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From the Private Secretary

19 October 1990

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General Scowcroft telephoned me this morning to follow up on the Prime Minister's conversation with the President yesterday evening about embassies in Kuwait. The President had been grateful for the Prime Minister's subsequent message and Scowcroft thought he would accept the advice in it. But the basic problem remained unsolved. The American embassy in Kuwait could only survive another two weeks or so. What would happen then? Was it just to close down and the occupants be taken away to Baghdad as hostages? Surely there must be a way to withdraw the embassy with dignity, such as taking them out by helicopter. I asked whether the Americans could not follow our example of greatly reducing the numbers of people in the embassy, so that they could retain a presence in Kuwait for a lot longer. Scowcroft said that most of those in the embassy were not diplomats, so he doubted whether this would work. The President was very reluctant to see American citizens marched off into captivity. The matter did not have to be settled in the next few days. But time was getting short. If I had any further ideas about how the Americans could withdraw their embassy without seeming to surrender and lose face, he would be grateful to know. We agreed to discuss it again next week.

Scowcroft then said that he had heard our man in New York was proposing a further Security Council Resolution on the killing of Palestinians in Jerusalem. I said this was rubbish. David Hannay had been approached by the UN Secretary General, who had decided to abandon his attempt to send a mission to Israel. David Hannay had done his best to dissuade him from this course, but the Secretary General was adamant and had demanded a meeting of the Security Council so that he could report. In the circumstances, there had been no alternative but to call an informal session. My understanding was that David Hannay hoped to be able to come out of it with a presidential statement in reasonably moderate language. This might at least tide us over until the date when the Secretary General had been due to report formally. We could not exclude the possibility that others would table an unhelpful Resolution but we would try to dissuade them.

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My understanding was that David Hannay had discussed this at length with Pickering and they were agreed on the right tactics.

This was evidently all news to Brent Scowcroft who commented plaintively that Pickering never seemed to tell Washington anything. He added that he assumed it was now less likely that we would get a Resolution on compensation.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sir Robin Butler.

Charles Powell

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