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*From the Private Secretary*

26 October 1990

EUROPEAN COUNCIL: ARAB/ISRAEL

General Scowcroft telephoned me again this afternoon, this time on the subject of a possible Declaration on Arab/Israel at the European Council in Rome this weekend. The Americans had heard that the French were going to push for a strong call for an early International Conference. They would very much regret this in the present situation: it would hand a major propaganda victory to Saddam Hussein. I said I was not aware of any specific French proposal. The European Council tended to refer to an International Conference quite routinely in its statements. I did not think an anodyne reference on standard lines could do much harm, especially if we explicitly denied linkage. Scowcroft disagreed: in the present climate a reference to an International Conference would inevitably be seen as a concession by the Twelve to Iraq. I said I would find out where matters stood. We would do our best to avoid anything which could be construed as linked to the Iraq/Kuwait crisis.

I subsequently mentioned this to the Prime Minister, who commented that it might be part of the price which the French were paying for the release of their hostages.

I have recounted this to John Weston by telephone.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sir Robin Butler (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

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