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c/c Markis



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 June, 1981

Dear Francis,

Meeting of Arab Ambassadors

The Ambassadors of the UAE, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria and Kuwait called on the Prime Minister, at their own request, this afternoon. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was also present. The six Ambassadors left with the Prime Minister a statement setting out the resolutions adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League in Baghdad on 11 June. No doubt this is already available to you but I enclose a copy for ease of reference. Except that the Lord Privy Seal was given a copy of a statement by the Arab Ambassadors themselves, today's meeting seems to have covered almost exactly the same ground as was covered in the meeting which the same six Ambassadors had in the Foreign Office on 11 June. I do not intend, therefore, to cover the discussion in detail.

At the outset, five of the six Ambassadors spoke in turn. The Algerian did not. The Ambassador of Iraq said that his government greatly appreciated the stand taken by HMG and the statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons last week. If Israeli aggression went unpunished serious consequences would follow. These would undermine the foundations of international life. It would no longer be enough for the Security Council to seek condemnation rather than punishment of Israel. The Lebanese Ambassador said that Israel ignored mere resolutions. The Arabs now wanted practical measures involving cessation of economic and military aid to Israel. The Ambassador of Jordan said that Israel had gone too far but it was not up to the Arabs alone to respond. Other nations, especially the permanent members of the Security Council, had a particular role to play. The Kuwait Ambassador said that Arab governments were coming under increasing pressure from their own people. More and more people were asking why the Arabs should go on producing oil for the West on the present scale. The Ambassador of the UAE said that the Arabs were not seeking complete mandatory sanctions. They had in mind modified sanctions including an end to arms supplies to Israel. If Arab governments were to keep control of popular discontent, they needed the help of Western governments.

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As it was the Arab governments were increasingly regarded by their own people as governments which served the interests of the West and got nothing in return. What would happen if workers in the oil fields were to decide to act and went on strike?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he well understood the exasperation which Arab countries might feel over a "toothless" resolution. But there would be considerable difficulties with a sanctions resolution. It would not go through the Security Council. For the Arab governments to submit such a resolution would be bad tactics. For the first time they had a chance to get the United States to join a resolution condemning Israel. A resolution could probably be drafted which could make reference to the cessation of supplies of military equipment to countries engaged in aggression. A resolution which was supported by the Americans would be far more use than one which, by its excessiveness, rallied opinion to Israel's support and was vetoed by the Americans. The recent incident had increased the need to find a solution to the Arab/Israel dispute. To achieve such a solution, the US would have to exert pressure on Israel. If the US government had supported a resolution condemning Israel, it would improve the chances that the US would be prepared to push the Israelis beyond Camp David. If, on the other hand, the Americans had vetoed a resolution, the chances of moving negotiations into a new phase would be diminished.

The Prime Minister said that it was essential to get out the facts about the Iraqi reactor. All sorts of stories were being put round, e.g. about an underground chamber which had not been inspected by the IAEA. The pro-Israel lobby were having a significant impact on public opinion, particularly in the US. Anything that the Government of Iraq could do to get the facts established publicly would be important.

As regards the United Nations, the Prime Minister said that the important thing was to put down a resolution that would be passed. A sanctions resolution would not get through and the immediate objective of getting the US to condemn Israel for the raid would not be secured. Her own views were clear. She wished to see Israel condemned by the Security Council. Failure to secure such a condemnation would be a victory for Israel. Israel had been the aggressor. We did not want to see a repetition of the vote in the IAEA on 12 July when Canada and the United States had voted against a motion condemning Israel. The Iraqi Ambassador asked whether the Prime Minister could be sure that the Americans would go along with a resolution condemning Israel. The Prime Minister said that she was confident that the Americans would do so.

The meeting ended with repeated expressions of gratitude by the Ambassadors for the position taken up by the Prime Minister and by HMG.

*Yours ever*

*Richard Alexander*

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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