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T77/80

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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T77/80

Original Afghanistan Pt 4

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FM PRESIDENT CARTER
TO PRIME MINISTER THATCHER
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S E C R E T VIA CABINET OFFICE CHANNELS WH80426
APRIL 7, 1980

DEAR MARGARET:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PROMPT RESPONSE TO MY LETTER OF MARCH 27 ON THE IDEA OF CONVENING A NATO SUMMIT MEETING. I FOUND ENCOURAGING YOUR VIEW THAT THE ALLIANCE NEEDS TO GIVE A TANGIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF WESTERN SOLIDARITY IN THE FACE OF THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN.

WHILE I APPRECIATE THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH YOU AND HELMUT HAVE IDENTIFIED, I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT THESE ARE NEITHER INSURMOUNTABLE NOR OF GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN THE OVERRIDING RESPONSIBILITY WE ALL SHARE IN ENSURING THAT THE ALLIANCE REMAINS A VIABLE INSTRUMENT FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGES TO OUR SHARED SECURITY INTERESTS.

TO BE FRANK, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPRESSION OF DISARRAY IN THE WEST AND THE FACT THAT LEADERS OF THE SOVIET UNION MAY DRAW DANGEROUS CONCLUSIONS FROM IT. YOU KNOW THAT THERE IS A SENSE OF DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES OVER THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO DATE TO DEVELOPMENTS WHICH IN THE FIRST INSTANCE THREATEN EUROPE'S SECURITY MORE DIRECTLY THAN OUR OWN. I PERSONALLY CANNOT ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF A DIVISIBLE DETENTE WHICH INSULATES OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES' RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION FROM THE RESPONSE REQUIRED TO SOVIET AGGRESSION.

IT IS TO OVERCOME THESE POTENTIAL DIFFERENCES WHICH COULD BE SO DAMAGING TO ALLIED SECURITY THAT I RAISED THE POSSIBLE USEFULNESS OF A NATO SUMMIT MEETING. IF SUCH A MEETING IS NOT TO BE HELD SOON, THEN WE MUST PLACE ALL THE MORE EMPHASIS ON TANGIBLE ACTIONS AT PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED ALLIED MEETINGS. I AGREE WITH YOUR SUGGESTION THAT THE VENICE SUMMIT INCLUDE A DAY DEVOTED TO POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES. THIS SESSION SHOULD BE CAREFULLY PREPARED SO AS TO HAVE A CONCRETE OUTCOME. OUR GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN IN CONTACT ABOUT INITIATING SUCH PREPARATIONS PROMPTLY ON A QUADRIPARTITE BASIS.

I ALSO BELIEVE WE MUST STRENGTHEN THE NATO MEETINGS ALREADY PLANNED. ACCORDINGLY, THE UNITED STATES WILL SUGGEST THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTERS' MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MAY 13-14 IN BRUSSELS BE UPGRADED TO A JOINT FOREIGN MINISTERS AND DEFENSE MINISTERS

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MEETING. THIS WILL ENABLE US ALL TO DEVELOP A BROADER CONSENSUS ON THE NATURE OF THE DANGERS FACING THE ALLIANCE AND MEASURES REQUIRED TO MEET THEM. IT WILL ALSO PERMIT THE SMALLER ALLIES TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSING ISSUES WHICH WILL ALSO BE ADDRESSED AT VENICE AND THUS MINIMIZE BOTH THEIR SENSE OF EXCLUSION AND THEIR CONSEQUENT TENDENCY TO AVOID SOME OF THEIR SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES. THE ANKARA FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING WOULD GO FORWARD AS SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW UP IN NATO ON THE VENICE AND BRUSSELS MEETINGS.

FINALLY, THE PROSPECT IS THAT THE SOVIET UNION'S OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN WILL PERSIST FOR SOME TIME AS WILL ITS EFFORTS TO DIVIDE US ON THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE. FOR THIS REASON, I BELIEVE WE MUST KEEP OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A NATO SUMMIT LATER IN THE YEAR. WE CAN ASSESS THIS BETTER AFTER WE HAVE SEEN THE RESULTS OF THE VENICE SUMMIT AND THE NATO MINISTERIALS.

IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS APPROACH EFFECTIVE, HOWEVER, WE MUST BE CLEAR AMONG OURSELVES -- AND MAKE CLEAR TO OUR PARTNERS -- AS TO THE PRECISE STEPS IT WILL BE INDISPENSABLE FOR ALL OF US TO TAKE AS PART OF A CREDIBLE RESPONSE TO SOVIET AGGRESSION IN SOUTHWEST ASIA. IN MY LETTER OF MARCH 27, I INDICATED WHAT IN MY JUDGMENT THOSE STEPS SHOULD BE. WE SHOULD MOVE FORWARD EXPEDITIOUSLY TO MAKE THEM CONCRETE AND TO IMPLEMENT THEM COLLECTIVELY.

I AM DIRECTING MY ASSOCIATES TO PROCEED URGENTLY WITH THESE ESSENTIAL STEPS IN VIEW, AND I TRUST THAT YOU WILL BE INSTRUCTING YOUR OWN PEOPLE ALONG THE SAME LINES.

SINCERELY,
JIMMY CARTER

THE RIGHT HONORABLE
MARGARET R. THATCHER, M.P.
PRIME MINISTER
LONDON
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