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# BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

## POLICY AND REFERENCE DIVISION

June 12, 1980

POLICY STATEMENTS

(FULL TEXT)

### 23/80. THE DANGERS TO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Douglas Hurd, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, at the Institute for Jewish Affairs, on June 11, 1980:

The United States has played a dominant role in peace-making in the Middle East in recent years, and it would be impossible to imagine a lasting peace settlement without its full participation, Mr. Douglas Hurd, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said at the Institute of Jewish Affairs on June 11.

But that essential role "did not exclude a complementary role for Europe," he said, explaining why the heads of the European Community nations would be considering a declaration or diplomatic action at their summit meeting in Venice this week. "Indeed, the United States itself has often urged the Europeans to take more seriously their interests and responsibilities in the Middle East. That is what we are now doing."

Mr. Hurd said:-

"I would like to concentrate on the central problem of the Arab/Israel dispute and how Israel's future can be assured. But it is an important part of my message to stress that this problem must be looked at in its geographical and political context, if we are to understand its urgency.

"The region which it has become fashionable to refer to as the 'Arc of Crisis,' includes many unsolved problems and conflicts, which, singly or in combination, threaten world peace. The

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revolution in Iran, the continuing problem of the U.S. hostages and most of all the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have helped to build up a general feeling of tension and instability in the area.

"But added to these are other potentially serious disputes, some directly connected to these major events, such as the tension between Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and some of her Arab neighbors, notably Iraq; others less obviously so, such as last year's events at the Great Mosque in Mecca and unrest in the Yemen. The list could be prolonged. The general point, that the area is full of dangers any one of which could escalate into a major crisis, is one which is too obvious to us all to need laboring.

"Of course the Middle East is not alone in this respect. South-East Asia and Africa also present a daunting list of problems and conflicts. But the Middle East must be of particular concern to Europe and to Britain. We live close to the Middle East. The peoples of Europe and the Middle East are linked by history. Our trading connections with the Middle East are infinitely varied, and tens of thousands of British people now work and live there. We cannot be indifferent or detached.

#### Arab/Israel Peace Settlement Essential for Stability

"How does this relate to the Arab/Israel dispute? It would not be accurate to argue that the root cause of all these problems can be traced to the Arab/Israel conflict. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution did not happen because of the failure to solve the Arab/Israel dispute. Many of the inter-Arab disputes are caused by conflicting perceptions and interests unrelated to the establishment and continuing existence of Israel.

"Nor would a solution to the Arab/Israel dispute usher in instantly a new era of unity, cooperation and stability. Differences of interest will persist; boundary and other disputes will continue to be a source of friction.

"But I am convinced that there will be no stability in the Middle East, and certainly no common determination to resist Soviet expansion, until the foundations of an Arab/Israel peace settlement have been laid. We cannot look forward to developing the common interests which we and the countries of the area, including Israel, share, until the path towards an Arab/Israel solution has been mapped out.

/"That ...

"That is why the Heads of State and Government of the European Community have put the Middle East on the agenda of their Summit meeting in Venice this week. They will consider whether there is any declaration or any diplomatic action by which the countries of Europe could help forward the process of peace.

#### Britain Has No Particular Interests to Protect or Appease

"It is not for me to predict what answer they may find. Nor obviously can I speak for any Government except the British. I wish however to say something about our thinking and the reasons why we think this discussion is necessary and how we believe it could be fruitful.

"In the Middle East we British have no particular interests to protect or appease. Our interest is a general one. We are not concerned on our own account as to where particular frontiers should run or what particular Governments should rule in particular countries. In short, we no longer have even the vestige of an imperial role. Our interest is the general interest of a stable Middle East within which we can maintain trade and friendship because its peoples are prosperous and at peace with each other. A stable Middle East must include the state of Israel, existing within secure frontiers, fully recognized by her neighbors and in turn fully recognizing their rights. Israel's security is thus of fundamental concern to us.

#### Both the U.S. and Europe have Peace-Making Roles

"We accept that in the task of peace-making a dominant role during recent years has fallen to the Americans. This is natural enough. It is impossible to imagine a lasting peace settlement without the full participation of the United States, both in reaching agreement and in making sure that agreement once reached is respected. But this essential role of the United States does not exclude a complementary role for Europe. Indeed the United States itself has often urged the Europeans to take more seriously their interests and responsibilities in the Middle East. That is what we are now doing.

"Against this background we do not ignore, indeed we welcome the achievements of Camp David. We recognize the fundamental concessions which Israel made to bring about peace with Egypt, a peace which owes its existence to the statesmanship of President Sadat, Mr. Begin and President Carter. It is crucial that this achievement should not be lost - but if it is to be saved then it must be further developed. We do not believe - I do not think that

anyone believes - that bilateral peace between Egypt and Israel can last in isolation. Progress towards a wider peace is vital. That is one reason why we find the present situation so depressing and dangerous.

### Camp David Agreement Rejected by Most Arabs

"The Camp David Settlement was vehemently rejected by almost the whole of the Arab world outside Egypt. It is therefore difficult to see how by itself it can provide the means by which a wider peace can be achieved. The rights and wrongs of this rejection can be argued forever. But it remains the fact that there is no evidence that it will be reversed or even qualified by those concerned.

### New Settlements - "Bitterly Resented"

"There is another dangerous development. Despite the Camp David Agreement and the autonomy talks held under that agreement and despite the advice of her friends, the Government of Israel has continued to plant settlements on the West Bank. Although these new settlements are still relatively few in number, the Palestinians not surprisingly see them as a reinforcement of Israel's military occupation. The new settlements are bitterly resented, as indeed any fair-minded person could have foreseen. Security on the West Bank has deteriorated rapidly in recent weeks, as terror on one side breeds terror on the other. Hatred and fear have reached dangerous proportions. Meanwhile the autonomy talks have passed their deadline. If present efforts to resume the talks succeed we shall welcome this and wish them well. But from now on the key lies increasingly on the West Bank itself and in Gaza. As the Egyptians rightly recognize, it is not much use setting up an autonomous authority on which Palestinians refuse to serve, or holding elections in which Palestinians refuse to vote.

### Palestinians - No Longer Refugees

"This analysis leads straight into the question of Palestinian rights. As Lord Carrington pointed out to the General Assembly of the United Nations last September there is a gap here in the resolutions of the Security Council. It is no longer realistic to talk of the Palestinians in terms of refugees. Whatever may have been true in the past, the truth now is that the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza believe that they have a separate political identity as Palestinians.

/They ...

They believe that they have the right to a homeland, to self-determination and to full participation in negotiating a settlement. Efforts are sometimes made to contest this claim on historical or legal grounds. For some time to come this claim can no doubt be suppressed by military force. But in the long run we do not believe that this claim can be denied. It must be considered and its application must be negotiated alongside Israel's legitimate claim to security if there is to be a just and lasting settlement.

### The PLO - Not "Simply and Solely a Gang of Murderers"

"This brings us directly to the question of the PLO. British Ministers understand fully the depth of the emotions which have been stirred on this subject. It is a sad commentary on our world that many who are now recognized leaders of their countries, at one time practised violence in support of the cause which they serve. Nevertheless if we believe in a saner world we must condemn terrorism whenever it occurs and by whoever it is practised. This is what we have done in Palestine and the Lebanon. I certainly do not believe that any terrorist group, Zionist or Arab, will get their way in Palestine by such methods. On the contrary, every act of barbarity postpones the day when sensible men and women can meet together and reach a peaceful settlement. If the Palestine question could be solved by bombing or shooting, it would have been solved long ago.

"The PLO contains within it those who practise the terrorism which we condemn. It also contains those who are ready for compromise and co-existence. Her Majesty's Government do not grant the PLO any official or exclusive status. Last week's headlines about the European Community recognizing the PLO were wide of the mark. But we believe it would be foolish for the West to pretend that the PLO is simply and solely a gang of murderers, or that the Palestinians have no right to be present when their future is discussed. If we pretended that we would play into the hands of the terrorists. We would be snubbing those Palestinians and Arab friends who believe in cooperation with the West and peaceful negotiation. We would be helping the Soviet Union by presenting it with the monopoly of support for a cause which the overwhelming majority of Arabs believe to be just. It is rarely wise to present an unscrupulous adversary with a just cause.

### The IRA and the PLO - A Comparison

"I have heard comparisons made between the PLO and the IRA in Northern Ireland. There is a crucial

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difference. In Northern Ireland we know the views of the people. There have been referenda and there have been many free elections. We know that the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland, Catholic as well as Protestant, reject the IRA and its methods. We have no such knowledge on the West Bank and Gaza. Indeed there can be no doubt from the evidence that the PLO enjoy very widespread support. Recent events on the West Bank have served to increase that support by discrediting anyone who held a more moderate opinion. That is not an argument for condoning terrorism. It is an argument for out-witting terrorism by putting right the grievances on which terrorists thrive.

### A Settlement Cannot be Imposed

"A lasting settlement is still some way off. We in Europe certainly should not be dogmatic about how it can be achieved. But one thing is fairly clear. The settlement could not be imposed; it will some day have to be negotiated. Some day, round some table, whoever else may be present, Palestinians will have to agree to recognize Israel's right to exist in security and to accept the arrangements negotiated to guarantee that security. In their turn Israelis will have at the same time to recognize the rights of the Palestinians to determine their own future within the context of the negotiated settlement.

"Before that day Israel will have a crucial choice to make about her own security. One choice would be to continue to rely for security on military occupation backed by civilian settlement. Anyone who knows the geography of Israel, anyone who drives from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, anyone who stands on the Golan Heights can understand the attraction of that choice. For the time being the military equation is in Israel's favor. For the time being the pressures on Israel from the West are manageable. No doubt, for the time being, Israel could sustain that choice.

### Continued Military Occupation Means Greater Violence

"But that choice of military occupation would mean steadily greater violence in the Occupied Territories. It would imply a readiness by Israel to use the techniques of repression with increasing ruthlessness. I just cannot believe that after centuries of persecution in which they have suffered and withstood, it is the vocation of the Israelis to rest their future on the persecution of others.

Another Act of Boldness and Wisdom?

"The other choice is very different. It involves recognizing that others too have a right to a homeland in Palestine. It involves sitting down and hammering out arrangements to reconcile that right with the right of Israel to security. The courage which Israel has shown in achieving and carrying through the agreement with Egypt gives some reason to hope for another act of equal boldness and wisdom. So does the openness of Israeli society and the vigor with which all these matters are debated. It is an awesome choice and we who do not have to make it must not be presumptuous about it. The stakes which Israelis and Palestinians have on the table are far higher than our own. Our task in Britain, in Europe, in the West as a whole is to help forward as best we can the day when that choice is made. That is what the discussion in Venice will be about."

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