

SECRET



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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

Handwritten: 27(A-B) (2) Simon Minister

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12 September 1990 12/9

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Dear Simon.

GULF CRISIS: ISRAEL

I had a talk this morning with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, mostly about the situation in the Gulf. What he had to say was fairly predictable. The Israeli Government was deliberately lying low and avoiding statements or actions which might be seen as provocative. They thought that the United States had acted well so far and they admired the Prime Minister's strong stand. But there was some unease that we were allowing ourselves to be drawn by Saddam Hussain into a waiting game and would fail to take decisive action which the Israeli Government believed would be required, if the present situation was to be brought to a conclusion on satisfactory terms. They did not believe that sanctions would work, and sooner or later we would have to use force to remove Iraq from Kuwait. He very much doubted whether the Arab contingent would actually fight Iraq, so the United States and Britain would have to bear the brunt. Israel had no wish to be drawn into the conflict. But the likelihood that Saddam Hussain would contrive to bring Israel in must be considered quite high. The Israelis had established their "red line" over any Iraqi move into Jordan. That was meant seriously. Their credibility would disappear if they failed to respond to an Israeli intrusion into Jordan. That said, Israel did not at all relish the thought of Jordan's involvement, since it would inevitably lead to the demise of the Hashemites and their replacement either by an Iraqi or Syrian dominated regime or by the PLO. Netanyahu expatiated on the difficulties for Israel of involvement in military action against Iraq: they would have to control Jordanian air space and guard their flank against attack from Syria. All that said, he personally found it hard to envisage a military solution without Israel being involved.

Netanyhau also expressed concern about attempts to link the Iraq/Kuwait situation with the Arab/Israel problem. Israel did not and would not accept any parallel. The PLO's support for Iraq had put them right beyond the pale so far as Israel was concerned, and there was even less prospect than before of Israel being willing to negotiate with the PLO in any shape or form. But he accepted that it would be necessary to have some movement on Arab/Israel matters if we were to keep together the great coalition which had been formed against Iraq.

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Netanyahu raised one particular problem concerning the EC/Israel meeting on 17 September. The EC was imposing a form of sanctions against Israel in the form of withholding scientific cooperation. This was surely completely inappropriate in the present situation and the blockage should be lifted at the forthcoming meeting. The Germans were ready to be helpful and he hoped that the United Kingdom would be so too. It was not enough to argue that the suspension of cooperation was an autonomous decision by the Commission: the Commission would respond to a clear directive from Ministers.

Yours in care,
C. D. Powell

(C. D. POWELL)

Simon Gass, Esq.,
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