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Prime Minister

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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27 January 1982

Jean Michael

request if required

Thank you for your letter of 20 January following your recent visit to Israel. It was kind of you to send me your considered views.

I certainly intend to visit Israel. I am very anxious to dispel some of the misunderstandings which have arisen between us and to improve relations. I have no doubt that a constructive and useful dialogue is possible. We have put a set of dates to the government of Israel which it now transpires are not convenient to them; we are looking for alternatives.

In this context I am glad that you were able to defend this government against the wholly unjustified charge of being anti-Israeli. I am sorry that this impression seems to persist in Israel and hope that we shall soon be able to lay it to rest for once and for all. The Israeli impression that we have in mind imposing a settlement on Israel is of course quite false, as we have made clear many times. A freely negotiated and accepted settlement is fundamental to our policy and that of our European partners.

You say that the only way Israel is prepared to make progress is on the basis of Camp David and/or peace treaties with sovereign states. Of course Camp David may yet prove able to produce further progress towards the necessary settlement and any settlement must involve peace treaties between Israel and her Arab neighbours. But the fact is that there will not be lasting peace in the area unless the

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Michael Latham Esq MP



future of the Palestinians is also adequately provided for. Permanent Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank is not compatible with this. Moreover, pace your paragraph 5, the West Bank cannot simply be handed back to an existing sovereign state: there is no Arab state prepared to have it on those terms, whatever Jordan's interest in the future of the area. Israel may have her minimum requirements for a settlement, but the Arabs have theirs too. Neither can be regarded as the last word if progress towards a negotiated settlement is to be possible.

I am afraid I do not find very convincing the reasoning you give for the Israeli law on Golan. Internal problems in Israel cannot serve as a defence for such an illegal act. There is no doubt that it does constitute an obstacle to peace and that it has made the prospect of Syrian-Israeli negotiations more remote. Only a negotiated peace can make Israel's long-term future secure.

I was interested in your view of the potential usefulness of Soviet involvement. It has always been noticeable that the Russians have stuck firmly to their support for Israel's right to live in peace and have urged the Arabs to follow suit. However, an international conference looks a very long way off (not least because of Israel's attitude) and I am not confident of US readiness to tackle the problem in this way.

If you wish to discuss your ideas further, I am of course always ready to discuss them with you, as I am sure are Humphrey Atkins or Douglas Hurd, our programmes allowing. I am sending copies of my letter to them and to the Prime Minister. Perhaps we could have a talk after I get back from Israel.

J. a
P. Carrington

(CARRINGTON)



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