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RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SECRETARY  
GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, DR. KURT WALDHEIM, IN NEW YORK ON  
28 FEBRUARY 1981 AT 1700 HOURS

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Present:

Prime Minister

Dr. Waldheim

Sir Anthony Parsons

Mr. Urquhart

Mr. Bullard

Mr. Alexander

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Dr. Waldheim said that the world seemed to him to be in a bad shape. It would take some time to improve things. Much would depend on the line taken by President Reagan and it had therefore been a good thing that the Prime Minister had been able to see him so early in his term of office. It was essential to re-establish a working relationship between East and West. To say this was not to show weakness but merely to recognise how much depended on the two super powers. President Brezhnev's speech earlier in the week had been interesting. Very similar speeches had been made by President Brezhnev early on in the lives of previous US Administrations. It was intended to signal the Soviet desire to work with the Americans. The Prime Minister agreed about the need for a working relationship but said that it was important that the West should not make unrequited concessions simply to secure an improvement in relations. The Americans would study President Brezhnev's speech carefully. No doubt there would be a bilateral summit eventually. But it would be important not to rush into this. The Americans would have to decide their attitude to SALT first. If there was to be a Summit it would need to be one which would produce results and was therefore carefully prepared. Dr. Waldheim agreed with the last point.

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Namibia

Dr. Waldheim said there was much concern in the United Nations about the failure of the PIM in Geneva. A very dangerous situation now existed. There would be repercussions throughout black Africa if South Africa remained unyielding. Their concern about Namibia might well be misplaced. As could be seen in Zimbabwe, it would not follow from a solution in Namibia that the whole area would turn communist. The Prime Minister said that she was concerned lest a solution in Namibia should merely result in the "chorus" turning against South Africa itself. Mr. Urquhart said that the Front Line States argued the contrary. They professed to regard the problems of Namibia and South Africa as entirely different. Sir A. Parsons said that there was a chance that if the Namibian problem was resolved, the Africans would pause for thought. They knew that South Africa was qualitatively different. It was not inevitable that they would simply roll on from one problem to the next. Dr. Waldheim said that at the least a solution in Namibia would buy time. The Prime Minister said that she was not disputing the need to find a solution in Namibia. Indeed she regarded it as only a matter of time before an answer was found. But she was concerned about what would follow.

The Prime Minister asked about the situation in Angola. Was there any chance of getting the Cubans out. Dr. Waldheim said that the Angolans felt they needed the Cubans (whom Andrew Young had once described as "stabilizing the situation" in the country). Only the civilian Cubans had the know-how to keep the economy running. If peace were to return they could be replaced by Western experts. President Neto had given him the impression he did not like having them in the country. But as long as the war continued, they relied on them. A solution in Namibia would have a very positive effect.

As regards the situation at the United Nations, Dr. Waldheim said that some difficult debates were in prospect. The OAU were looking for a meeting of the Security Council in mid April. They would probably seek Chapter VII action then. If they did not get it they would probably go for a special session of the

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General Assembly. Sir A. Parsons said that it was clear that the sensible thing for the Africans to do would be to await the South African elections on 27 April and the formulation of a clear policy by the new American Administration. However advice to this effect was ignored. Dr. Waldheim commented that the Africans had given up the idea of a March meeting and had moderated their demands somewhat. The Prime Minister said that clearly the South Africans would do nothing before their elections. If the Africans insisted on pushing ahead in the United Nations, the only effect would be to ensure the hostility of American public opinion. Dr. Waldheim said that he would be counselling patience.

#### Afghanistan

Dr. Waldheim said that he had appointed Senor De Cuellar to follow up the two General Assembly resolutions. However the Russians had not yet accepted that the UN had a role. The Pakistanis, who had been criticised by e.g. Mr. Chatti for being too flexible, were feeling isolated. The Iranians would only participate in the discussions if the guerillas were to be represented. A Pakistani representative was at present in Tehran for discussions. These would probably prove unsuccessful. Dr. Waldheim's own view was that the Russians probably wanted to withdraw but would only do so in a negotiating process which was acceptable to them.

#### El Salvador

The Prime Minister said that it was clear to her from her talks in Washington that the Americans were preoccupied with the situation in El Salvador. The question was how to stop support reaching the guerillas. No-one defended what was being done in the country by either side but it was essential that the people should be left to sort out their own problems.

#### Middle East

Dr. Waldheim said that he had been reading the statements made by the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on the Arab/Israel dispute. He thought that the British

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Government's position was a good one. The Palestinians were the key factor. It was clear that they would have to be associated with any negotiations. The Prime Minister said that Palestinian involvement could go no further than association with the negotiations. It was a pity that there was no other organisation to represent the Palestinians. She recalled that King Hussein and his then Prime Minister Sharif Sharaf had discussed with President Carter the possibility of encouraging the formation of another Palestinian organisation and had regretted that the attitude of the Israeli Government prevented this. The need to make the creation of a new organisation possible remained. Meanwhile it was necessary to "use a long spoon" when dealing with the PLO. Dr. Waldheim commented that he understood that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had acknowledged the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians. Mr. Bullard said that Lord Carrington appeared to have been misreported. His position was that the PLO was considered by many Palestinians to be their representative.

Dr. Waldheim said that without a solution to the Arab/Israel dispute there could be no overall settlement in the Middle East. He hoped that the Europeans would continue to play a helpful role. He had much welcomed the Venice initiative. The Prime Minister said that there would be no solution to the Arab/Israel dispute unless all the Arab countries were associated with it. As a first step it was necessary to obtain more precision about the meaning of the words used by those involved. The search for a settlement so far had been bedevilled by vagueness e.g. in Resolution 242. This was the purpose of the exploration initiated at Venice. Sir Anthony Parsons said that he agreed with the Prime Minister about Resolution 242. He had thought its ambiguity wrong at the time it had been adopted. It was now necessary to have more clarity.

As regards the content of a possible agreement the Prime Minister said that it was not easy to see the way ahead. She did not think that Hussein would want the Palestinians within his own borders. On the other hand she was wary of an independent Palestinian state. She did not think it would be possible to find a solution without the United States and the new Administration

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had not yet made up their minds how to proceed. Mr. Peres' ideas would probably prove impractical. Moreover, he was unlikely to yield up in areas vital to Israeli security. Sir A. Parsons said that one useful thing Mr. Peres could do would be to allow the Palestinians to set up an organisation separate from the PLO. The Prime Minister agreed but added that <sup>however</sup> it was achieved, it would be essential for Israel to have totally secure borders. Mr. Bullard noted that this to some extent depended on whether Israel's neighbours were to be friends or enemies. The Prime Minister said that it would be a long time before Israel could trust any of them. However Mr. Peres did recognise that something would have to be done. In the longer run she was doubtful whether even a solution of the Palestinian problem would buy stability in the area as a whole. Dr. Waldheim said that he thought the creation of a homeland for the Palestinians would be an enormously important psychological step.

#### UNIFIL

Dr. Waldheim referred to the problems which UNIFIL was having with the Palestinians in the area where it was deployed. He sometimes thought that it would be better to withdraw the UN presence. However this would merely open the way for a direct confrontation between Israel and Syria. Mr. Urquhart said that the Israeli decision to opt for pre-emptive action had been misguided and had put the United Nations in a difficult position.

#### UNWRA

Dr. Waldheim described the financial difficulties being experienced by UNWRA and asked for the Prime Minister's help. The Prime Minister was non-committal.

The meeting ended at 1745.

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