

SUBJECT

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T2231



VCC MASTER
OPS

H/L

Free after

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 December 1983

Dear Mr. President,

I am grateful for your message of 5 December in which you set out your view of recent developments in the Middle East.

I think it important that we should explain our thinking to each other in order to increase mutual understanding. Richard Luce has given me an account of the interesting talks which he had in Damascus on 4 December. Only through constructive dialogue can we hope to make progress towards solving the acute problems of the region. I am encouraged that despite your disagreements with the United States, President Reagan's special representative in the Middle East, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, was in Damascus on 14 and 15 December for talks, and I hope that these talks too were fruitful.

The role of the Multinational Force in Lebanon, and the British contribution to it, is clear. It is a peacekeeping force. We agreed to contribute to it on the basis that its purpose was to assist the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese armed forces in the Beirut area to facilitate the restoration of Lebanese Government authority over that area. Our aim is to help restore conditions in which the people of Lebanon themselves can settle their internal differences. I believe that this objective is shared by all the contributors to the MNF. Above all our presence is intended to help end the cycle of violence which has caused so much suffering in Lebanon and to promote reconciliation among the people of Lebanon.

We also support President Gemayel's efforts to reach agreement on the early withdrawal of outside forces. I am conscious

/ of Your

Of Your Excellency's view that Syrian forces are in Lebanon on a different basis from those of Israel, whose invasion of Lebanon last year the United Nations Security Council unanimously condemned. I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to reach an agreement which will allow the withdrawal of both Israeli and Syrian forces, while meeting the essential and different security requirements of both countries.

It is not our intention to become involved in internal Lebanese quarrels, and we do not intend that our forces should do anything which might have the effect of exacerbating tensions within Lebanon. Naturally our troops must have the right to defend themselves if attacked, but they will exercise this right with deliberation and responsibility. We shall continue to play our part in Lebanon so long as we think we have a useful contribution to make. Both President Gemayel and Mr. Walid Jumblatt have assured us during recent visits to London that all communities welcome the presence of the British contingent, and value the role it is playing, notably in providing a neutral guard for the vitally important ceasefire commission.

If the suffering in Lebanon is to be brought to an end, all of us who have the interests of the Lebanese people at heart must work together constructively for peace and reconciliation. I am sure that we share the same objective. I hope, therefore, that we can continue to keep in touch.

With my personal good wishes for a speedy recovery from your recent illness,

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

President Hafez el Asad

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 December 1983

Dear John,

Type letter pl.

Letter from President Asad of Syria

A.J.C. 19/12

With my letter of 8 December I enclosed the text of a message from President Asad.

President Asad's message consists entirely of an attack on the policies of the United States in Lebanon and towards Syria. Sir Geoffrey Howe thinks that in her reply the Prime Minister will not wish to become too directly involved in defending the actions of the United States. To do so would overemphasise the identification of the British Government with US policies and undermine any chance we may have of being able to influence the Syrians towards more constructive policies now or in future. For the same reasons, the draft reply includes a reference which acknowledges, without accepting it, the Syrian position that her forces in Lebanon should not be equated with those of Israel. We should, nevertheless, make clear that we and our partners share the same overall objectives in Lebanon. Sir Geoffrey therefore recommends that the Prime Minister should in her reply concentrate on explaining how we see the mandate of the MNF and the role of the British contingent.

/ I enclose a draft for the Prime Minister's consideration.

Yours ever,

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

Peter Ricketts

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

Registry
No.

DRAFT LETTER

Type 1 +

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret,
Secret.
Confidential.
Restricted.
Unclassified.To:-
President Hafez el Asad

From

Prime Minister

Telephone No. Ext.

Department

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

I am grateful ~~to you~~ for your message of 5 December in which you set out your view of recent developments in the Middle East.

I think it important that we should explain our thinking to each other in order to increase mutual understanding. Richard Luce has given me an account of the interesting talks which he had in Damascus on 4 December. Only through constructive dialogue can we hope to make progress towards solving the acute problems of the region. I am encouraged that despite your disagreements with the United States, President Reagan's special representative in the Middle East, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, was in Damascus on 14 and 15 December for talks, and I hope that these talks too were fruitful.

The role of the Multinational Force in Lebanon, and the British contribution to it, is clear. It is a peacekeeping force. We agreed to contribute to it on the basis that its purpose was to assist the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese armed forces in the Beirut area to facilitate the restoration of Lebanese Government authority over that area. Our aim is to help restore conditions in which the people of Lebanon themselves can

settle their internal differences. I believe that this objective is shared by all the contributors to the MNF. Above all our presence is intended to help end the cycle of violence which has caused so much suffering in Lebanon, and promote reconciliation among the people of Lebanon.

We also support President Gemayel's efforts to reach agreement on the early withdrawal of outside forces. I am conscious of Your Excellency's view that Syrian forces are in Lebanon on a different basis from those of Israel, whose invasion of Lebanon last year the United Nations Security Council unanimously condemned. I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to reach an agreement which will allow the withdrawal of both Israeli and Syrian forces, while meeting the essential and different security requirements of both countries.

It is not our intention to become involved in internal Lebanese quarrels, and we do not intend that our forces should do anything which might have the effect of exacerbating tensions within Lebanon. Naturally our troops must have the right to defend themselves if attacked, but they will exercise this right with deliberation and responsibility. We shall continue to play our part in Lebanon so long as we think we have a useful contribution to make. Both President Gemayel and Mr Walid Jumblatt have assured us during recent visits to London that all communities welcome the presence of the British contingent, and value the role it is playing, notably in providing a neutral guard for the vitally important ceasefire commission.

/If the

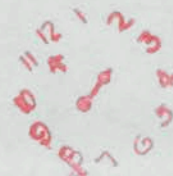
If the suffering in Lebanon is to be brought to an end, all of us who have the interests of the Lebanese people at heart must work together constructively for peace and reconciliation. I am sure that we share the same objective. I hope, therefore, that we can continue to keep in touch.

With my personal good wishes for a speedy recovery from your recent illness,

Lebanon: Int Sit RLS.

8

119 DEC 1983





EMBASSY OF THE
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

cc MIAH
OPS
PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T203^{MA}/83

Dear Prime Minister,

In the present critical circumstances which the world in general, and the Middle East in particular, are undergoing, and what they entail in terms of aggression and development and widening of this aggression, I write to you to point out a number of grave developments in our region. Such developments have become a threat to peace and security, not only to this sensitive region, but also to peace and security in the world at large. The gravest of these developments are the following:

1. The U.S. military escalation in the Lebanon, and the involvement of the U.S. forces in the internal Lebanese problem, and their participation in the fighting against some parties.

2. The development of U.S. military escalation from involvement in the internal fighting to launching aggression against Syrian forces in the Lebanon. The last of such acts of aggression were the air Raids which the U.S. air crafts carried out yesterday against our forces positions in the Lebanon, and the consequent declarations that were characterized by threats to continue such aggressive acts against our forces.

The U.S. forces have come to Lebanon under the pretext of helping in establishing peace in this country, but no sooner they turned to forces that threaten peace and security in the Lebanon and the region. What we fear is that the region has come to be on the brink of another Vietnam.

3. The strategic agreement concluded between the American President, Ronald Reagan, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Itzhak Shamir, during the latter's visit to Washington. According to this agreement, the interests of the United States, a Super power, have been linked to those of Israel, in a way that the huge potentialities and capabilities of the United States are put in the service of the Israeli expansionist aggressive projects. It has become clear that the two sides have agreed to launch a direct aggressive action



EMBASSY OF THE
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

against Syria and her forces in the Lebanon, and to take other actions that violate the unity of Lebanon and destroy its future. The Israeli air raids against some lebanese towns and villages, and the raids against the Syrian positions the next day, were the first stage of a joint American - Israeli aggressive plan.

4. The pressures exerted by the American and Israeli governments to hamper the process of national reconciliation, and to push some lebanese parties to aggravate the internal situation in the Lebanon in order to frustrate the possibility of achieving reconciliation among the lebanese parties, so as to keep Lebanon an explosive hot bed of tension.

Referring to these developments and to their grave consequences that threaten Syria's security and future and the people of Lebanon, I would like to draw your attention to them because they constitute a serious threat to peace and security in our region and to the world at large. Moreover, these developments reveal the United States aggressive method and its policy that looks down upon peoples, as if the world has become a jungle where might and aggression prevail.

I am sure that you are aware of the dangers of the continuation of this aggressive method and the threats against a United Nations member State which has always tried to maintain its independence, defend its territory and its national interests against any aggression.

I am also confident that once your government realizes the danger of this explosive situation, it will take every measure to help us put an end to this aggressive policy and will help us defend our independence, sovereignty and national dignity.

Finally please accept my deepest regards and best wishes hoping that your people will always enjoy prosperity and progress.

Hafez Assad
President of the Syrian Arab Republic

Damascus,
5 December 1983



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Prime Minister.

London SW1A 2AH

A.J.C. ^a/₁₂.

8 December 1983

Dear John,

Syria

The Syrian Embassy this afternoon delivered to the department the enclosed text of a message to the Prime Minister from President Asad dated 5 December.

We shall let you have a draft reply as soon as possible.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street