



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Very reluctantly
will attend
and absorb
takes No
Yes. I like the
be totally ineffective
disastrous. I understand an observer
part in the conference - therefore the
with needs REVISING. Prime Minister:

25 August, 1983

Dear Tim,

Do you agree with this
advice that the UK should
attend the conference as an observer?

International Conference on the Question of Palestine 25/8

John Coles wrote to Brian Fall on 26 July recording the Prime Minister's agreement that we should work for a common decision among the Ten that we should attend the above conference, which opens in Geneva on 29 August, purely as observers, and that we should reserve the right to reconsider our position if it became clear that the Ten were likely to be badly split.

Although we have had reservations about the way in which this conference has been prepared, it has now developed into a major international event under UN auspices, and will be opened by the UN Secretary-General. There is no ideal answer to the problem of attendance. The arguments on both sides were set out in my letter of 7 June and Brian Fall's letter of 25 July.

Following intensive consultations in the Ten it has emerged that a consensus on participation will not be possible. The Greeks are firmly set on attending as full participants. The Germans will not attend at all. Most of the other member states intend to participate as observers, although the Danes and Belgians are still un-decided between non-attendance and observer status. (The Americans are of course not attending in any capacity and have lobbied against our doing so).

If we decide to attend as observers there will therefore be at least six and possibly eight of the Ten sharing the same approach. We would make a final effort to persuade the Danes and Belgians to rally to the majority and would in any case be in respectable company. (I should add that the German decision to stay away has been influenced by Chancellor Kohl's forthcoming visit to Israel). We have worked to achieve the greatest degree of consensus possible among the Ten; our other like-minded partners in the Ten would feel let down if we now decided not to attend.

In the absence of Sir G Howe, Mr Luce believes that it would be right for the UK to attend this conference as an observer and proposes to instruct our Mission in Geneva in

/the

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/ the terms of the attached draft telegram. I would be grateful if you would let me know whether the Prime Minister is content. The telegram needs to be despatched as soon as possible, in view of the shortness of time before the conference opens.

The Israelis and their friends in this country have strongly urged us not to attend the conference and would be critical of a decision to participate even as observers. The Arabs (including the Egyptians) have urged us to go. The draft telegram sets out an explanation for our decision. In response to criticism we could if necessary add that our presence at the conference may serve to encourage those Arab moderates and others who are willing to use it as an opportunity for constructive thinking. At the same time we realise that the outcome is unlikely to advance the peace process: that is in part why we decided to attend only as observers.

Yours ever

John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

T Flesher Esq
10 Downing Street

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OUT TELEGRAM

Classification and Caveats
RESTRICTED

Precedence/Deskby
PRIORITY

1 ZCZC

2 GRS

3 RESTRICTED

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6 FM FCO 241745Z AUG 83

7 TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA

8 TELEGRAM NUMBER

9 AND TO UKMIS NEW YORK

10 YOUR TELNO 338 AND TELECOM LONG/MILES:

11 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE.

12 1. Please now inform the Conference Secretariat and UKMIS
13 NEW YORK inform the UN Secretariat that we shall be
14 represented by you as an observer. You may as discussed add
15 two members of the Chancery to the list of UK ~~delegates~~ ^{observers}

16 2. The UK ^{group} ~~delegation~~ should try to be present at all the more
17 important meetings of the Conference but should not become
18 actively involved ~~in lobbying about or drafting of conference~~
19 ~~documents.~~ It is not our intention that the UK delegation
20 should make any statement of policy ~~but we shall wish to keep~~
21 closely in step throughout with other members of the Ten
22 represented by observers ~~and could reconsider this point if~~
23 ~~necessary.~~

24 3. If asked about the reasons for our decision you should draw
25 as necessary on the following: We remain committed to the

NNNN ends telegram		BLANK	Catchword search	
File number		Dept NENAD	Distribution	
Drafted by (Block capitals) P M NIXON			Limited NENAD CABINET OFFICE	
Telephone number 233 6030			MED UND	
Authorised for despatch			ECD(E) SIR J BULLARD	
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OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

Classification and Caveats
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PRIORITY

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2 search for a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the
3 Arab/Israeli dispute. In discussion in the UN General Assembly
4 about the work of the preparatory committee for the
5 Conference we and our EC partners have consistently expressed
6 reservations about the contribution which it could make to the
7 solution of this complex problem. For this reason we and a
8 number of our partners in - Ten have decided not to participate
9 fully. Nevertheless we believe it would be wrong not to be
10 represented when we have long been urging the parties to the
11 dispute to seek a solution through peaceful negotiations.

*but do attend
as observers
only*

13 HOWE

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Catchword

M/East,
Situation,
P711

25 AUG 1983

