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9th January, 1991

*Ad welcome a  
commitment on this  
12.1.*

*Jim Amery  
12/11*

*Dear Douglas,*

Whether the Kuwait crisis is resolved by diplomacy or war it seems clear that we shall need to retain a sizeable and longterm Western presence in the area. This raises the questions of what it should consist of and where it should be located.

The answer to the first would seem to be for sea and air power and stockpiles of heavy equipment. All these will require some ground forces to protect naval and air facilities and the heavy equipment itself. They will also be needed as backing for the Governments in the Arabian Peninsula whose co-operation we shall require.

Where should these be stationed? Hopefully Western forces would enter Kuwait whether to drive out the Iraqis or escort their withdrawal. As reconstruction takes place most could no doubt be withdrawn but some should remain, as also in Bahrein, to deter any threat from Iran. Iran will become the major power in the area once Iraq has been faced down.

It might also be worth considering whether the West could recover the facilities Britain once had at Aden. The Yemen Government has aligned itself with Baghdad and might be glad to work their passage home. The Saudis I suspect would welcome this. King Feisal tried hard to persuade Britain to stay in Aden - and even offered to pay the costs of the base. Hopefully the Saudis would also agree to some facilities in the Eastern Province.

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The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, M.P.



I have discussed all this with Tony Parsons who agrees that Middle Eastern security is inseparable from European security and that the Arabs are too weak and divided to protect the vital oil resources. He is all for a longterm and substantial American-European naval-air presence. He would, however, be reluctant to see a permanent presence of Euro-American ground troops in the Arab world, partly because Iran would keep up a howl of opposition which would affect the Shiite populations in Southern Iraq and the Gulf.

I don't myself agree with him over this. The Arabian Peninsula is very lightly populated, at any rate by Arabs, (as distinct from European and Asian expatriates;) and a successful outcome to the Kuwait crisis should do much to restore the authority of the West in the area.

Tony does, however, make an important suggestion which I think you ought to see before you leave for Turkey. I quote the relevant passage from a letter of his (Dec 18) commenting on my last speech in the House:-

"I don't for a second contest your argument that oil is too precious to be left to the Arabs to defend. My idea, you will not be surprised to hear, is a modification of yours, based on making use of the only reliable state in the Middle East not counting Israel. I mean of course Turkey.

What I would like to see is the centre of American gravity in NATO moved from where there is no threat - Western Europe - to the area which is surrounded by actual or potential threats - i.e. as close as possible to the collapsing Balkans, the anarchic, decolonising Russian Empire and the dangerous Middle East. If the Americans had most of what they normally have in Germany/Britain, moved to Turkey, they would still be in the NATO area and would be perfectly poised to address threats from all the above directions. Would Saddam have invaded Kuwait if there had been large numbers of Americans of all arms in the Diyabekir area, for example?

My notion has the advantage of (i) solving the problem of: whither NATO? (ii) doing so without creating new and probably controversial structures (iii) avoiding the political storms which stationing people in the Arab world always seem to involve".

Perhaps this suggestion is already in your mind but it struck me as original new thinking and important. The Turks would benefit from the mere presence of a large American contingent. They would benefit still more if one outcome of the Kuwait crisis was to enable them to secure a major share in the Mosul oilfields, a point I mentioned to you at an earlier stage in the crisis.

I am copying this to John Major and Tom King.

*John Major,*

*Julian.*

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Julian Amery

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