



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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Dear Charles,

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Prime Minister  
later less than the  
Israelis told us.

Mr Richard Murphy's Visit to London: Arab/Israel CDP 27/1

Dick Murphy debriefed himself on the telephone to Ewen Fergusson immediately before his departure for Washington, following his various meetings with King Hussein and Mr Peres over the past week.

Murphy said that his goal had been to make measurable progress over direct talks, to take place as soon as possible, between Israel and a Jordan/Palestinian delegation and between Israel and Syria, though there was a big question mark over the latter. There had been some progress over the criteria for Palestinian representation; on the international conference there had also been progress though there were still important details over, for instance, what authority it might have and the need to ensure that it was not given a right of veto over the work in the bilateral committees. The Americans also wished to be sure that any conference was limited in duration, though this would not be difficult, for practical reasons, if the opening session was attended by prime ministers or foreign ministers. Significant work was, however, still required on King Hussein's insistence that he should be able to have recourse to the plenary session from the bilateral committee.

Mr Shultz personally felt very strongly that if the conference had the right to intervene, that would allow the participants to evade the tough issues which only they could address. Provided that outstanding detailed points could be agreed with the King (Mr Cluverius, Murphy's Special Assistant, would be flying to Amman on 24 January), it should be possible to start early consultations with representatives of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, including the UK, and with the UN Secretary General in New York, on detailed implementation.

Murphy told Fergusson that the Syrians had said that there was no problem to them over a conference attended by the Five. Jordan preferred the Five. Israel could accept the Five though, as we know, they are not keen on any conference at all.

As far as Soviet aspects are concerned, the Israelis are insisting on a prior Soviet willingness to restore normal diplomatic relations. Similarly, the Chinese would have to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in order to participate. So far the Soviet answer has been that they are not prepared to accept pre-conditions for their attendance. Murphy commented that

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he could not exclude the possibility of an autonomous decision on the Soviet side, but he doubted whether there would be any indication of this in the weeks before the forthcoming Party Congress.

The second Israeli requirement was for significant moves over Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union. As we know from Mr Peres' talks with us, that is the more important of the Israeli requirements.

Murphy said that the Soviet Union were putting pressure on the PLO to drop the 11 February Agreement with King Hussein and to work out a rapprochement with the Syrians. The Syrians had told the Americans that they were unclear what the PLO would be prepared to do. In the US view it rests with King Hussein to take the lead during this forthcoming meeting with Arafat. King Hussein had told them that the Syrians would like to exclude Arafat from the process and were against participation by the Egyptians in an international conference.

Murphy said that Arafat would be in Amman today or tomorrow. He assumed that, as usual, Arafat's answers to King Hussein on the major issues would be fuzzy. That would then present King Hussein with some tough decisions; whether to go ahead leaving the PLO on one side and whether, in such circumstances, representative Palestinians could be found whom the PLO would not oppose. It was obvious to the Americans and to the Israelis that King Hussein would have to be very careful since he could not fly in the face of Arafat and the PLO leadership, nor in the face of wider Arab opinion. The Amman meetings were clearly the key to see whether steps forward could be taken on the King's need for a continuing conference and over any possible link between the Palestinian and the Syrian aspects of the negotiations. Murphy thought that inch by inch progress was being made. There would be further meetings between King Hussein and the Americans in the near future. Murphy will be having further talks with Fergusson in Washington in a week's time and would then give him a full picture of how things stood.

Murphy commented that in his talks with Mr Peres, the Prime Minister had been very sensitive to King Hussein's concerns, though he had also emphasised his own domestic problems. Murphy added that Peres had acted in a very "prime ministerial" manner and had shown considerable self confidence.

In response to a question about the Israeli idea of a preliminary meeting between Mr Peres and King Hussein, Murphy said that if that could be arranged it would be of enormous use, since

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it would help Mr Peres to mobilise electoral support for a peace platform. It might well be that, despite all the difficulties for King Hussein, he too might be brought to see the advantages; he might find such a meeting easier if it were under third party chairmanship, and given the current tense state of US/Jordan relations (disappointment over arms etc) a British role could make it easier for the King to accept. Fergusson expressed willingness on our side to do anything which we could to help.

*Yours ever,*  
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