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CONFIDENTIAL

BY AIR BAG
1042/19/60

30 MAY 1960

V1022/1.

British Embassy,
Washington, D.C.
May 26, 1960.

Dear John,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your reflections on your tour of the Levant, which we found most interesting. Perhaps I might offer some marginal comment on the passages dealing with Anglo/American relations, at the cost of going over well trodden ground.

2. I think you are probably right in suggesting that Jordan is the main source of potential friction in Anglo/American policy within your parish. And I was very glad to see your remark that it might be worth letting the Americans provide the lion's share of the political advice for the sake of a greater involvement on their part. We here have always felt some uneasiness about the very excellence of the British relationship with the Jordanians, and indeed Charles Johnston admitted the dangers of this in his interesting Annual Review for 1959. It would only be human if the Americans felt a certain jealousy, and in such a situation there is bound to be some temptation - especially for their people in Cairo - to suspect that for instance a rapprochement between Jordan and the U.A.R. would be easier to arrange if it were not for us. I am afraid that it is true that Mills is regarded in the State Department as a well-meaning but ham-fisted mediocrity, though in any circumstances one could hardly expect the incumbent of his post to carry as much weight as the Ambassador in Cairo. All the same we think that the Jordanian cause gets a pretty fair hearing in Washington, if not in Cairo. Mills has certainly said enough about a pro-Nasser clique in the State Department to make them sensitive on the subject.

3. I imagine that you have been into all this with Armin Meyer in the course of last week, and I hope that you were reassured. For his part he told us with every appearance of sincerity that he found an almost complete identity between our views not only on policy towards Jordan but on other Middle Eastern issues.

4. As regards arms supplies, it is undoubtedly true that the Americans consciously prefer to leave the most awkward decisions in this field to us. I fear,

/however,.....

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Levant Department,
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however, that if we should make an attempt to arrive at a "more equitable sharing of responsibilities" with the Americans we may have some difficulty in getting them to agree just what these responsibilities are. It is after all only fairly recently that they have gone on record as agreeing that there is justification for the supply of heavy tanks to Israel and Jordan. In the case of Israel you will recall that in 1958 they argued strenuously that there was no such need. They have come a good way since then, but even now I suspect that if it were a choice between supplying American tanks or none, they would prefer to let both countries go without. The Americans would argue with sincerity - as indeed the President implied at his press conference last February - that the Western cause in the Middle East is better served by their keeping comparatively clean hands in the arms business for the sake of their relations with Arabs and Israelis, whereas we and the French - to put it bluntly - have less credit to lose. They have suggested before that there were advantages as well as disadvantages in the situation where we stood well with Qasim and were suspect with Nasser, and the converse applied to themselves, and they might expect us to accept the same argument in this case. (A Democratic Administration might perhaps think differently, but not if Senator Fulbright had any say in it).

X | 5. I realise of course that none of this will be new to you and that you might nevertheless think it worth having a try at shifting the American position. Perhaps Pat Hancock's idea of a moratorium on arms supplies to the Egyptians and Israelis (his letter 1192/43 of April 11) might have supplied a useful context for such an attempt, but I suppose that if it ever looked promising to you it looks a good deal less promising now in the aftermath of the Summit. 11192/22

11121/4 6. I do not know whether in suggesting a reapportionment of responsibilities you were also thinking of money as well as arms. We suggested in the context of the talks on aid to Jordan (para. 7(b) of Sammy Hood's letter 10418/2 of March 16) that it might be worth doing some horse-trading about the levels of our aid in other Middle East countries besides Jordan, and I think perhaps this takes on some added point from the noises that the State Department have been making - or been told to make - recently about possible increases in our aid to Libya and the Sudan. We should be interested in due course to hear what conclusions you have come to about this.

Yours ever
Denis Greenhill
(D.A. Greenhill)

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(V 1022/1)

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

June 1, 1960.

Thank you for your letter 1042/19/60 of May 26 commenting on my report on a visit to Levant Department countries. It was very helpful to have your reactions.

2. We did indeed exchange some general ideas with Armin Meyer while he was here. You may like to have copies of the enclosed minute which records some of the things he said at the opening meeting. See also Roger Stevens' letter to you of May 18. In general he was very forthcoming about the importance of Jordan as an element in the present status quo which, however uneasy, is worth doing a good deal to preserve. He said he thought the State Department had come a long way from their views of 1958, when they had been dubious about the chances, and usefulness, of the present régime.

3. As regards your paragraph 4, I do not suggest by my phrase, "a more equitable sharing of responsibilities" that we can or should persuade the Americans by one heave to take on much more than they are at present willing to. This phrase was meant as a mild safeguard against any suggestion that we should allow the present equilibrium to slip and take on more than we are doing at present, thereby allowing the Americans gradually to disengage in relation to us. We were encouraged by the State Department's reaction to our proposals for dealing with Israel's requests and by a number of signs from Lewis Jones that the State Department appreciate what we are doing in difficult cases like Israel and Jordan. If we can hold this situation vis-à-vis the Americans and gradually improve it we shall be well content.

4. As regards your paragraph 6, we take your point and shall keep you posted as soon as there is anything to be said about our policy for the next round of discussions with the State Department on Jordan.

(J.G.S. Beith)

D.A. Greenhill, Esq., C.M.G., O.B.E.,
Washington.

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