



Prime Minister

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prms
(We can go through this on the phone.)

21 September 1981

Dear Michael,

The Prime Minister's visit to Bahrain and Kuwait

The visit will be the first by a British Prime Minister while in office. This alone will ensure a high degree of government and media interest in Bahrain and Kuwait and elsewhere in the Middle East. Still greater significance will be attached to the Prime Minister's pronouncements on Middle East questions because of the British Presidency. Arab states will be looking to us for reassurance that the EC initiative, on which they have based great (perhaps excessive) hopes, will not falter. They will examine closely what the Prime Minister says on the issue; some may try to make comparisons with whatever President Mitterrand may say on his visit to Saudi Arabia, which takes place on exactly the same dates as the Prime Minister's. Lord Carrington believes therefore that it would be valuable for the Prime Minister to make a carefully planned statement of British and European policy on some suitable opportunity. This would show support to our friends in the area whose closeness to the West has been under attack from Arab radicals. It would also set out our policy for the benefit of Middle East media, who have not always shown understanding for our views, however much friendly Arab governments understand our policies.

In Bahrain and Kuwait, there will be no speeches at any of the meals offered by the two governments. The only occasions on which the Prime Minister will make public statements will be her press conferences. The press conference in Bahrain will come at the end of her first full day in the Gulf, after the talks with the Bahrain government and the dinner given by the Amir. The Prime Minister's first public pronouncement will be eagerly awaited. Television as well as newspapers from many other Arab states will be there. In our view, the greatest and most positive impact would be given to the Prime Minister's visit if she would agree to begin her press conference with a short prepared statement. This could be circulated and given a great deal of publicity. It would serve also as an excellent introduction for the Prime Minister's visit to Kuwait, which pushes harder on the Arab/Israel dispute than the other Gulf states and which has not always shown their understanding for our views.

I enclose a draft introductory statement, of which the opening few remarks can be dropped if the statement is circulated to pressmen. It does not go beyond current policy but aims to restate it fully. The draft has been approved by Lord Carrington, who hopes that the Prime Minister will agree to make the statement.

Yours very,

(F N Richards)

Private Secretary

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