

PRIME MINISTER

WRITTEN INTERVIEW WITH AL-HAYAT NEWSPAPER:
11.15 AM WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 1990

You have agreed to give a written interview to the daily Arabic language newspaper "Al-Hayat". "Al-Hayat" is published simultaneously in France and Egypt as well as at its headquarters in London. It moved here from Beirut two years ago, and now has a large circulation, particularly in Saudi Arabia, but also in the Gulf and the rest of the Middle East.

I attach questions from the newspaper together with draft answers provided by the Foreign Office. "Al-Hayat's" Editor-in-Chief, Mr Jihad Khazen, will call on you on Wednesday 24 October for an extended photocall of about 10 minutes or so.

Content with the attached answers and with a photocall on Wednesday?

Peter Bean

PETER BEAN
Press Office

19 October 1990

Q.1 : Did the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait come as a complete surprise to you, or had your Government considered it was a possibility should the talks between Kuwait and Iraq fail?

I think it came as a complete surprise to everyone. Discussions between Iraq & Kuwait were in progress & due to not continue. Saddam Hussein had given an assurance to President Mubarak & to King Fahd that there was no question of invasion of Kuwait. History has many examples of perfidy & deceit. This was high among them - a day's war with Jordan. Hussein says can be trusted.

A.1 : ~~We had hoped that Iraq's differences with Kuwait would be settled peacefully and through negotiation. That is what the UN Charter calls for. We were, of course, shocked at Iraq's flagrant violation of international law, particularly following the explicit assurances that Saddam Hussein had given to President Mubarak and King Fahd on the eve of the invasion. Iraq's duplicity takes one's breath away.~~

explicit & categorical

Q.2 : Do you consider that the UK now has an adequate military presence in the Gulf to meet any contingencies, or are you considering plans to boost it further? If so, what types of forces you think are still needed there? Are you now satisfied with the contribution, whether military or financial, of Europe, Japan, and Arab countries to the military build-up?

We have sent substantial naval & air forces to the Gulf & our Armoured Brigade - its support units - are now arriving. I think the response of the Arab nations - in particular Egypt - has been outstanding. To Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia

A.2 : ~~British Force levels in the Gulf are kept under review; we currently consider them adequate. The international response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait has been tremendous. As the Saudi Foreign Minister said in his address to the UN General Assembly, over 26 Arab, Islamic and other friendly states, from every continent of the globe, have come to their support to counter Iraqi aggression.~~

Q.3 : Have the mechanics of the chain of command in the Gulf now been fully worked out as a result of the visit of the Defence Secretary Tom King to Washington, and do you accept the placing of British and other forces there under supreme US command?

A.3 : The Command arrangements agreed provide for British Forces to remain under ultimate ^{British command} UK Command. However they may be placed under the tactical control of a US Commander for specific actions where this makes military sense. Equally some US units may be assigned to ^{British} UK tactical control. Both US and UK forces, of course, are under the strategic guidance of ~~the~~ Saudi Arabians.

Q.4 : Given the fact that economic sanctions have never worked in the past, do you really expect them to work this time?

A.4 : Iraq is particularly vulnerable to sanctions: its economy is based almost totally on the export of oil and is heavily dependent on imports. Thanks to the full support which the international community have given to the enforcement of sanctions, all oil outlets have been effectively blockaded, and the import of goods have been cut to a trickle. That will give sanctions the best possible chance of achieving their objective: to get Iraq out of Kuwait. But we do not rule out the military option

Q.5 : President Bush has stated repeatedly that should sanctions not work, then other options must be considered. In fact, there can be only one other option: war. Do you feel that war is avoidable?

A.5 : There can be no compromise on these fundamental principles. Nobody wants armed conflict, but Iraq's aggression cannot be allowed to stand. We are determined to do everything necessary to ensure Kuwait's freedom. But the military option remains available.

Q.6 : Should Britain, along with the US and other allies, feel that war is the only remaining option, would you go back to the UN Security Council for authorisation to dislodge the Iraqis by force?

(points set out in the UN Security Council resolutions.)
Soldier Hussein must not gain anything as a result of his aggression. He must get out of Kuwait, pay compensation for the appalling damage which he has done - and the world must see that he is never in a position to do something similar again. If we believe we are relying on achieving that through sanctions, we have been wrong.
will work. But if not, the military option is the best build up of forces continues. We must be ready for any contingency.

A.6 : Britain has acted throughout the Gulf crisis in accordance with international law, and we shall continue to do so. Security Council Resolution 661, which called for comprehensive economic sanctions, expressly affirms the right of individual or collective self-defence in response to the armed attack by Iraq against Kuwait, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Q.7 : Do you see any possibility in the future of negotiations with Iraq over its claims against Kuwait, and what would be the preconditions and framework of such talks?

What is there no legitimate claim? You don't neglect it
A.7 : ~~Iraq invaded an independent state, a member of the UN and the Arab League. It must face the consequences of its actions. The final outcome of this crisis must include Iraq making good the damage it has done. Once Iraq has withdrawn unconditionally from Kuwait and legitimacy has been restored, Iraq and Kuwait will be in a position to resolve their differences peacefully.~~
*Some one who made borders into another country
e kills so many people: you get him out.
We had here had many border marks of diplomatic efforts at the United Nations to persuade Iraq to withdraw at least of Iraq's son air Iraq is willing to do so.*

Q.8 : Jordan and the PLO have come out in support of Iraq, while at the same time supporting the independence of Kuwait. Do you feel they have lost international support for adopting such a stand? Have you been surprised by the position of King Hussein, given his life-long moderate policies?

No answer to your first question in your
A.8 : ~~The will of the international community has been clearly expressed in successive UN Security Council resolutions on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Attempts by Jordan, the PLO and others to broker a compromise solution to the problem, which would reward Iraq for its aggression, are a misjudgement. There can be no compromise solutions which dilute the position of the international community as reflected in by the Security Council resolutions and endorsed by the Arab League. I recognise that King Hussein is in a difficult position. But I believe that he has now realised the need for firm sanctions enforcement. I welcome this: Jordan is an old friend and has long been a force for moderation and stability in the region.~~
sanctions are now being imposed by Jordan and we are pressing for the early disbursement of the economic assistance which Egypt needs.

The PLO in particular has been severely damaged in its credibility by supporting the force of an independent state while at the same time expecting support for its efforts to have return of the occupied territories.

sanctions are now being imposed by Jordan and we are pressing for the early disbursement of the economic assistance which Egypt needs.

Q.9 : Do you accept as at least partially true the criticism in some quarters that your tough statements against President Saddam Hussein have endangered the lives of British, and perhaps other, hostages in Iraq?

A.9 : It is Iraq which is using human beings as pawns in this present crisis. Saddam Hussein ^{has} is breaching ^{and} every accepted ^{standard} norm of international behaviour, by holding foreign nationals against their will. This is totally unacceptable. The Iraqi Government should allow ^{all the hostages} these people to leave as soon as possible. I understand ^{very well} the concern of many people who have relatives and friends trapped in Iraq and Kuwait. We ^{shall} will continue to do everything we can to secure their release, but there can be no deals with hostage-takers, whether they are terrorists or governments.

A
Let alone
the Arab
tradition
of hospitality,

Q.10: British companies dealing with Iraq and Kuwait have lost hundreds of millions of pounds in lost contracts in both countries. Are there government plans to compensate and otherwise help them?

A.10: These are mandatory United Nations sanctions, not a unilateral move by the British Government. I have ~~the utmost sympathy~~ ^{sympathy} with those who have suffered losses. But many companies are insured against such unforeseen events with our Export Credit Guarantees Department and have paid premiums accordingly. It would be unfair to them to treat insured and uninsured companies equally. ^{as in exactly the same way.}

Q.11: There has been mention by some US officials of the need for long-term security arrangements in the Gulf to avoid the type of scenario we are now witnessing. What shape do you think such arrangements might take, and what might Britain's role be? What is the likely impact of the current crisis on Britain's future defence planning, particularly at a time when its defence spending is under review as a result of the changes in Europe?

There will certainly, in my view, need to be regional security arrangements once Iraq is out of Kuwait.

A.11: It is too early to say what the long term results of this present crisis will be. Our prime concern is to restore Kuwait's independence and freedom. But there is clearly a need for a security structure in the region which will ensure a more peaceful future for all. It is primarily for the countries of the region to decide what shape such a structure should take. *As a country that has had a long association with the Gulf, we shall listen carefully to what they have to say.*

The United Nations, the Arab League, the GCC would all need to be involved.

Q.12: There has been much speculation that the US administration's plans for a \$20 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia threaten Britain's own position as an arms supplier to the Kingdom, and in particular the future of the Al Yamamah programme, including the planned sale of 48 more Tornado planes. What is your own perception of the situation?

A.12: I would not wish to go into any detail on the question of arms sales to Saudi Arabia. But we do have a very close relationship with Saudi Arabia and there can be no doubt that the Al Yamamah Programme has been a great success. Both governments remain firmly committed to the Programme and I believe it will continue to make an important contribution to the security of the region for many years to come.

Q.13: There have been hints by British officials that a restoration of relations with Syria is imminent. Is this the case, and what preconditions would the Syrians have to meet?

A.13: I welcome Syria's decision to send troops to defend Saudi Arabia against Iraqi aggression. *Example is where.* I know that the Americans and Irish have acknowledged Syria's helpful rôle in securing the release of their hostages in Lebanon. So have we. We broke ^{off} relations with Syria in 1986 because we had clear evidence of their involvement in an attempt to place a bomb on an airliner at Heathrow airport. We have to overcome such problems before we can resume relations. I trust we can do so

We also acknowledge the helpful rôle which Syria has played in obtaining release of hostages in Lebanon.

~~before too long.~~

I urge President Asad to demonstrate his rejection of terrorism and to use his influence to persuade those who are holding British hostages to release them.

Q.14: Following the release of Brian Keenan, and the recent meeting of the British Ambassador in Beirut with Sheikh Fadlallah, will Britain from now on be taking a more active role in trying to secure the release of its hostages in Lebanon?

A.14: Britain has always taken an active role in working for the release of British hostages in Lebanon. We have followed up every lead both in Lebanon and elsewhere and used every contact that we thought might bring results. We have also raised the plight of the hostages in every major international forum. Our vigorous efforts will continue. ~~As is well known, Iran played a helpful role in the releases of Brian Keenan and two American hostages earlier this year. Iran has undertaken publicly to use her humanitarian influence to achieve the release of the remaining hostages in Lebanon. Following the resumption of diplomatic relations, we will continue to urge them to live up to this undertaking.~~

hope very much that these efforts will lead to results.

Never
a day
goes
by without
our
thoughts
going
to
the
families