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Subject as USA: May 1979  
Visit to UK by Mr Vance

PARTIAL RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE  
US SECRETARY OF STATE, MR. CYRUS VANCE, AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON  
THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY AT 2000 HOURS

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The Prime Minister asked Mr. Vance about the stage which had been reached in the negotiations for the release of the US hostages. Mr. Vance said that an understanding had been reached with the Iranian Government. The membership of a Commission which would investigate the Shah's period in office had been agreed. It would work in private. It would go to Tehran almost at once. Whilst there it would listen to evidence produced by the Iranian Government. It would meet the hostages to establish that they were alive and in good health. These preliminary activities would last about a week following which it would draft a preliminary document.

When the document was complete, the Commission would meet the Revolutionary Council in Tehran and tell them that before the document could be taken back to New York, the hostages would have to be handed over to the custody of the Iranian Government and lodged either in a hospital or in the foreign ministry with Mr. Laingen. The Commission would not return to New York until the hostages had been handed over.

Once the hostages had been handed over, the Commission would return to New York and communicate the preliminary document to the Secretary General. It would be published within two days. The hostages would be released by the Iranian Government on the day that the document was published. The American Government were therefore hoping that the hostages might be released within about two weeks. Of course there was a risk of slippage but in any case the hostages should be free long before the end of March.

/Mr. Vance said

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Mr. Vance said that he had two worries about the arrangements that he had described:-

a) He was still not sure that the Iranian Government had the authority to secure the release of the hostages from the students. He had repeatedly tried to secure from the Iranians a detailed account of how they would deal with the students but had so far failed to get any satisfaction; and

b) One member of the US Embassy staff seemed to be unaccounted for. No letters or other communication had been received from him. Since he was a particularly active man and was known to have resented his imprisonment particularly strongly, there was concern lest he had tried to escape and had been killed in doing so. If it turned out that he was dead, the American Government would be placed in a position of acute difficulty. (Mr. Vance laid great stress on his wish that knowledge of this problem should be limited to the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary).

*And*  
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22 February 1980

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