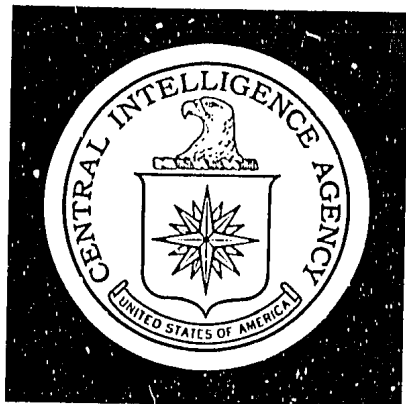


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OFFICE OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

MEMORANDUM

Western Europe, the Israelis, and the Arabs

Secret

16 September 1971

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

16 September 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Western Europe, the Israelis, and the Arabs*

NOTE

This memorandum assesses official and public attitudes within the principal West European countries toward the Arab-Israeli situation and how these are likely to develop in the future. A summary and discussion of general implications appears in paragraphs 33-35.

* *This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated within CIA.*

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1. In the two decades before 1967 Israel's image in Western Europe had been generally that of a doughty, resolute defender of its right to exist. Most West Europeans acknowledged this right, and they and most of their governments had backed the new nation at one time or another with material as well as moral support. The rapid and decisive Israeli victory in the Six Days War produced a wave of approval and admiration, despite the commercial disruption caused by the closing of the Suez Canal. Most Europeans believed that a settlement of the Middle East problem was finally in sight.

2. For a time, it was not realized that Israel had won only the third in a series of battles, leaving peace in the area as elusive as ever. But the wave of sympathy for the Israeli position crested in the summer and fall of 1967. It has since receded in the face of Israel's unyielding position on settlement terms, its apparent intention to retain at least some of the conquered territory, including Jerusalem, and its policy of "creating facts" by such moves as building permanent facilities in the occupied areas.

3. Official and popular West European attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict are often far apart, the interaction

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between them accounting in large part for the ambiguity which seems to characterize many aspects of Europe's approach to the problem. But these attitudes are evolving in a way that may subject the Israelis to increasingly significant West European pressures to come to a compromise settlement. An Israeli failure to respond in some way to such pressures could complicate the US role in the Middle East and even produce strains in US-European relationships.

The Israelis

4. The decline in pro-Israeli sentiment in Western Europe has caused uneasiness and even a bit of soul-searching in Israel. Yet the Israelis cannot bring themselves to acknowledge that their stance on the territorial issue is primarily responsible for that decline. Israeli leaders are upset, moreover, by charges that their "intransigence" has led to an increase in the Soviet presence in the Middle East. The fact that greater Soviet involvement has not produced a corresponding increase in European support for Israel as the anti-Communist bastion in the area has both baffled and disappointed them. Bristling statements on this issue by Israeli cabinet ministers, such as Dayan and Allon, have done Israel's

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image more harm than good in European eyes, and qualified disavowals by Prime Minister Meir and other official spokesmen have failed to repair the damage.

5. The siege mentality which is so much a part of their outlook today has led the Israelis to seek constant reaffirmations of support from those whom they consider to be their friends and to try to avoid censure by others not avowedly enemies. It was, thus, very important for Israel to forestall criticism by the traditionally pro-Israeli European Socialist parties last June when the Socialist International convened at Helsinki. The strenuous efforts put forth by Mrs. Meir at that time proved successful, and an almost audible sigh of relief was heard from the Israelis. There is dismay among them whenever Israel suffers even a minor setback in the United Nations, even though the Israelis, in practice, ignore adverse resolutions there and are generally contemptuous of the world organization. And when former sympathizers in Western Europe appear critical of or cool toward Israel's policies, the Israelis are hurt; for they firmly believe that Europe as a whole bears some responsibility for the sufferings of the Jews in World War II and owes Israel special obligations as a result.

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The French government hoped,

by getting a consensus on various issues among the Six which favored the Arabs, to reinforce their influence with the Arabs and in Big Four talks on the Middle East. The Dutch attitude during the talks, on the other hand, has been described as "150 percent" pro-Israeli, and the positions of the others varied between the two extremes according to the issues. The subjects formally under examination by the Six were: freedom of navigation, demilitarized zones, Jerusalem, and the Palestine refugees. While all six governments agreed that the Israelis had been far from forthcoming on a peace settlement, there was considerable reluctance to take formal positions on these issues despite strong French urging.

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The Arabs

9. West Europeans were favorably impressed by President Nasser's public acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist and his acceptance in 1970 of US initiatives for a negotiated settlement. After Nasser's death, President Sadat further improved

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the Arab image -- or at least that of Egypt -- in European eyes by appearing to focus Egyptian attention more on internal Egyptian affairs, and by his positive response to Ambassador Jarring and to US attempts to mediate a settlement. King Hussein of Jordan also cooperated. All this was in striking contrast to Israeli public comment and behavior on the issue of a negotiated settlement, a contrast which served to dilute European support for Israel.

10. Yet Arab efforts to win support for their viewpoint in Western Europe have had mixed results. The unhappy plight of the Arab refugees in the camps in Gaza and on the West Bank has certainly attracted a good deal of sympathy and will, doubtless, serve once again this month or next as a springboard for Arab denunciations of the Israeli position before the UN Security Council and the General Assembly. But European sympathy for the refugees has generally not broadened out to include the Arab states. Certainly the activities of the fedayeen last year, especially those involving hijackings of Western airliners and bombings in West European cities, can only be described as a net loss to the Arab cause in terms of public relations.

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11. ON the diplomatic front, virtually every Arab foreign minister, as well as the kings of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, have received red carpet treatment in European capitals over the past several years. Almost all have visited Paris, much to the disgruntlement of Israeli Foreign Minister Eban who is still hoping for an invitation to the City of Light. The Arabs have also hosted a number of West European statesmen during this period. But they have been ineffectual in making their case. However well-conceived and smoothly presented their diplomatic initiatives have been, much of their impact has been lost -- usually because of ill-timed terrorist acts or because of inflammatory speeches by Arab leaders which have periodically echoed an unrelenting hostility toward Israel as a nation, something which the West Europeans cannot approve. And threats against European and American interests in the Arab world have only nourished the distrust already present in abundance.

12. The statement recently made by Libyan Deputy Prime Minister Jallud to his German hosts in Bonn to the effect that the FRG "must choose between Israel and oil" obviously does not reflect an appreciation of the German political imperatives which deny the West German government the choice

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of turning its back on Israel. Nor does it show a real appreciation of realities in the Arab world. For, while oil is undoubtedly itself an "imperative" which all West European states must consider, the chances of concerted Arab action to deny it to the European market are very slim, and the West Europeans -- if not the Libyans -- know it.

The Europeans

13. But the Europeans are heavily dependent on Arab oil. They are both increasingly uneasy over the parlous situation between Israel and the Arabs which poses a continuous threat to their petroleum supply and increasingly frustrated over their own inability to ameliorate matters. Nevertheless, except for France, the West European governments with any real stake in the Middle East have been more than happy to let the US bear responsibility for mediation efforts between the adversaries and for guaranteeing Israel's continued existence. This has permitted them to avoid uncomfortable domestic pressures and to keep out of the direct line of fire of both sides in the controversy.

14. *France:* A public opinion poll taken in France in September 1967 showed 68 percent of all Frenchmen were "sympathetic to

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Israel", while only 6 percent indicated their sympathies lay with the Arabs. When the poll was repeated in March 1970, the pro-Arab figure remained the same, but the proportion favoring Israel had dropped to 32 percent. The French case may be an extreme example of Israel's fall from grace in European eyes; comparable polls are not available from other important West European countries. It does, however, illustrate a decline in sympathy for Israel since 1967 which is shared in other European states. It also demonstrates that -- at least with the French public -- this sympathy has not been transferred to the Arab cause.

15. Official French support for the Israeli position was, of course, sharply curtailed after the Six Days War which de Gaulle had advised against and which the Israelis had so handily won thanks in large part to the major weapons they had previously purchased from the French. De Gaulle's basic concern was that an Israeli victory would definitively polarize the area -- leaving the Arabs more than ever dependent upon the Soviets, the Israelis looking to the US as their ultimate guarantor, and the French without clients or suitors to satisfy their aspirations to a key role in the Middle East.

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16. In the event, de Gaulle's concern proved justified. Official French policy then took on a definite pro-Arab cast as de Gaulle, and Pompidou after him, sought to establish France as the third major influence in the Mediterranean. During the Four Power talks on the Middle East, the French position has been closest to that of the Soviets. Both have favored the imposition of a peace settlement based on a strict interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967. France's aim in such an imposed settlement is, of course, to insure its own position in future developments in the area. To this end, the French would be quite willing to take part in peacekeeping activities. The French and Soviet positions would, most likely, be farther apart on the questions of territorial adjustments and the strength of an enforcement mechanism -- with the French probably showing more flexibility than the Soviets on boundary adjustments and calling for a stronger security guarantee than Moscow is likely to favor.

17. The French government's pro-Arabism is not undiluted. The still significant pro-Israeli sentiment in France is recognized and, to some extent, shared by officials in Paris who periodically reaffirm France's formal commitment to Israel's right to a secure existence. France believes, however, that

since the US will serve as the guarantor of Israel's survival no matter what actions France may take for its own advantage, it has room to pursue its Mediterranean vocation by cultivating the Arabs.

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[redacted] Israel is still France's major trading partner in the Middle East, trade between them having increased by more than 50 percent since 1967; and the French government continues to wink at a limited sale of military supplies to Israel -- provided a profit can be made and the transactions are handled discreetly enough so that French interests in Arab countries are not threatened.

18. *West Germany*: Following the flurry of Israeli anxiety over the EC political consultations, the West German-Israeli "special relationship" was reconfirmed by Foreign Minister Scheel during his fence-mending (and precedent-setting) trip to Israel in July. (At that time Scheel also indicated that the FRG's current annual level of economic aid -- 140 million DM -- would probably be maintained.) The Israelis were further reassured by the publication of a recent statement by Chancellor Brandt which also reaffirmed the special relationship, indicated that the FRG would not be influenced by Soviet views on the Middle East in the course of its efforts to reach an understanding with Moscow, and

pledged that Bonn's attempts to improve relations with the Arab states would not be pursued to Israel's detriment.

19. Ironically, Israel has had less confidence in the attitude of the Brandt government than it had in the long line of Christian Democratic governments which preceded it. Brandt's anti-Nazi credentials are impeccable, and he is an honored fellow member of the Socialist International. But the Israelis have feared that his support might be less stalwart because he does not have the same need to prove his good will toward the Jews as, for example, former Chancellor Kiesinger -- once a Nazi Party member -- did.

20. While the West Germans may be inclined in coming years to assert their own particular interests -- in regard to Israel as in other matters -- they do not think that it is to their interest at this stage to rush into normalizing relations with Arab countries which have recognized East Germany. Early this year, Brandt told Prime Minister Heath that he saw little alternative to maintaining the lowest possible profile in the Middle East -- a posture which will not, of course, prevent Bonn from establishing mutually profitable, though perhaps still unofficial, relations with as many Arab states as possible.

21. UK: Since [redacted]

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leaving Palestine in 1948, the British have pursued a constantly tacking course calculated to avoid total rupture with either the Arabs or the Israelis. After their 1956 Suez venture, they set about repairing relations with the Arabs and had achieved some success by 1967. Britain's need for Arab oil, its own huge oil investments in the area, and the large Arab reserves held in British banks made such repair work a vital necessity to the stagnant British economy. In recent years, a [redacted]

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[redacted] willingness to let the US lead in Middle East initiatives has characterized British actions there.

22. British opinion has for some time shown increasing indifference toward the Arab-Israeli problem. Prime Minister Heath has, moreover, turned Britain's overall foreign policy in the direction of Europe; the combination should have and did cause great concern to the Israelis. They could not help but be impressed by their own lack of economic or other leverage with the UK. The British have, in fact, tended of late to favor the French Middle East viewpoint when it did not directly contradict that of the US. While their posture clearly reflects their view of Britain's interests, this may be explained partly by a desire not to antagonize France at this juncture because of the EC

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question. But there is still more public support for Israel in Britain than for the Arabs. Furthermore, although official London's long experience in dealing with the Arabs has given it an understanding of and even considerable sympathy for Arab aspirations, the British have little confidence in the Arabs' ability to attain their goals through effective concerted action.

23. *Italy*: Because of its location, Italy is more sensitive than the other major West European states to the dangerous implications of the Arab-Israeli deadlock and the increased Soviet presence in the Mediterranean. In addition to its feeling of vulnerability, however, Italy harbors the conviction that its location gives it the right to exercise its *presenza* in the area: a presence which, after the chastening experience of World War II, has been limited to commercial and cultural ties with Arab littoral states. In 1967, then Foreign Minister Fanfani made an abortive attempt to foster Italy's *presenza* by advocating a highly unpopular "equidistant" (but clearly pro-Arab) attitude during the Middle East crisis. Since then, Italy has been trying to consolidate its economic bridgeheads in the Maghreb and the Middle East while maintaining a mutually profitable commercial relationship with Israel.

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24. The Italian National Petroleum and Gas Company, which controls oil concessions in North Africa and the Middle East, has made special efforts this year to recover lost economic ground in Libya. And Italy's peripatetic Foreign Minister Moro, who managed to allay anxieties in Israel during his trip there in April, has also made recent visits to Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Algeria, and is planning another Middle East swing in October during which he hopes to firm up relations between Italy and Syria. In the interests of keeping this delicate juggling act going, the Italians have tried to keep their distance from the potentially violent reactions connected with the Arab-Israeli issue, and they want very much to continue doing just that.

25. There is a significant reserve of sympathy among Italians for the Israeli cause, little if any for that of the Arabs. But there are also domestic pressures from both the Communists and various Italian economic interest groups for some pro-Arab gestures; and the possibility of increasingly sharp criticism of the Israeli position on Jerusalem by the Vatican cannot be excluded. Thus, while the Israelis now believe Italy to be a firm friend and supporter, the constancy of Italian policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict is by no means assured.

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26. *The Vatican:* The Vatican's desire to see Jerusalem become an internationally administered city is in direct conflict with Israel's determination to retain control there. Israel and the Vatican have exchanged pointed words on this subject in the past and may well do so again, despite recent indications that the two have agreed to discuss their differences quietly. Should this rift remain unhealed, Vatican influence on governments of heavily Roman Catholic countries, such as certain of those in Latin America, could contribute to a further weakening of the Israeli position in the UN.

27. *Benelux:* Except for Dutch oil holdings, the Benelux countries have few concrete interests at stake in the Middle East, and their support for Israel has run a relatively smooth and steady course. Indeed, the Dutch government has been Israel's staunchest West European defender despite their large Middle East oil interests and the loss by emigration to Israel of the major portion of the Dutch diamond cutting industry. Still, Israeli immobilism on a peace settlement has caused both official and public patience with Israel to wear thin in the Benelux countries as it has elsewhere in Western Europe. But the smaller EC countries have a certain amount of fellow-feeling for another small country, Israel, a phenomenon which tends to

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temper any resentment they may feel over Israeli recalcitrance and to stiffen their resistance to French attempts to dominate them and speak for them in world forums.

28. *Scandinavia:* Much the same can be said for the Scandinavian countries which are even more removed from any direct connection with the Middle East. Their habit of speaking out for themselves at length -- has been given full rein in recent years though they have not always been consistent in supporting or condemning either side. On the whole, however, public support for Israel is probably higher in Scandinavia than anywhere else in Western Europe.

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29. *Spain:* For a variety of practical reasons, Spain is likely to continue showing extreme reluctance to be associated with US actions in support of the Israelis. Spain, which does not recognize Israel, has important oil and other commercial ties with the Arab states, particularly with Egypt, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. It seeks, wherever possible, to avoid friction with Morocco and Algeria over the Spanish territories in North Africa. And, as Foreign Minister Lopez Bravo indicated last February, it is quite content with a vote trade-off in the UN which guarantees Spain fourteen reciprocal Arab votes in situations not directly involving vital Arab interests.

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30. *Portugal*: Unlike Spain, Portugal has consular relations with Israel and has taken a formally neutral stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict in the past -- primarily out of concern for the Gulbenkian oil interests in Iraq. But government, business, and military interests in Portugal resent Arab support for national liberation movements in Africa. And they wish to maintain their good relationship with the US. As they have in the past, therefore, the Portuguese are likely to continue their quiet cooperation with US efforts in support of Israel -- provided the US remains discreet in its use of Portuguese facilities.

31. *Turkey*: Turkey would be much relieved if the Arab-Israeli conflict would just go away. For, while it lasts, the Turks are tugged in one direction by their friendship with the US and in the other by their strong desire to avoid imbroglios with their Arab neighbors. Turkey had deep misgivings over the use of its facilities by the US for contingency air relief operations in Jordan last September, and will probably be increasingly reluctant to acquiesce to similar US requests in the future.

32. *Greece*: Apart from the Orthodox Church, Greek interests in the Arab world are considerably reduced from what

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they were in the 1950s. Moreover, Greece is interested in demonstrating its loyalty to the US. It has provided facilities to the US in the past in connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict: e.g., as a transit point for the delivery of aircraft to Israel. And Vice Prime Minister Pattakos has recently asserted that Greek help would probably again be forthcoming should it be needed. Such assurances should not be taken as firm Greek policy, but past performance indicates that Greece would be the least reluctant of the NATO allies to cooperate with the US in supporting Israel in the event of renewed hostilities.

Some Implications

33. Apart from a general sense of isolation, the tangible effects on Israel of the corrosion of its image may not be great, particularly if Israel feels that US support will continue and that there is sufficient pro-Israeli sympathy in France and the UK to prevent either government from pursuing anti-Israeli policies beyond a certain point. The level of European approval which the Israelis enjoyed just after the Six Days War was, after all, abnormally high and probably could not have been sustained in any event; Arab

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rhetoric and the activities of the fedayeen since then have, if anything, been counter-productive; the Arabs have been unable to take effective, concerted action to bring pressure on the West Europeans; and West Europe's criticism of the US role in the Middle East should continue to be somewhat muted because of its continuing concern over Soviet influence in the Arab world and the Mediterranean.

34. But Europe's impatience with what is being increasingly viewed as Israeli intransigence and Europe's anxiety that this could help bring on a new upheaval could, in time, cut further into the important unofficial support enjoyed by the Israelis. And if the Middle East impasse continues to weaken West European emotional commitment to Israel, governments in France, Italy, and the UK may feel more inclined actively to endorse Arab initiatives in such forums as the UN -- even those which may call for sanctions against the Israelis. Further, a new outbreak of hostilities, unless Israel appeared clearly innocent, would increase concern in Western Europe and stimulate stronger pressures for an imposed solution.

35. Some NATO allies, in any event, are already showing reluctance to permit the US to use their facilities to support any US military moves connected with the Arab-Israeli problem. Their hunger for East-West detente can only reinforce such reluctance. Continued US support for a persistently unyielding Israel may become a much greater irritant in our dealings with individual West European countries and could reduce US leverage in NATO and the UN.