

ADVANCE COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

FM MOSCOW

TO DESKBY 021430Z FCO

TELNO 2085

OF 021526Z NOVEMBER 90

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO,
INFO IMMEDIATE MIDDLE EAST POSTS, ROME, PEKING, ACTOR, MODUKMY TELNOS 2073 AND 2078: KUWAIT/IRAQ: SOVIET POLICY: CALL ON
PRIMAKOV

SUMMARY

1. I CALLED ON PRIMAKOV THIS AFTERNOON. HE SAID THE RUSSIANS WOULD CONTINUE TO INSIST ON SADDAM IMPLEMENTING ALL SCR'S. BUT THEY WOULD NOT GO BEYOND THAT IE THERE WOULD BE NO SUPPORT FOR ACTION TO TOPPLE SADDAM INSIDE IRAQ. AFTER IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT, THERE MUST BE A POLITICAL/MILITARY PACKAGE FOR THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION AND PARALLEL ACTION ON ARAB/ISRAEL. SADDAM NEEDED TO SAVE 'FACE'. CONTRARY TO WHAT FALIN TOLD ME, PRIMAKOV WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SECURING THE RELEASE OF SOVIET HOSTAGES. HE WARNED AGAINST EXPECTING DOMESTIC PRESSURE, OR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, TO SECURE IRAQ'S WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT OR SADDAM'S DOWNFALL. I WARNED AGAINST PUTTING STRAINS ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS OR UNDERMINING THE MILITARY OPTION. PRIMAKOV WAS INSISTENT THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT BREAK RANKS IT WAS NOT IN THE RUSSIAN INTEREST TO RISK FALLING OUT WITH ITS WESTERN PARTNERS. HE ASKED THAT THIS MESSAGE SHOULD BE CONVEYED PERSONALLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON PRIMAKOV THIS AFTERNOON. HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO IRAQ, AND ON SOVIET POLICY ON THE GULF:

- (A) WE MUST ALL INSIST ON THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL THE RELEVANT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS, BUT WE SHOULD NOT SEEK TO GO BEYOND THEM. NOR SHOULD WE HINT THAT WE CONTEMPLATED DOING SO, SINCE THIS MERELY MADE SADDAM MORE INTRANSIGENT. IN OTHER WORDS, SADDAM MUST WITHDRAW, FROM KUWAIT UNCONDITIONALLY, BUT WE SHOULD NOT THEN TRY TO BRING ABOUT HIS POLITICAL DOWNFALL IN IRAQ.
- (B) AFTER SADDAM HAD WITHDRAWN, WE SHOULD BE READY TO CONSIDER A PACKAGE DEAL ON THE GULF/MIDDLE EAST REGION. IRAQ'S NEIGHBOURS WOULD NEED GUARANTEES, AND KUWAIT WOULD NEED FRIENDLY ARAB FORCES TO SAFEGUARD ITS SECURITY IN PLACE OF THE CURRENT

- MULTINATIONAL FORCE. SADDAM TOO WOULD NEED GUARANTEES THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED. THIS PACKAGE SHOULD BE BROKERED BY THE ARABS. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ACTIVATE THEM IN THE SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION.
- SIMULTANEOUSLY, BUT SEPARATELY, NEGOTIATIONS MUST BEGIN ON ARAB/ISRAEL. PRIMEKOV DID NOT SUGGEST HOW THIS PROCESS WAS TO BE INITIATED, OR BY WHOM.
- (C) THE SOVIET UNION HAD NO INTENTION OF BREAKING RANKS WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE CRISIS. THE SOVIET UNION'S FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS DICTATED STAYING CLOSELY IN STEP.
- (D) HE HAD TOLD SADDAM THAT HOLDING FOREIGN HOSTAGES WAS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. GIVEN HIS LONG PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH SADDAM, WHOM HE HAS KNOWN TWENTY YEARS, HE HOPED THIS MIGHT HAVE REGISTERED. HE HAD DEMANDED THE RELEASE NOT JUST OF RUSSIAN HOSTAGES, BUT OF ALL OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS TOO. SADDAM HAD AGREED THAT ALL SOVIET PERSONNEL COULD LEAVE AS THEIR CONTRACT EXPIRED. PRIMAKOV BELIEVED THAT SOME 2,500 OR HALF THE SOVIET TOTAL OF AROUND 5,000 PERSONNEL WOULD BE OUT BY THE END OF NOVEMBER. SADDAM HAD ALLOWED SOME 30 SOVIET MILITARY SPECIALISTS TO LEAVE IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, WHEN THEIR CONTRACTS HAD EXPIRED. NO SOVIET CITIZENS HAD BEEN MOVED TO AREAS THAT ARE POTENTIAL MILITARY TARGETS. (THIS CONTRADICTS FALIN'S CLAIM TO ME THIS MORNING MY TELNO 2078).
- (E) THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF POPULAR DISAFFECTION WITH SADDAM IN IRAQ. HIS GRIP WAS TOO TIGHT. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES TO UNDERMINE HIM.
- (F) SANCTIONS WERE ONLY WORKING VERY SLOWLY, AND WERE PRETTY LEAKY.
- (G) HAVING GIVEN UP THE GAINS SECURED AT VERY GREAT COST IN THE WAR WITH IRAN, SADDAM WAS NOW DOUBLY DETERMINED NOT TO BE FORCED OUT OF KUWAIT EMPTY HANDED. THIS WAS WHY SOME SORT OF FACE-SAVING PACKAGE MUST BE CONSTRUCTED TO FOLLOW ON IMMEDIATELY AFTER AN IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT. WE MUST WORK WITH THE GRAIN OF SADDAM'S PSYCHOLOGICAL MAKE-UP. HE WAS NOT A EUROPEAN.
- (H) THE ARABS, EG THE SAUDIS, WERE VERY 'GUNGHO' WHEN THEY WERE TALKING TO WESTERN INTERLOCUTORS. THEY WERE MUCH LESS KEEN

ON A MILITARY SOLUTION WHEN TALKING AMONG THEMSELVES.

- (I) PRIMAKOV WAS EVASIVE ABOUT WHAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD DO IN THE EVENT OF A MILITARY SOLUTION. HE SAID (CORRECTLY) THAT SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN MILITARY ACTION WOULD HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY THE SUPREME SOVIET. HE COULD NOT SPECULATE ON THE OUTCOME. (IN FACT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE STRONG OPPOSITION TO SOVIET PARTICIPATION.)
- (J) PRIMAKOV DETECTED A CHANGE IN SADDAM'S ATTITUDE COMPARED WITH HIS PREVIOUS VISIT. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BE SPECIFIC BUT SADDAM SEEMED LESS CONFIDENT THAT HE HAD BEEN, AND LESS FULL OF RINGING CLAIMS ABOUT IRAQ'S AGE-OLD RIGHT TO KUWAIT.

3. AS I HAD DONE WITH FALIN, I STRESSED TO PRIMAKOV THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE CONSENSUS. I ALSO WARNED AGAINST ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE MILITARY OPTION MIGHT NOT BE EXERCISED IF NECESSARY. THIS COULD ONLY GIVE SADDAM COMFORT. WE HAD BEEN PERTURBED, IN THIS REGARD, BY GORBACHEV'S REMARKS IN PARIS THAT THE MILITARY OPTION WAS UNACCEPTABLE. PRIMAKOV INSISTED THAT GORBACHEV HAD BEEN MISINTERPRETED. HE COULD NOT IMMEDIATELY LAY HIS HAND ON THE TEXT OF GORBACHEV'S REMARKS, BUT HE COULD ASSURE ME THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE NOT RULING OUT THE MILITARY OPTION AS A LAST RESORT. HE UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON SADDAM.

COMMENT

4. TWO MESSAGES CAME THROUGH PARTICULARLY CLEARLY AT THIS ENCOUNTER. THE FIRST WAS THAT THE RUSSIANS WANT SADDAM OUT OF KUWAIT AND WANT TO SEE ALL THE SCR'S IMPLEMENTED IN THE PROCESS: BUT THEY DO NOT WANT TO GO BEYOND THIS. THERE IS NO SUPPORT FOR ANY IDEA THAT THE COALITION SHOULD GO ON TO TOPPLE SADDAM INTERNALLY.

5. THE SECOND MESSAGE WAS THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE RUSSIANS BREAKING WITH THE CONSENSUS. PRIMAKOV WAS MOST INSISTENT ON THIS SCORE, REPEATEDLY TOLD ME THAT 'WE SHOULD NOT WORRY', AND ASKED ME TO ENSURE THAT THIS MESSAGE WAS BROUGHT TO THE PERSONAL ATTENTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER (TO WHOM HE SENT HIS WARMEST PERSONAL REGARDS).

6. IT IS CLEAR THEREFORE (AS I ARGUED IN MY TELNO 2073) THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE NOT CONTEMPLATING BREAKING RANKS: BUT IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT THEY WILL LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED IN THE SEARCH FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION (AT PRESENT THEIR FAVOURED ROUTE IS 'ACTIVATING THE ARABS'). WHEN I ASKED PRIMAKOV WHAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD DO NEXT, HE REFUSED TO BE DRAWN. HE DID HOWEVER, AGREE TO KEEP IN TOUCH AND

DISCUSS FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

BRAITHWAITE

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

38

ADVANCE 38

IRAQ/KUWAIT
 PS
 PS/MR WALDEGRAVE
 PS/S OF S FOR DEFENCE
 PS/PUS
 MR FAIRWEATHER
 MR SLATER
 MR GORE-BOOTH
 MR GOULDEN
 MR JAY
 MR BERMAN (LEGAL ADVISERS)
 HD/MED
 HD/AMD
 HD/CONSULAR D
 HD/ECD(E)
 HD/NAD
 HD/NEWS D
 HD/NENAD
 HD/NPDD
 HD/SECPOL D
 HD/SED

HD/SOVIET
 HD/UND
 MR PRIDDLE, DEPT OF ENERGY
 MR APPLEYARD CABINET OFFICE
 (BY TUBE H29)
 MR W D REEVES CABINET OFFICE
 (BY TUBE H29)
 MR D J GOWAN CABINET OFFICE
 (BY TUBE H29)
 MR BARRASS, CABINET OFFICE
 (BY TUBE H29)
 PS/NUMBER 10 DOWNING ST
 CABINET OFFICE DIO
 (BY TUBE H29)
 SIR ROBIN BUTLER, CAB OFFICE
 AUS (C) MODUK
 HD/SEC (O) (C) MODUK
 MR LS SMITH BANK ENGLAND
 MR WICKS HMT
~~EMERGENCY UNIT~~
~~RESIDENT CLERK~~

NNNN