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From the Private Secretary

7 November 1990

SOVIET VIEWS ON THE GULF

The Soviet Ambassador came to see me this afternoon to talk about Mr. Gorbachev's message to the Prime Minister on the Gulf, a copy of which I sent you earlier today. He did not seem to me to have much new to say, but was at pains to stress that the Soviet Union was not trying to reduce the pressure on Saddam Hussain and accepted it might become necessary to use force. He drew attention in particular to the paragraph towards the end of the message in which Gorbachev reiterates that there is no linkage between the crisis in the Gulf and other conflicts in the Region. He asked how I thought the Prime Minister would react to the idea in the message for a "more energetic use of the Arab factor". I said I did not think this was particularly helpful. The whole affair had passed out of the Arab orbit and was now firmly seized by the UN Security Council. It would be too easy for Saddam Hussain to dominate and divide the Arabs on their own. The main reason why the Americans and others had gone into Saudi Arabia was to defend the country and the Gulf States against an over-mighty Iraq. This point apart, I thought the Prime Minister would find the message fairly reassuring. I thought she would reply, but only after she had seen Secretary Baker on Friday.

The Soviet Ambassador drew attention to the last paragraph about an early meeting between the Prime Minister and Gorbachev. He knew that Gorbachev was giving personal consideration to this, but was much criticised for travelling too much abroad. He hoped to have a specific proposition to put to us soon.

At the end of the meeting, the Ambassador referred briefly to the forthcoming visit of President Landsbergis and asked whether the Embassy could have a debriefing after the event. I said I would see what could be arranged.

(C. D. POWELL)

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