

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T.74/80A.

IMMEDIATE

021540Z APR 80

TO PRESIDENT CARTER, THE WHITE HOUSE.  
FROM MRS THATCHER, 10, DOWNING STREET.

*OPS.*

*subject: filed-  
Afghanistan sit.*

SECRET

DEAR MR PRESIDENT,

YOUR MESSAGE OF 27 MARCH ARRIVED VERY OPPORTUNELY ON THE EVE OF MY MEETING WITH HELMUT SCHMIDT, AND WE WERE ABLE TO HAVE A VERY GOOD TALK ABOUT IT. HE WILL BE REPLYING SEPARATELY BUT I THINK WE FOUND OURSELVES IN AGREEMENT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROBLEM.

FIRST OF ALL, IT IS CLEARLY VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE THIS YEAR TO SHOW THE UNITY AND RESOLVE WHICH THE SITUATION REQUIRES. IT MUST BE RIGHT TO BEGIN NOW TO CONSIDER THE BEST WAY OF ACHIEVING THIS.

YOUR SUGGESTION FOR AN ALLIANCE SUMMIT IN MAY OR JUNE IS VERY ATTRACTIVE. BOTH THE LONDON SUMMIT MEETING IN MAY 1977 AND THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT IN MAY 1978 DID AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF GOOD FOR THE ALLIANCE AT THE TIME. BUT IN THE PRESENT SITUATION THE IDEA SEEMS TO HELMUT SCHMIDT AND ME TO RAISE THREE DIFFICULTIES.

FIRST, AS YOU YOURSELF POINT OUT, THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF THE FRENCH. YOU KNOW THEIR TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE TO THESE SUMMITS, AND HOW THEY HAVE HANDLED THE DISCUSSION OF AFGHAN-ISTAN IN THE ALLIANCE SO FAR. WE ARE VERY DOUBTFUL WHETHER PRESIDENT GISCARD WOULD BE WILLING TO ATTEND A SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON OR IN BRUSSELS, OR EVEN AN UP-GRADED MEETING IN ANKARA, WHICH IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, AS IS A MEETING IN PARIS ITSELF. HE IS ALWAYS CONCERNED TO AVOID FOCUSING TOO MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION ON FRANCE'S ROLE IN THE ALLIANCE. YET TO HOLD A MEETING OF OTHER HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE WOULD, WE BOTH THINK, BE A GREAT PITY.

THE SECOND PROBLEM IS THAT OF THE TURKS. THEY ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE CHOICE OF ANKARA FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN JUNE AND WOULD BE GREATLY DISTURBED IF THIS WERE IN ANY WAY DAMAGED OR DOWNGRADED THROUGH A SUMMIT HELD IN ANOTHER PLACE. BUT A NATO SUMMIT IN ANKARA WOULD CREATE VERY SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEMS FOR THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT.

THIRD, THERE IS THE QUESTION WHAT WILL BE THE RIGHT MOVE IN THE EAST/WEST CONTEXT. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THE EAST EUROPEANS ARE FAR FROM SOLIDLY BEHIND MOSCOW. WE SHOULD NOT GIVE THE RUSSIANS AN EXCUSE FOR A WARSAW PACT COUNTER-SUMMIT WHICH COULD ENABLE MOSCOW TO TIGHTEN DISCIPLINE IN THE OPPOSITION CAMP.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS WE ARE INCLINED TO SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN TWO STAGES. THE FIRST WOULD BE THE VENICE SUMMIT ON 22/23 JUNE WHERE WE HAVE ALL AGREED THAT THE FIRST DAY SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO POLITICAL QUESTIONS. OHIRA HAS SINCE WRITTEN TO ALL OF US EXPRESSING HIS INTEREST IN CLOSE CO-ORDINATION OF HIS POSITION WITH OURS. PRESIDENT GISCARD WILL DEFINITELY BE PRESENT. THUS WE HAVE THE MAKINGS OF A REALLY CLOSE AND INTIMATE DISCUSSION CONCENTRATING ON THE ESSENTIALS.

THE SECOND STAGE WOULD BE THE REGULAR MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY POWERS WHICH IS ALREADY ON THE CALENDAR FOR 25/26 JUNE. WE ENVISAGE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ALLIANCE PRESENT IN VENICE WOULD GO ON FROM THERE TO ANKARA AND GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE VENICE TALKS WHICH COULD THEN BE REFLECTED FULLY IN AN UPGRADED COMMUNIQUE. THIS WOULD GIVE GREAT SATISFACTION TO THE TURKS AND MAKE POSSIBLE ANY NECESSARY ADJUSTMENT OF THE SIGNAL WHICH THESE MEETINGS SEND TO THE EAST.

HELMUT SCHMIDT AND I ABSOLUTELY AGREE WITH YOU ABOUT THE NEED TO GIVE A TANGIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF WESTERN SOLIDARITY. IT IS ONLY A QUESTION OF WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE IT.

YOURS SINCERELY

MARGARET THATCHER

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QSL UR MSG AT 1553Z