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MIDDLE EAST

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~~MR DEREK THOMAS~~

MR FERGUSSON

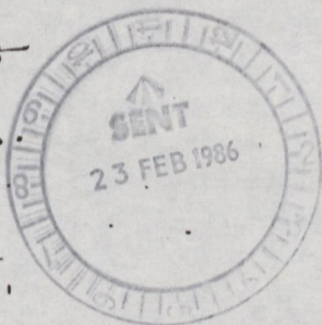
SIR D. HIRSH

HD/WENAD

HD/MED

NO. 10 DOWNING STREET

CABINET OFFICE DIO



IMMEDIATE

ADVANCE COPY

PUSD (2)

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1.10.85

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FM AMMAN

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TO DESKBY FCO 23 10002

TELNO 230830Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM, CAIRO

INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME, BONN

INFO PRIORITY THE HAGUE, RIYADH, BAGHDAD.

CALL ON KING HUSSEIN: ARAB-ISRAEL

SUMMARY

1. KING HUSSEIN'S AIM IS THAT SOMETHING SHOULD EMERGE FROM THE NEW SITUATION CREATED BY HIS SPEECH WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE BASIS IN DUE COURSE FOR REACTIVATION OF THE PEACE PROCESS. HE IS CLEARLY HOPING THAT THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES WILL FIND A WAY OF CHANGING THE CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP. ANY ACTION BY OUTSIDERS WHICH INTERFERES WITH THAT PROCESS WILL BE UNPOPULAR HERE AND COULD EXACERBATE WHAT IS ALREADY A DELICATE SITUATION.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON KING HUSSEIN ON THE EVENING OF 22 FEBRUARY. THE HEAD OF THE DIWAN (MARWAN AL GASEM) WAS PRESENT.
3. I TOLD THE KING THAT BRITISH MINISTERS WERE NATURALLY MOST INTERESTED IN HIS SPEECH OF 19 FEBRUARY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. WE WERE SAD THAT ALL HIS EFFORTS SHOULD HAVE ENDED THIS WAY. PERSONALLY I THOUGHT THAT HIS SPEECH WAS, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, COMMENDABLY RESTRAINED.
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5. HE HAD DECIDED THAT HE MUST, IN HIS SPEECH, SET OUT THE FACTS, IN PARTICULAR FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. HE HAD SPENT THE LAST 48 HOURS RECEIVING DELEGATIONS (FROM E.G. THE REFUGEE CAMPS, THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY, THE JORDAN PARLIAMENT ETC) EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR HIS STAND. IT LOOKED AS THOUGH HE WOULD SPEND THE COMING DAYS RECEIVING FURTHER DELEGATIONS INCLUDING SOME FROM THE WEST BANK.

6. HIS HOPE WAS THAT OUT OF THIS NEW SITUATION SOMETHING MIGHT GELL WITH WHICH HE COULD WORK. JORDAN'S QUARREL WAS NOT WITH THE PALESTINIANS, NOT EVEN WITH THE PLO, BUT WITH THE CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP. IT WAS VITAL TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON THAT LEADERSHIP. ANYTHING THAT RELIEVED THAT PRESSURE AND BUILT UP THEIR STATUS WAS UNHELPFUL.

7. HE WISHED TO TELL ME VERY PRIVATELY (I SUGGEST WE KEEP THIS ENTIRELY TO OURSELVES) THAT ONE IDEA HE WAS CONSIDERING WITH HIS ADVISERS WAS THE CONVENING OF A CONFERENCE OF PALESTINIANS, PROBABLY IN AMMAN, WHO WOULD DEBATE THE ISSUES FREELY AND OPENLY. BUT THAT WAS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE IDEA AND IT WAS FOR THE FUTURE. FOR THE TIME BEING WE COULD ONLY OBSERVE AND SEE WHAT EMERGED.

8. AS TO THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, PRESIDENT ASAD HAD PHONED HIM TWO DAYS AGO. ASAD HAD SEEMED PLEASED WITH THE SPEECH, PROBABLY BECAUSE HE THOUGHT JORDAN HAD COME ROUND TO HIS VIEW OF ARAFAT. JORDANIAN AND SYRIAN VIEWS ON AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WERE NOW VERY CLOSE. HE THOUGHT ASAD WOULD PROBABLY VISIT JORDAN IN THE REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE (I DID NOT THINK HUSSEIN WAS REALLY CONVINCED ABOUT THIS).

9. THE KING SAID THAT HE EXPECTED TO VISIT IRAQ IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THEN SAUDI ARABIA AND, THEN, PERHAPS EGYPT. EGYPT WAS 'STUMBLING'. PRESIDENT MUBARAK DID NOT YET SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JORDAN'S DECISION TO TERMINATE THE DIALOGUE WITH THE CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP. THE KING REFERRED DISMISSIVELY TO EGYPTIAN TALK OF AN EC 'CONTACT GROUP'.

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10. I TOLD THE KING THAT, AS HE WOULD KNOW, EC FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD BE MEETING ON 25 FEBRUARY. THEY WOULD BE DISCUSSING THE ARAB/ISRAEL QUESTION. WE ABOVE ALL WISHED TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE. THE QUESTION WAS: WHAT WOULD BE HELPFUL.

11. THE KING SAID THAT JORDAN'S AIM REMAINED AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WITH ALL THE PARTIES REPRESENTED. BUT THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION REMAINED THE KEY. IF, AS A RESULT OF HIS NEW APPROACH, THIS QUESTION WAS SOLVED AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE, ALL THE FRUITLESS DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN NAMES ETC WOULD BE A THING OF THE PAST.

12. MARWAN ALQASEM SAID THAT A DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE (A MEMBER OF THE BEIRUT EMBASSY) HAD VISITED HIM EARLIER IN THE DAY AND HAD FLOATED THE POSSIBILITY OF A MISSION IN THE AREA BY A GROUP OF EC REPRESENTATIVES (IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER QASEM WAS REFERRING TO A CONTACT GROUP OR A TROIKA FORMULA). THE DUTCH ENVISAGED THAT THE MISSION WOULD VISIT JORDAN, THE PLO, EGYPT AND PERHAPS OTHERS WITH THE AIM OF RECONCILING THE JORDANIAN AND PLO POSITIONS. THE EMISSARY HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THIS WAS MISGUIDED, FIRST, BECAUSE IT WOULD GIVE ARAFAT A NEW LEASE OF LIFE, SECONDLY BECAUSE THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES (SELF-DETERMINATION ETC) LAY BETWEEN THE PLO AND THE UNITED STATES, NOT THE PLO AND JORDAN.

13. QASEM ALSO SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE (THE KING WAS NOT) OF A "GOOD" STATEMENT WHICH THE GERMAS WERE PROPOSING THAT EC FOREIGN MINISTERS SHOULD ISSUE. QASEM THOUGH (AND THE KING AGREED) THAT THE BEST THING THE EC COULD DO WAS TO LET THE SITUATION EVOLVE. A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF CONCERN AND INTEREST WOULD DO NO HARM BUT A HIGHER-PROFILE INITIATIVE MIGHT. THE KING REPEATED THAT NOTHING SHOULD BE DONE TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON THE PLO LEADERSHIP. ONE ACTION WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL (BUT HE WAS NOT NECESSARILY THINKING IN EC TERMS) WOULD BE TO PERSUADE THE ISRAELIS NOT TO PUT OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF PALESTINIANS FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WHO WISHED TO COME TO JORDAN AND MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN. I SAID THAT I WOULD IMMEDIATELY REPORT THESE VIES. WE WERE KEEN AS ANYONE TO BE HELPFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE.

COMMENT

14. THE KING, WHO HAD BEEN RECEIVING DELEGATIONS FOR HOURS, WAS MORE LIVELY AND CONFIDENT THAN HE HAS BEEN FOR MONTHS. I THINK HE FEELS THAT HE HAS PUT ARAFAT'S EVASIONS BEHIND HIM AND IS NOW DIRECTING ATTENTION TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER - WHO ARE THE REAL PALESTINIANS AND WHO HAS A GENUINE CLAIM TO REPRESENT THEM? BUT HE HAS CREATED A DELICATE SITUATION, INTERNALLY AND MORE WIDELY IN THE ARAB WORLD, AND HIS COMMENT THAT WE SHOULD NOW WAIT AND SEE WHAT EVOLVES SEEMS TO ME HIGHLY SENSIBLE. NO-ONE CAN FORESEE WHAT THE CURRENT FERMENT IN THE AREA WILL PRODUCE. IN THE LONGER-

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16. WHILE I WELL APPRECIATE THE NEED THAT OUR OWN STANCE ON 25 FEBRUARY SHOULD NOT APPEAR NEGATIVE I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT IN THIS NEW, DELICATE AND FLUID SITUATION IT WOULD BE WISE FOR EC FOREIGN MINISTERS TO GIVE THEMSELVES TIME BEFORE EMBARKING ON ANY INITIATIVE, THOUGH IT MAY BE THAT A CAREFULLY DRAFTED STATEMENT WOULD BE HELPFUL.

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TO DESKBY FCO TELNO 95 .

TELNO 230830Z FEBRUARY 86

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INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME, BONN

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Russ

*pr check that this
was to No: 10. if
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to CP of my letter
yesterday as A/I*

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NEWS D
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PS
PS/MR RENTON
PS/PUS
MR FERGUSSON
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