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Subject file Middle East,
Pt 5, Situation

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE**

(A)

DEAR HELMUT,

YOU WILL HAVE HAD AN ORAL REPORT THROUGH OUR AMBASSADOR OF MY DISCUSSIONS IN RIYADH WITH CROWN PRINCE SAUD AND SOME OF THE OTHER SAUDI MINISTERS, COVERING IN PARTICULAR THE LINE I TOOK WITH THEM OVER THE TORNADO AIRCRAFT. I THOUGHT HOWEVER THAT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE AN ACCOUNT OF MY IMPRESSIONS.

~~SEARCHED~~ T6/8/81

MY RECEPTION COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE CORDIAL. THE SAUDIS WERE AT PAINS TO MAKE ME WELCOME. THE ATMOSPHERE OF OUR TALKS WAS EASY AND RELAXED.

PREDICTABLY THE SAUDIS URGED UPON ME THE NEED FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TO RECOGNISE THE PLO AND THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. THE PALESTINE ISSUE WAS FOR THEM THE TOP PRIORITY WITH THE SOVIET THREAT, WHICH THEY ACKNOWLEDGE, AND INTER-ARAB DIFFERENCES, SOME WAY BEHIND.

MY REPLY WAS THAT WE DO RECOGNISE THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIANS TO SELF-DETERMINATION. THIS WAS NOT IN DOUBT. BUT THERE HAD TO BE A COUNTER-PART. AT PRESENT THE PALESTINIANS WERE COMMITTED IN THEIR COVENANT TO THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. WE BELIEVED THAT THE PALESTINIANS MUST RECOGNISE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST BEHIND SECURE BORDERS.

I URGED THE SAUDIS TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE PALESTINIANS TO BRING ABOUT SUCH RECOGNITION. THE SAUDIS ARGUED THAT WHILE THEY OF COURSE ACCEPTED THE FACT OF ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE IN THE REGION, THEY COULD ONLY EXPECT THE PALESTINIANS TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF RECOGNITION WHEN THE ISRAELIS RECOGNISED THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIANS TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND AND ACCEPTED THAT JERUSALEM SHOULD BE RESTORED TO ITS PRE-1967 STATE.

DESPITE THEIR FIRM LINE, I SENSED SOME FLEXIBILITY IN SAUDI THINKING. IN A SEPARATE DISCUSSION, THE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD DOUGLAS HURD THAT IT WAS UP TO THE PALESTINIANS TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. HE HINTED THAT THE PALESTINIANS MIGHT POSSIBLY BE PREPARED TO MOVE IF THE COMMUNITY COULD MAKE SOME GESTURE TOWARDS THEM.

I DO NOT WANT TO BUILD TOO MUCH ON THIS. BUT I BELIEVE THAT COLLECTIVELY AND INDIVIDUALLY WE SHOULD USE ALL OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE ARABS TO TRY AND BRING ABOUT SOME MOVE BY THE PALESTINIANS, PERHAPS IN THE FORM OF A PUBLIC STATEMENT. SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE TO BE COUCHED IN CONDITIONAL TERMS, EG IF ISRAEL WERE TO AGREE TO WITHDRAW FROM TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967, THEN THE PLO WOULD BE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT ON THE BASIS OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS AND SECURE BORDERS FOR ISRAEL AND INDEED FOR ALL STATES IN THE AREA.

I HOPE YOU WILL FEEL ABLE TO URGE THE CASE FOR A MOVE ON THESE LINES. I AM INCREASINGLY CONVINCED THAT ONLY IF THE PALESTINIANS ARE PREPARED TO MAKE SOME SUCH GESTURE WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO GIVE THE AMERICANS AND OURSELVES WHAT WE NEED TO BRING ABOUT A PARALLEL MOVE BY ISRAEL.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT. I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR IMPRESSIONS.

MARGARET THATCHER

25 APRIL 1981

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