation.

ii) Stock-piling of US military and medical equipment in Israel.

iii) Joint planning and combined naval and air exercises.

iv) Resumption of supply of cluster bombs, suspended following their use by Israelis during war in Lebanon last year, subject to Israeli 'guarantees' that they will only be used against military targets.

v) A total of \$550,000,000 funding for development of the Lavi fighter.

Many Arab states, notably Jordan and Egypt, have expressed their deep unhappiness at this development. In identifying the US even more closely with Israel it is likely to undermine further US credibility as an impartial peacemaker in Lebanon and make it more difficult for the moderate Arabs to join in any negotiations based on the Reagan plan to solve the Arab/Israel dispute.

4. Jordanian Parliament. King Hussein has given thought to recalling the Jordanian Parliament and may announce a decision to do so shortly. The Parliament was prorogued in 1974 following the Rabat Summit resolution that the PLO was the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinians. The King could expect strong opposition particularly from Syria. Given the risks involved for Hussein, the Prime Minister was careful not to express specific support for the move in her letter to him on 21 November (text at Annex). Whether or not he decides to use the Parliament as a platform from which to launch an initiative to start negotiations with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians must also depend on the outcome of the struggle between Arafat and the Syria-backed rebels in Tripoli. Although the Likud Government would not welcome the emergence of a Jordanian-Palestinian entity offering a real opening to negotiations, they are unlikely to prevent PLO-Jordanian Palestinians from participating in the Parliament which they would regard as a useful way of undermining the PLO.

5. PLO. A Saudi/Syrian plan to end the fighting in Tripoli and evacuate Arafat and his supporters has been accepted in principle by both Arafat and the rebels. The ceasefire that followed the announcement of the plan has been subject to only minor violations. The UN Secretary-General has agreed on humanitarian grounds that ships used to evacuate Arafat's fighters should fly the UN flag. Four Greek ships are expected to evacuate 4000 Palestinians carrying personal weapons only, one to Tunis and three to the YAR. King Hussein is reported to have said on 13 December that Arafat would always be welcome in Amman without conditions. The evacuation procedure has moved slowly, but the Israelis have now answered the Greeks that they will not interfere with the operations. Nevertheless anti-Arafat feeling is high in Israel after a bomb attack on 6 December on a bus in Jerusalem from which 5 Israelis

have now died. Responsibility has been claimed by a group calling itself the General Command of the Palestinian Revolutionary Forces.

6. A sitrep on latest developments in Lebanon is attached (Annex A).
7. Jordanian attitudes. King Hussein shares our wish to see a stable independent Lebanon free of all foreign forces. He supports President Gemayel and has given him some practical help (armoured cars for Lebanese Army). He has been generally supportive of the MNF but, like us, sees no future in the US policy of being tough with the Syrians and insisting on no amendment of the Israel/Lebanon agreement. In his message of 25 October to President Reagan he suggested that, with the 23 October bomb attacks, the MNF's bluff had been called and that they should work for a phased withdrawal of all forces, including the MNF, with a fixed timetable.
8. National Reconciliation. President Gemayel has nearly completed his round of talks with American, European and Arab leaders. He has seen President Mitterrand, King Fahd, Signor Craxi and President Reagan and saw the Prime Minister and Secretary of State on 14 December. Plans are in hand to arrange the postponed visit to Damascus as soon as President Asad's health allows. But Gemayel is not much nearer to success with the mandate given him at the first session of the Geneva National Reconciliation talks (31 October - 4 November): "to undertake the necessary contacts to end the Israeli occupation". The stumbling block remains the 17 May Israel/Lebanon agreement which the United States and Israel wish to see implemented but which Syria and the Lebanese opposition want set aside, if not abrogated. Gemayel apparently aims to seek a form of words which avoids the question of implementation/abrogation while offering to respect the political and security concerns of Syria and Israel.
9. US/Israeli Attitudes. The Americans seem to have accepted the Israeli argument that a move away from the 17 May agreement will be interpreted as a sign of weakness and President Gemayel came away with little from his recent meeting with President Reagan (1 - 2 December) except for promises of increased military and economic assistance. He was told that the agreement was still the 'best and

most viable basis' for Israel withdrawal and that he should negotiate direct with the Syrians to expedite their withdrawal, attempt to extend his authority outside the Beirut area and pursue national reconciliation.

10. Syrian Attitudes. At Geneva I the Syrians showed some flexibility, indicating informally that they might be prepared to accept the setting aside of the 17 May agreement (without formal abrogation) and the working out of new Israeli/Lebanese security arrangements. But Syria will not accept implementation of the 17 May agreement and the recent US air strikes and naval shelling against Syrian positions in Lebanon appear to have hardened her attitude. The Syrians' ability to switch the fighting on and off at will, demonstrated most recently by the sudden drop in violence after talks among the factions in Damascus on 9 December, further strengthens Asad's hand.

11. Bilateral Relations. Our relations with Jordan are close and free of problems. King Hussein, a regular visitor to the UK, as are other members of the Royal Household, is a useful sounding board for Arab thinking. The Duke of Gloucester as Grand Prior of the Order of St John, and the Duke of Edinburgh as President of the World Wildlife fund, both paid visits to Jordan in October. Mr Luce was there from 3-6 November as part of a wider tour of the Middle East including Israel and Egypt. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh will make a State visit in March 1984. Two recent articles in the Times, by its Jerusalem based correspondent, have suggested that the security situation in Jordan may put the State visit in jeopardy. This was not well received by the Jordanians and our Ambassador has been at pains to set the record straight with King Hussein and the Jordanian Foreign Minister

12. Aid. Our aid programme makes a valuable contribution to Jordan's development. A £9.9 million loan made in 1977 is almost completely disbursed. Disbursement of a 1982 loan for £8 million is due to start in 1984/85. We have also agreed to provide a grant of £3.6 million towards the Amman-Aqaba electricity transmission line. Our technical co-operation programme is running at £600,000 pa and is greatly appreciated by the Jordanians.

KING HUSSEIN'S CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER: 16 DECEMBER

IRAN/IRAQ

POINTS TO MAKE

UK Attitude to Conflict

1. UK anxious to see an early end to the conflict. At present negotiated settlement unlikely. Mediation by UN Secretary-General offers perhaps best hope. Immediate aim must be to prevent escalation of attacks on economic targets, particularly those belonging to third countries.

Widening of Conflict

2. Concerned by recent attacks on maritime targets, including Greek shipping, and Iraqi threat to attack Kharg Island. Iranian retaliation could affect third countries.

Freedom of Navigation in the Gulf

3. UK concerned to preserve safe passage of neutral shipping. Would deplore action by either belligerent which threatens this.

UK Response to any Escalation (If Raised)

4. UK initial response would be diplomatic and political. But the necessity for military action could not be ruled out. We are keeping in close touch with our friends in the Gulf.

Bomb Incidents in Kuwait

5. We deplore the bomb attacks that took place in Kuwait on Monday. As yet no evidence to suggest that this is the first step in an escalation of the Gulf war. What is King Hussein's view of these developments?

/Smith and Hagger



Smith and Hagger

6. Grateful for King Hussein's efforts and those of Crown Prince Hassan to secure better conditions for these British prisoners in Iraq. [If raised: There is no question of an exchange of prisoners - Salim Hassan for the two British prisoners.]



ESSENTIAL FACTS

The War

1. Further Iranian offensive launched on 19 October and renewed in Kurdistan on 3 November recovered some previously Iraqi-occupied Iranian territory and seized some Iraqi territory. Iraq's counter-attacks have not met with success. Fighting has died down but both sides continue to send reinforcements to the area. Iranians may now be preparing a new offensive further South.

2. Iraq has continued attacks on Iranian convoys in the Gulf. The most recent attack was on 8 December, in which a Greek vessel was sunk, along with an unconfirmed number of Iranian vessels. Iraq has threatened further attacks on Kharg Island but has not so far used the Super Etendard aircraft. Iraqi aim might be to goad Iran into some form of retaliation in the Gulf that would involve the West in the conflict.

Jordanian View of the War

3. Jordan remains a firm supporter of Iraq, both materially and diplomatically. UNSCR 540 (which called for Iran and Iraq to refrain from action that endangered peace in the Gulf area) was passed largely through the efforts of France and Jordan, which held the presidency of the Security Council in October. Jordan's support for Iraq has complicated further its relations with Syria which supports Iran.

Bomb Incidents in Kuwait

4. The US State Department have taken the view that preliminary indications point to some Iranian complicity. We have no evidence, as yet, to suggest that this is the first move in an escalation of the Gulf conflict. The Iranian Government has denied that it was involved.

/Mediation



Mediation

5. Iran has denounced UNSCR 540 yet tacitly observes its provisions and has reconfirmed Iranian support for a continuing role for the UN Secretary-General and his representative (Mr Palme). Iraq insists on its implementation yet violates its terms by continued attacks on shipping and on Iranian civilian targets.

6. Iran wishes to persuade the UN Secretary-General to send another mission to the area to look at civilian damage and particularly to investigate the evidence of Iraq's use of chemical weapons. Before taking action the Secretary-General wants to be sure the move would not fail. He has yet to secure Iraqi agreement to any further mission to investigate war damage. Iraq would welcome follow-up action to SCR 540 by a UN mediator, as would the French and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Iranians would, however, resist any mission specifically to follow-up SCR 540.

7. It would be useful to try to pull these strands together as a way of getting the Iranians back into play with the UN after their disenchantment with SCR 540. If necessary, we could accept separate UN missions to Iran and Iraq with a view to combining them later. We are also discussing with the Americans the text of a possible further SCR in case it is necessary to table this quickly to pre-empt unhelpful Soviet action at the UN.

Contingency Planning (not for use)

8. Talks at Political-Director level were held with the French on 1 December. The French are non-committal on the question of contingency planning in the event of a closure of the Straits of Hormuz. They accept that it would be prudent to plan in advance of a crisis, but are not convinced about the imminence of such a crisis.

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9. We are in close contact with the Americans. A State Department team led by Raphael, Assistant Secretary in the State Department, visited Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states between 29 November and 7 December to discuss concerted action, share assessments of Iranian and Iraqi intentions, and to lay ground work for possible further political/military talks on military contingencies. Raphael discussed his visit with officials in London on 9 December and also met Mr Luce. There had been general support in the Gulf for the visit of a further US military team to assess the Iranian threat and lay the ground work for talks leading to possible joint military contingency planning (although views varied as to how far this should be taken). Raphael also noted that, although the United States remained neutral in the war, it was in the US interest not to see Iraq defeated. The US team had told Iraq and the Gulf states this. The US were also planning to take further measures against Iran, which might include tightening trade controls.

Smith and Hagger

10. Messrs Smith and Hagger are Britons imprisoned in Baghdad: John Smith on charges of attempted bribery of an Iraqi official, and Donald Hagger on spurious charges of espionage. The Iraqis have constantly tried to exchange these prisoners for Salim Hassan, an assassin of the Iraqi Intelligence Service who murdered a former Iraqi Prime Minister outside a London hotel in 1979. He is currently serving a sentence of life imprisonment at Wakefield.

11. Mrs Smith had a meeting with the Prime Minister in February 1983 and on 13 July had a meeting at the FCO with Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan. King Hussein has, at our request, pleaded with Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi President, for better conditions for Smith and Hagger. The King has reported that unless we agree to an exchange of prisoners further efforts by him are unlikely to lead to progress.

LEBANON:SITREP 12 00Z 15 DECEMBER

Military situation

1 Beirut/Shouf. Several serious violations of ceasefire 14 December. Clashes in southern suburbs of Beirut between Lebanese Army and Shia militia, Druze shelling of Christian East Beirut. Two French members of MNF, 2 Lebanese Army soldiers and 2 civilians killed 14/15 December. Ceasefire Committee again failed to meet 14 December (No meetings since 2 December). Airport remains closed.

2 Two incidents involving BRITFORLEB. On 14 December 4 Druze shells landed close to BRITFORLEB HQ. Defence Secretary and Mr Luce both spoke by telephone on 14 December to Jumblatt. Embassy Damascus spoke to Druze officials there. Druze undertook to halt any shelling. On 15 December 2 RPGs hit nearby tobacco factory, 2 small arms rounds hit a forward position. No damage, no casualties. Commander BRITFORLEB satisfied no deliberate targetting.

3 Further attacks by Syrian anti-aircraft positions on 2 US F14s carrying out reconnaissance (14 December). Immediately afterwards USS New Jersey, Tatnall and Ticonderoga fired approximately 80 rounds at 6 anti-aircraft sites around Dahr al Beida, 23 miles east of Beirut (14 December). No details of casualties or damage. US have told us naval rather than air bombardment to avoid escalation and allow immediate response. President Reagan has reiterated (14 December) US forces will retaliate if reconnaissance missions fired upon: 'We are not there to shoot first or to enter into combat but ... it has been our policy that if they are attacked they will defend.... We have retaliated as near as we can against those who have actually done the attacking'.

4 Evacuation of Christian refugees from Deir al Kamar due to begin today (15 December). Reports that Israeli and Italian troops will guarantee safe passage of Christian civilians and militia through Druze lines. Evacuation expected to take up to a week; majority are homeless and will go to reception centres in Christian East Beirut.

5 National Reconciliation. President Gemayel told Lebanese journalists in London (14 December) Lebanese officials were in touch with faction leaders and that national reconciliation talks were likely to resume within a few days probably in Montreux. His estimate may be seriously over-optimistic. No news of date for crucial Gemayel/Assad meeting, but Syrian President apparently recovering: shown on television (14 December) in talks with Saudi Foreign Minister. US Middle East envoy Donald Rumsfeld arrives in Damascus for talks 14 December; will continue on to Israel later today, Beirut (16 December) and Baghdad (17 December).

6 PLO/Tripoli. Israeli Government seeking to play down claim by Deputy Prime Minister Levy that Israelis would not interfere with evacuation of PLO loyalists. Government clearly wish to keep their options open, and Israeli aircraft reportedly flew low over Tripoli yesterday. But military intervention still seems unlikely. Italian ship due today or tomorrow to take 97 seriously wounded Palestinians to Cyprus under ICRC auspices. Co-ordinating committee supervising evacuation has announced that Greek ships will arrive 16 or 17 December but other sources indicate up to a week's delay. Greeks continue to seek guarantee of safe passage. It remains unclear whether the French will provide naval escort. Rebel forces have threatened to resume hostilities unless Arafat leaves by 21 December. There are reports that Arafat may be reconsidering alternative plan for evacuation over land, transitting through Syria to Jordan then on to Iraq or Aqaba for departure to Tunis or North Yemen.



10 DOWNING STREET

WAL 0211 13
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21 November 1983

THE PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty,

I am grateful to you for your letter of 26 October with which you enclosed copies of your recent letters to President Reagan about the situation in Lebanon and the future of the Middle East. Richard Luce has subsequently given me an account of his discussions with you in Amman. It is most useful to have your ideas about the dangers threatening the region.

When the Foreign Ministers of the four contributors to the multi-national force met in Paris on 27 October, they reaffirmed their commitment to the MNF and stressed the urgent need for all the parties involved in the Geneva talks to take the steps necessary to achieve national reconciliation. The task is a difficult one. The first results from Geneva are not discouraging, but the news of further violence in Lebanon in recent days shows how urgent it is that a lasting political solution be reached. We shall do what we can to help the reconciliation process along and so create conditions in which the presence of the MNF is no longer necessary. I see the advantages of your idea of a framework for the withdrawal of Israeli, Syrian (and indeed PLO) forces linked to a timetable. Indeed we have been developing some thoughts of our own along similar lines.

I share your concern that the pressure of events in Lebanon has diverted attention from the need to make progress towards a wider peace in the region. Richard Luce has reported to me the

/ feelings

feelings of despair and frustration which he found on his recent tour, especially in the Occupied Territories, as a result of the lack of progress towards an overall settlement. The tragic fighting now taking place in Northern Lebanon underlines the urgent need for renewed efforts to solve the Palestinian problem, and highlights the difficulties facing those who would like to make faster progress. Under the circumstances I can understand Your Majesty's wish to consider whether there are steps which Jordan might take to this end. I realise that the recall of the Jordanian Parliament would have far reaching implications. Your Majesty will no doubt be looking to other Arab countries to provide backing for such an important step.

As for Britain, you can count on our support for any move which helps to break the current deadlock. We stand ready to do all we can to help promote peace in the region.

With my warmest and deepest regards
and respects for Your Majesty at this
most difficult time,

Yours sincerely

Raymond Shabta

His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal

King of Jordan.

Born Amman 1935.

Educated Bishops School, Amman; Victoria College, Alexandria; Harrow; shortened course at Sandhurst 1952/53. He was present when his grandfather, the Amir Abdullah, was assassinated in Jerusalem in 1952 and acceded to the throne in the following year on the deposition of his father, Talal, a schizophrenic. He has been in power longer than any other Arab leader and has survived numerous assassination attempts and threats to his throne including the overthrow of the Hashemites in Iraq in 1958, the loss of the West Bank to Israel in 1967, the civil war against the Palestinian groups in 1970-71 and periods of bad relations with Iraq and, most recently, Syria.

In relation to Israel, King Hussein recognises the futility of extreme policies. He has, however, maintained both in public and private strong opposition to the Camp David agreements and to the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations despite US attempts - some heavy-handed - to persuade him to participate. His willingness to contemplate full peace with Israel is genuine, but his freedom of manoeuvre has always been limited by the need to keep in step with his Arab neighbours and with the oil-rich Arab states which contribute substantial sums to Jordan in budgetary support; he also has to take account of the views of the Palestinian half of Jordan's population. In the light of the re-armament of Israel since 1973 he recognises how far the Arabs have to go before they will have a credible military option; he will therefore do everything possible to avoid Jordanian involvement in a further Arab/Israel war.

At the Rabat Conference in October 1974 King Hussein recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, thereby implicitly renouncing his claim to the West Bank. Nevertheless, King Hussein has not abandoned his belief that his family will have an important role to play with regard to the West Bank in any Arab/Israel settlement. He recognises, however, that the initiative for such a development must come from the West Bankers themselves.

Despite the playboy image of his youth King Hussein is now wholly serious and dedicated in his efforts to preserve the Hashemite Kingdom and to protect the interests of his people, both East Bank Jordanians and Palestinians. Allied to a measure of luck he has shown the ability and experience to take sensible and sometimes courageous decisions in times of crisis.

Both by inclination and because of his assessment of the best interests of his country, King Hussein has always been strongly pro-Western. He has, however, taken care to maintain relations with the Soviet Union and has argued that the Russians must be associated with a future UN conference to settle the Middle East dispute.

King Hussein takes all major foreign and defence policy decisions himself. He is less interested in economic questions and has devolved responsibility for planning in this field to Crown Prince Hassan. Perhaps King Hussein's greatest single asset is his very warm, friendly and outgoing personality. He has used this to good effect in keeping in close touch with and maintaining the loyalty of the Armed Forces, whose importance to his throne he has always recognised.

In his personal life, the tragic death in a helicopter crash in 1977 of his Palestinian-born third wife, Queen Alia, affected him deeply. His marriage in June 1978 to his fourth wife, Noor (née Elizabeth or Lisa Halaby, an American of Lebanese origin) appeared at the outset to be one of genuine affection but is now showing some signs of strain. Despite complaints at the King's choice of another non-Arab, non-Muslim girl to marry, the marriage did not attract the public criticism aroused by the King's wedding to Princess Muna. Shortly before the marriage the King announced that Prince Ali, his infant son by Queen Alia, would be next in the line of succession after Prince Hassan, thus displacing the son subsequently born to Queen Noor in 1980, the two sons of Princess Muna and the son of Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath. By this means King Hussein sought to avoid later argument and to strengthen the Hashemite throne for the future by giving precedence to a son of entirely Arab descent.

King Hussein has recently suffered on more than one occasion from slight heart trouble. Provided, however, that he continues to be able to avoid assassination attempts and accidents and that his health remains good, there seems no reason short of an all-out Arab/Israel war, with all the uncertainties it would bring, why he should not remain King of Jordan for the foreseeable future. For the time being, his neighbours and his financial backers seem likely to continue to believe that their interests will be best served by the maintenance in Jordan of the Hashemite regime headed by King Hussein.

AL-LAWZI, AHMAD

Head of the Royal Court.

Born near Amman 1925.

Graduated from a teacher training college in Baghdad. Worked as a teacher 1950-3; Assistant Head of Royal Protocol 1953-6; Head of Royal Protocol 1956-61; Member of Parliament 1961-3; Assistant Head of the Royal Diwan 1963-4; Minister of State at the Prime Minister's Office 1964-5; Minister of the Interior (Rural and Municipal Affairs) 1967; Minister of Finance, October 1970 - December 1971, when he became Prime Minister following Wasfi al-Tell's assassination. Resigned in May 1973. President of the National Consultative Council 1978 - December 1979. Head of Royal Court December 1979 to date.

Once a member of the Ba'ath Party, later an associate of Bahjat al-Talhouni (qv), later still found favour with Wasfi al-Tell to such an extent that Wasfi named him as his successor. Politically, as well as personally, somewhat colourless (apart from his devotion to the Hashemites), he remained Prime Minister longer than many of his critics expected when he was first appointed. His name still features among those thought to be potential future Prime Ministers. A self-important yes-man but financially honest, probably quite a good committee chairman, and regarded as the present establishment's most gifted impromptu orator.

Married with several children. Speaks indifferent English and prefers to do business in Arabic. Personally friendly. His health has not been good recently.

CURRICULUM VITAE OF MR. TAHER MASRI

Mr Al-Masri was born in 1942 in Nablus. (West Bank). He later studied at the North Texas State University where he received a BA in Commerce.

He joined the Jordanian Central Bank in 1965 and worked there, including a period attached to the Bank of England, until his appointment in 1973 to represent Nablus in the Lower House of the Jordanian Parliament. In May 1973 he was made Minister of State for the Affairs of the Occupied Territories, a post which he held until November 1974.

Mr Al-Masri has previously served as Jordanian Ambassador in Madrid (1975-78) and Paris (1978-83).

He speaks excellent English, and is married with two children.