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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

Dear Charles,

**THE GULF CRISIS: VISIT BY MR PRIMAKOV**

I understand that Mr Gorbachev's Special Envoy on the Gulf, Academician Evgeni Primakov, is due to call on the Prime Minister at Chequers at 1600 tomorrow, 20 October. You might find it useful to have a note of the background against which his visit is taking place.

As you know, Primakov visited Baghdad earlier this month and saw Saddam Hussain on 5 October. The Russians have told us that the purpose of his visit was to resolve the problem of the return of Soviet Specialists in Iraq over which there had been "practically open resistance from the Iraqi authorities". After apparently "heated arguments" with Saddam Hussain agreement was reached that 1,500 could leave within a month.

According to the Russians, Primakov's other aim was to clarify "with pressure if necessary" the possibility of a significant shift in Saddam Hussain's position, especially on withdrawal from Kuwait. He had called on Saddam to display a sense of reality and stressed that neither the Soviet Union in particular or the world community in general would ever accept the annexation of Kuwait. Although Saddam had countered with the usual arguments and pretexts justifying the annexation, Primakov had felt that some new nuances were beginning to emerge. His overall conclusion was that the International Community's rejection of the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait and the introduction of sanctions was causing Saddam to sober up, slowly but visibly.

Primakov is coming to London after discussions in Rome, Paris and Washington. We understand that in Rome and Paris he argued that a face-saving solution should be offered to Saddam. This should include guarantees of Iraqi security and a possible deal whereby Iraqi troops would withdraw from

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Kuwait if the West would agree an international conference on the Middle East should be convened shortly afterwards. But he admitted to the French that he had no guarantee that Saddam Hussain would deliver even if these conditions were met. He also took the opportunity to make clear the Soviet distaste for military action in the Gulf and the Soviet Union's firm resolve to stand behind the UN Security Council Resolutions on the crisis. He told the Italians that the initiative on Arab Israel should take place independently of but prior to Iraqi withdrawal but did not float the idea of such an advance gesture with the French.

The Americans told us before Primakov's arrival in Washington on the evening of 18 October that they would take a tough line on the compromise solution they expected him to have in his pocket. We have not yet had a read-out on his talks with the Administration (which took place earlier today) but have asked the Embassy in Washington to let us have a report first thing tomorrow morning. We shall arrange to get this to you well before the Prime Minister's meeting.

We have conveyed to the Russians our own concern about Primakov's tour (which, incidentally, is shared by moderate Arabs such as the Egyptians). Speaking on Ministerial instructions, David Gore-Booth summoned the Soviet Minister in London on 19 October. He said that we would not accept any compromise solution; Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally and completely. We had therefore been concerned to read reports that Primakov was pedalling something short of full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions. During the ensuing discussion Galitsin more or less admitted that Primakov's mission might have the tactical purpose of demonstrating to the old thinkers in the Soviet establishment (who we know are less than happy with the line Mr Gorbachev has taken on the Gulf) that there was no opening for a compromise solution.

Yasser,  
RebHoll-d.

Resident Clerk

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