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From the Private Secretary

2 September 1990

GULF CRISIS: EUROPEAN CONTRIBUTION

I should record that the Italian Ambassador telephoned me on Saturday morning to convey the hope of his Government at the highest level that the Prime Minister would avoid further airing the question of Europe's military contribution in the Gulf, for instance in her speech in the House of Commons. The Italian President and the Government believed this would only introduce dissension and division when the maximum solidarity were needed.

I said that I took note of these remarks. The Prime Minister had not criticised any individual European country and had indeed praised the political response of the Twelve to the crisis. But there was a genuine problem on the defence side, to which she had thought it right to draw attention. Her speech in Helsinki had been closely argued and I noted that the representations he had just made did not seem to challenge the arguments. Europe's security would be affected by events outside Europe and we must be ready to respond promptly and effectively. That had not really been the case for Europe as a whole. The most recent American initiative on burden-sharing had shown that the Prime Minister was right to say that we could not expect the United States always to be the West's champion out-of-area on its own. Problems could only be solved when you first identified and drew attention to them. That had been the Prime Minister's intention and the issue was one which she would wish to pursue further within NATO and the Twelve, not in any spirit of undermining European unity, but in the hope of strengthening it and improving its effectiveness.

(C. D. POWELL)

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