

Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

8 September 1990

Dear Charles,

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF REFUGEES FROM IRAQ

In your letter of 5 September, <sup>to Richard Gwynne</sup> you expressed the Prime Minister's wish to see more emergency relief for Jordan and for a prompt and positive follow up to Richard Branson's suggestion for practical help i.e. tents and blankets to the refugees stranded there. <sup>copy attached</sup>

Your letter crossed with <sup>the Private Secretary's</sup> mine the same day about the announcement made by the Prime Minister in the Emergency Debate yesterday of a £2 million contribution to UNDRO and to the International Organisation for Migration who are organising the evacuation of the refugees. As for tents and blankets, the ODAS have already made available £500,000 to the Jordanian Red Crescent through the ICRC to spend on whatever was most urgently required, as well as £100,000 worth of blankets and medical supplies which was taken to Amman by Richard Branson in his plane on 5 September. We have also contributed almost £3m through the European Community.

But given the increasingly desperate situation of the 100,000 refugees on the Jordanian border and the likelihood that the international agencies are not able to cope in the short term, we have been considering with the Aid Wing what more we can do both nationally and by energising the international community before more refugees start dying. The strong public support for the measures so far taken against Iraq could start to erode rapidly both at home and overseas if the international community does not simultaneously address the problem of the refugees urgently. As a first step, the Secretary of State has asked Mrs Chalker to fly to Jordan as soon as possible next week (probably on Tuesday) to see how our assistance is being used and what more can be done to crank up the international relief effort.

/Internationally



Internationally, there needs to be a single individual (such as Sadruddin Khan) in a visible presence on the media, who can give an impetus and who is demonstrably in charge of coordinating all humanitarian assistance. And a major international air and sea evacuation must be set in hand urgently.

The UN Secretary General activated UNDRO (UN Disaster Relief Organisation) as a coordinating centre on 28 August, rather than appoint a Special Representative as we had urged. This has not (as we feared) proved effective. If the Prime Minister agrees, when Sir David Hannay presents his credentials to the UNSG in New York on 10 September, he could be instructed to express Mrs Thatcher's profound concern about the situation of the refugees and urge Senor Perez De Cuellar to appoint a Special Representative who could work with UNDRO, the appropriate agencies within the UN system and without (the ICRC and the International Organisation for Migration) and all those countries and relief organisations in the international community who wish to help.

A major air (and sea) evacuation would need massive funding and a coordinated effort by the international agencies who are experts i.e. the IOM, the IRCRC, the UN and its agencies including ICAO (the intergovernmental body dealing with air transport, including overflights and special routings) and IATA (on which the airlines are represented). In order to generate the necessary support and publicity, we might consider the following:

- a) An urgent appeal at the highest level to King Fahd and the Amir of Kuwait to ask them to make available the necessary funds to finance a major airlift. They are likely to find it easier to respond to an appeal for humanitarian assistance than for aid to Jordan, with whose monarch they are pretty disenchanted. The Saudis should also be asked if they could provide personnel and technical help i.e. temporary accommodation and equipment such as water trucks to help the refugees immediately. They have considerable experience from the Haj in dealing with large influxes of people. The Japanese could also be tapped as could the Germans.
- b) One or more British airlines to announce publicly their willingness to make a plane or planes available immediately to the IOM. Mr Branson is in regular touch with the ODA and might well respond enthusiastically. British airlines to seek to mobilise their colleagues in IATA to support a once for all emergency exercise. (On the basis of Arab funding, the airlines might be willing to respond).
- c) An approach to the Jordanian authorities to ask them to arrange a round-the-clock airlift not only from Amman airport, but also possibly from other nearby military airports. This could be coupled with an offer of trained personnel (e.g. air traffic controllers and other airport technicians) to help. If the CAA are not able to help, we might need to turn to the military.



d) an approach to the countries whose nationals are principally affected (e.g. Egypt, Phillipines, India, Bangladesh) and to encourage them to offer planes and ships as part of an international evacuation;

e) in slower time, a major effort to evacuate the rump of the foreign workers who have been unable to leave Kuwait, possibly by seas.

f) Also in slower time, an offer of a British hospital ship.

These are very ambitious ideas which will need further fleshing out, but there is catastrophe in the making. If refugees start dying in large numbers, public opinion will tend to blame the West for not doing enough rather than recall Iraqi responsibility for destabilising and ruining entire communities. The main responsibility for coordinating the international response must be with the UN. A distinctively British gesture would help keep international solidarity against Iraq and have considerable propoganda advantages. It would also undercut Saddam Hussain's attempted blackmail of such countries as India and the Phillipines by using their trapped communities as a means of securing food imports against the UN embargo. At all stages we should make clear that their disastrous situation is directly attributable to Saddam Hussain's inhumane acts. Although we look to have the main financial costs borne by the Gulf States and Japan, there could be financial implications, but we will seek to ensure that some of the EC money is designated for the airlift.

If the Prime Minister agrees, messages will be prepared to King Fahd and the Amir of Kuwait and to Prime Minister Kaifu, together with instructions to Sir David Hannay.

I am copying this letter to Sara Gillett, John Gieve, Simon Webb the PS to the Secretary of State for Transport.

*Yours sincerely  
Dominic Asquith*

Dominic Asquith  
PS/Mr Waldegrave

C D Powell Esq  
No 10 Downing St

LOCATION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO WERE TRAPPED IN IRAQ/KUWAIT AS AT 7 SEPTEMBER

COUNTRY	TOTAL IN IRAQ/KUWAIT ON 2 AUGUST	IN JORDAN	NO MAN'S LAND OR ON WAY TO JORDAN	IN OR ON WAY TO TURKEY	IN OR ON WAY TO SAUDI ARABIA	IN OR ON WAY TO IRAN	REPATRIATED	STILL IN IRAQ/KUWAIT
Bangladesh	85,000	12,000+	12-15,000	15,000	6,000		1,200	35-40,000
India	180,000	3-5,000	15,000+			100,000	14,000	120,000
Pakistan	110,000	3,000	10,000+	18,000	10-12,000		20,000	50,000
Sri Lanka	150,000	3,000	1,000+		1,500			95,000
Thailand	10,000	1,500	-					
Philippines	50,000	2,200	3-10,000					
Egypt	1,700,000	?	?				5,000	40,000
Yemen		7,000					100,000	1,300,000
Others	140,000						13,000	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2,400,000</b>	<b>45,000</b>	<b>60-80,000</b>	<b>40-50,000</b>	<b>18,000+</b>	<b>10-100,000</b>	<b>190,000+</b>	<b>1,800,000-2,000,000</b>

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PRIME MINISTER

This is a slightly breathless initiative from Mr Waldegrave, but I am sure he is right that a considerable disaster could be in the making.

As with most fund-raising exercises, we end up always approaching the same donors: and I doubt the Saudis or Kuwaitis will see the refugees from Iraq and Kuwait as their responsibility.

*Yes* I think it is right to ask the UN Secretary-General to appoint a single person to take responsibility for organising relief and the airlift: but then we should leave it to him to drum up support and financial contributions. Anything else should wait at least until after Lynda Chalker returns and reports.

Agree?

*CP*

CHARLES POWELL

8 September 1990

*Germany*  
*Sweden*  
*Switzerland*  
*Italy*  
*Agreed*

*all the countries that are not close reach now. We can't expect the Saudis & Kuwait to do everything i.e. pass up for weeks for serious danger and refugees.*

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*From the Private Secretary*

9 September 1990

You wrote to me yesterday with some proposals for handling the refugee crisis in Jordan (and Turkey), as increasing numbers of people flee Iraq. I have now been able to obtain the Prime Minister's views.

In brief, she is content for Sir David Hannay to suggest to the UN Secretary General, when he presents his credentials tomorrow, that he should appoint a Special Representative to handle the refugee crisis, and that he should be someone of international standing. Beyond that, the Prime Minister takes the view that it is for the United Nations itself to head a fund-raising drive for financial assistance for the refugees: and she has reservations about constant recourse to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for finance. She takes the view that they are already being asked to provide substantial funds for the American military presence and for aid to countries affected by implementation of sanctions. She does not think it reasonable to expect them also to take the lead in finance for the refugees. She thinks it better for the UN to turn to countries like Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, who are not playing any significant military role in the Gulf, for this sort of assistance. It follows that the Prime Minister is not willing to send messages on the lines proposed in your letter to King Fahd and the Ruler of Kuwait.

From our point of view, the Prime Minister thinks the next step should be for Mrs Chalker to pay her visit to the area and report further. We can decide what further contribution we ought to make in the light of that.

I am copying this letter to John Gieve (Treasury), Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence), Eamonn Taylor (Overseas Development Administration) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

The Hon Dominic Asquith  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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EXTRAORDINARY EPC MINISTERIAL MEETING: ROME, 7 SEPTEMBER:  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR JORDAN, TURKEY AND EGYPT  
SUMMARY

1. De Michelis and Delors try to bounce through an immediate decision on 750 mecu of financial support for Turkey, Jordan and Egypt. Seen off by Mr Waldegrave despite scant support from EC colleagues. The report for ECOFIN Ministers now says only that this is a Commission proposal. But it will get considerable support from most other member states and the Commission still hope for a final decision at the FAC on 17 September.

DETAIL

2. In his opening statement, De Michelis referred to the US initiative on Burdensharing. His initial personal reaction had been that it was unthinkable that European countries could offer financial contributions to the US military effort. But support for the Gulf countries in applying the embargo and economic support for Jordan, Egypt and Turkey was different. Failure to

support

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support these countries might lead to their not participating in the fight against Iraq. The Twelve need to take an imaginative political decision and act soon.

3. Delors referred to the Matutes document on financial support for Jordan, Egypt and Turkey. The EC had already been providing emergency aid amounting to 6 million ecu but these funds were now depleted. Other countries than the three mentioned were also badly hit by the crisis: Eastern Europe would suffer from the oil price rise as would Africa. But their problem could be examined in the G24 and Lome contexts: there was no such mechanism for Mediterranean or Arab states.

4. Delors continued that the three countries concerned had been affected not just by the oil price rise but by the loss of trade and remittances. Jordan had lost 30 per cent of her GDP, Egypt 6 per cent and Turkey 4.5 per cent. So their needs were immediate and desperate and decisions had to be taken now. There would have to be a combination of EC and bilateral help in grant and/or loan form. Obviously apart from the EC there were other potential donors such as Japan and Saudi Arabia.

5. Matutes then introduced the Commission document. He noted that the main burden of help should fall on Saudi Arabia and the UAE who were securing an extra 30 billion dollars a year in oil revenue. They could therefore be asked to cover some two-thirds of the dollars 9 billion identified in the Commission document as necessary support for Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. OECD countries should take on the remaining third, excluding the US because of their military contribution. The Community and the member states should move quickly and be ready to help generously. The help should be as concessionary as possible: grants, and loans which could if necessary later be converted to grants.

6. During the first round of interventions, all Ministers expressed general support in principle for balance of payments support for the three countries. Samaras (Greece), however,

refused



refused to lift the Greek reservation on the new EC/Turkey agreement - a position for which he was criticised by several EC Ministers. No one committed themselves to the figures mentioned by Matutes.

7. Mr Waldegrave said that, though other countries were affected, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt were the three priority targets. They could be helped in many ways. For example, existing EC disbursements to Egypt and Jordan were delayed because of their failure to identify suitable projects. They could be encouraged to do better. But he hoped the message would go out from the meeting that Europe was ready to take on its fair share of the burden. Countries could contribute in different ways. Some were making a military contribution. Others, in one case for constitutional reasons, did not. But they could contribute financially. The additional burden on those who contributed militarily had to be recognised. There were three elements: bilateral military help, bilateral economic aid and EC aid. The right balance had to be struck so that no-one bore a disproportionate burden. While the UK was ready in principle to consider support of the kind proposed, the figures would need to be looked at carefully and all elements taken into account.

8. De Michelis then attempted, during his summing up, to bounce an agreement out of colleagues. He claimed, as the last of a list of points on which consensus had been reached, that there had been quote political agreement unquote that the Community countries, collectively and individually, would contribute the major portion of the three billion dollars balance of payments support that remained when the Gulf states had taken on two-thirds of the burden. He noted that bilateral contributions would have to take account of the military contribution that some states had made. He suggested that he write to Carli as Chairman of ECOFIN to inform him of this political decision and ask that finance ministers work out the details.

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9. Mr Waldegrave said that he could not agree to any precise commitments at this stage about balance of payments support. The UK agreed to the principle but figures would need careful consideration. De Michelis argued that ECOFIN had to be given some orientation on the overall sum. Otherwise they would not agree anything.
10. Fernando-Ordonez queried the figures. Delors said that the Commission calculation called for dollars 9 billion by the end of 1991. If the Gulf took on two-thirds, the OECD countries should take on the rest. He thought that between one and a half and two billion dollars should come from the EC countries. If half of this was bilateral, the remaining half would be community money, amounting to around 7.50 million ecu, of which two thirds might be in grant form. If a decision in principle could be taken today, finance Ministers could consider how this extra money could be found and the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 September could take a formal decision.
11. Dumas and Genscher then announced that they could accept the Commission proposal, upon which De Michelis closed the meeting. Mr Waldegrave immediately had a private word with De Michelis and persuaded him to agree that in the Presidency letter to Finance Ministers for this weekend's meeting he would not specify that there had been a consensus on a particular sum of money: it was a Commission proposal. De Michelis also agreed that it would be left clear that the final decision would be taken by Foreign Ministers on 17 September. Greenstock subsequently saw a draft of the Presidency letter, which mentioned the 750 mecu sum in fairly categorical terms, but managed to have the draft altered to indicate this was still a Commission proposal. He did not see the final version signed by De Michelis. It is probable that all other Community countries will have accepted that 750 mecu will be the target figure for balance of payments assistance up end-1991.

COMMENT

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COMMENT

12. The attempt by the Presidency, with Commission support, to go beyond the sense of the discussion to bounce through agreement on a high figure was unfortunate, if not unexpected. Mr Waldegrave made clear that this was unacceptable, cut across current US efforts to coordinate international assistance, was based on unproven assumptions and took no account of national contributions, either military or financial. The Presidency was therefore prevented from summing up that there was agreement. The letter which De Michelis is sending to the President of ECOFIN will refer to the 3 texts agreed at the meeting (see Rome MIFTs) and to support for a Community financial package, EC aid and national contributions: it will then invite ECOFIN to report to the FAC on the technical feasibility of such a proposal. Spain, Denmark and to a lesser extent, Holland indicated to the Presidency that they could not agree precise figures. Delors said that this provision would be consistent with the financial prospectus for 1988/92 agreed by the European Council in February 1988. When pressed Matutes could not clarify, but Delors' Cabinet told us that they assumed a revision of the prospectives would be necessary and that Delors' reference was probably to the monies available between the prospectives total and the own resources available in each year.

13. -- See MIFTs --

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