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TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER  
OF AUSTRALIA, THE RT. HON. MALCOLM FRASER  
TO THE RT. HON. MARGARET THATCHER,  
PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T98/50

29 April 1980

My dear Margaret,

I have been thinking deeply about the consequences of the unsuccessful United States attempt to release the hostages in Iran. I cannot and would not criticise President Carter for attempting the release of the hostages. What the Iranians have done is unforgivable and outside the law. The frustration of a great nation such as the United States is something which even those of us who are not Americans can well understand.

But there are aspects of events over the last six months which do fill me with the gravest concern. I believe that as Prime Minister of Britain you are one of the leaders who may be able to do something to redress that concern.

Helmut Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing, after the invasion of Afghanistan, issued a communique which indicated their anxiety that this crisis could set in motion a process which, step by step, and whatever intentions might be, could have the gravest consequences for the world. Their concern must be compounded by recent events in Iran.

After the invasion of Afghanistan I said that I believed this was the gravest crisis since World War II. I adhere to that for reasons which we both share. But what has been happening since then in Iran has deepened my concern. Unless the dangerous accumulation of recent events can be arrested, the result could well be a slide into a third World War.

It is my belief from a careful reading of the statement issued at the conclusion of the European Council Summit in Luxembourg, that you and your colleagues in Europe are very conscious of the dangers that the world is facing.

Actions and reactions regarding Iran are indeed unpredictable. At what point would the Soviet Union become deeply involved in an effort to wrest the greatest prize that the Communist world could possibly have - control over Persian Gulf oil, which is vital to Europe, Japan, and so many other countries?

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I do not pretend to have the answers about what might happen in Afghanistan or Iran. But from the Australian standpoint I do have the strongest views about the way in which these grave and serious issues should be handled by the key Western powers - the United States and the major European countries. What ultimately happens to you and to us will depend very greatly on the actions and policies of Britain, France, Germany and the United States together.

When I last spoke with Helmut Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing, they both, but especially the former, expressed grave and serious concern about inadequate consultations and preparation, about differing strategies and techniques for handling these issues. That was why Helmut asked me to return to Washington. How much more must he feel these concerns now.

The risks of division are not risks at all: division will create its own certainties, and they will not be ones that you or I would like. The whole Western world is crying out for a common strategy and a common approach, which I believe only you and those other three leaders can achieve.

The containment of the Soviet Union, the averting of a more serious situation in the Middle East, and the resolution of outstanding conflicts there, whether they be old ones of long standing or newer ones created by Iran, will depend upon that unity of approach.

Let me say finally that my Government is grievously concerned at any sign of lack of unity of approach amongst the four major nations upon whom our freedom and way of life so greatly depend. Unity with the United States is of the highest importance. I respect enormously the strength of your support for the United States. But that is not the same as unity in an agreed strategy and an agreed approach. I urge you to do what you can to establish both the private reality and the public perception of unity amongst Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

I wonder if you, with Giscard and Helmut, would see value in seeking to achieve a meeting with Jimmy Carter to discuss these issues, with the objective of achieving and demonstrating the common purpose that I have referred to? The world would be greatly heartened by the knowledge that there was going to be a meeting between the four major Heads of Government to support the United States in these extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and at the same time to establish common strategies for the handling of the twin problems of Afghanistan and Iran.

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What I have in mind is not necessarily just one meeting, but a framework and process of consultations which might be begun by an early first meeting in the United States, and which should be carried on at all levels of Ministerial and official contact. Such a process would so establish the strength of the Western alliance, led by the United States, that the Soviet Union would know with total certainty that when policies were announced, they were shared policies, with the United States in securing the release of the hostages.

You should know that I am writing also to Jimmy Carter, Helmut Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing, emphasising the need for unity and suggesting that they participate in a fuller process of consultations with you.

With warmest good wishes,

(Malcolm Fraser)

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
Prime Minister of Britain.

*U.S. Plans for ... - ...*

*② 15th Vienna - ...*

*① 16 Days*

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*17 Days*

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