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THE PRIME MINISTER

18 April 1988

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T50/88.

Dear Prime Minister,

In response to your oral message conveyed through Mr. Capsis on 22 March, I wanted to let you have a brief account of my visit to Turkey last week during which I had a good talk with Prime Minister Ozal about Cyprus. I have also, as you will know, met President Vassiliou.

My overall impression is that the prospects for progress on Cyprus are rather brighter now than a few months ago. It would be rash to be over-optimistic. But I was impressed by President Vassiliou's readiness to negotiate with the Turkish Cypriot leadership and by Mr. Ozal's commitment to facilitating the search for a solution. The terms of that solution must be for the two sides in Cyprus to work out between them, and I have encouraged President Vassiliou to to meet Mr. Denktash under the United Nations Secretary-General's auspices without preconditions. But the parties directly concerned will also need some outside help and the progress which you and Mr. Ozal have made in Davos and Brussels in establishing a new basis for relations between Greece and Turkey should have a very positive influence.

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I considered very carefully your proposal that I should persuade Mr. Ozal of the need to fix a timetable for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from northern Cyprus. But frankly I do not believe that it is reasonable or realistic to expect the Turks and the Turkish Cypriots to give a commitment on this before the two sides on the island sit down to negotiate. It would be far better to get negotiations started on a pragmatic basis, and then see what might be possible after confidence has been established. I suggested both to President Vassiliou and to Mr. Ozal that the aim of such negotiations should be expressed as agreement on a unified Cyprus with a federal constitution, in which the presence of foreign troops would eventually be unnecessary.

I also noted what you said about the need for Mr. Ozal to meet President Vassiliou. I accept that such a meeting would be helpful in due course. But the first priority must be to get President Vassilou and Mr. Denktash to begin negotiations under UN auspices as soon as possible. Once this has been achieved, I see merit in Mr. Ozal's idea of moving on to a quadripartite meeting involving Greece and Turkey, as well as the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus. It is for you to judge the potential usefulness of such a meeting. But I urge you not to rule it out.

I would prefer to keep the content of this message confidential between us, although I have no objection to your making it known that I had sent you a personal message to brief you on my talks with the Cypriot and Turkish leaders. I have also written to President Vassiliou to inform him of my talks with Mr. Ozal. I should of course be most interested to learn your own further thoughts on the way ahead over Cyprus.

Finally, I was concerned to hear that Greece has so far been unable to join other Community members in agreeing a common position for the EC/Turkey Association Council on 25 April. There will of course be ample opportunity to raise specific political issues with the Turkish side over dinner

in the usual way. But there is important business to be done in the Association Council itself, and it would be badly received in this country and I believe more widely if progress was to be blocked on extraneous grounds.

Yours sincerely

Papandreou

His Excellency Mr. Andreas Papandreou