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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

30 May 1980

The Middle East

The Prime Minister held a meeting at Chequers this morning with Mr. Hurd to pursue the discussion on the Middle East which she had begun with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on Tuesday of this week. Sir Donald Maitland and Mr. Bullard were also present.

At the end of the meeting the main points that had arisen in the discussion were embodied in the attached note. Mr. Hurd put this to the Prime Minister who approved it.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

G. A. WHITMORE

Paul Lever Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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TR

cc C. Humphrey
Mr Hurd's Office

Middle East

copy Master set.

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ARAB/ISRAEL

1. If, as we expect, a vacuum develops, the Europeans might initiate a process on the following lines:

(a) The European Council in Venice on 12/13 June might issue a statement, the substance of which would stress commitment to Israel's security and elaborate on the need to take into account Palestinian political rights. It might go on to instruct the Foreign Ministers to take soundings of the parties concerned as to the best means of making progress on these two elements. This might take the form of simultaneous and separate soundings aimed at answering the following two questions:

(i) How is the principle of Palestinian self-determination to be put into practice and reconciled with the interests of the other parties, notably Israel?; and

(ii) How can Israeli fears for the long-term security be met to permit a lasting settlement?

(b) The soundings could take place over many months and continue in any case until the Americans are back in play after the Presidential Election. They could be carried out either by the Presidency (Luxembourg from 1 July and the Netherlands from 1 January next) or by an ad-hoc group or emissary selected by the European Council.

(c) At a later stage and with American agreement the Europeans might table a resolution before the Security Council. This would be designed to supplement Resolutions 242 and 338 (which are the most widely accepted resolutions on this subject) and state the two principles on which the soundings had been made (see (b) above). The Resolution might go on to invite the

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/Secretary General

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Secretary General to appoint a negotiator (c.f. Jarring) to begin with the negotiating process on the basis of these two principles. This process would clearly take a number of years and would involve all the parties concerned.

2. The following would be the advantages of the Europeans initiating a process on these lines:

- (a) We would be taking full account of the American concern not to cut across the Camp David process and not to provoke them into vetoing any resolution in the Security Council while they are absorbed in their elections.
- (b) We would limit the Russians' ability to recover lost ground by championing a "just cause" which they could otherwise do during the period of the vacuum.
- (c) Given that the soundings would cover both elements, all the parties would have a role to play during the "vacuum" period.
- (d) The expression of European concern would encourage the moderate Arab leaders, including the more sensible elements in the P.L.O. (c.f. the SDLP).
- (e) If this process could be got under way before long, the opportunity which the Arab extremists might have to create trouble at the Special Session of the General Assembly likely to be called in July to debate the Palestine question would be limited.

3. The French draft declaration for the European Council which the Prime Minister saw yesterday has been amended by the Working Group, and will be considered further at another meeting on 4 June.

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