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Top copy filed on Italy (Jan 80) 'Visit of Cossiga'

RECORD OF A MEETING, IN PLENARY SESSION, BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, SIGNOR COSSIGA, AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON 30 JANUARY 1980 AT 1115 HOURS

Present

Prime Minister	Signor Cossiga
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Signor Ruffini
Lord Privy Seal	HE Signor Cagiati
Sir Robert Armstrong	Signor Gardini
Sir Michael Palliser	Signor Squillante
Sir Ronald Arculus	Signor Bucci
Sir Michael Franklin	Signor Ruggiero
Mr. C.W. Whitmore	Signor Bottiglieri
Mr. Julian Bullard	Signor Santarelli
Mr. David Hannay	Signor Berlinguer
Mr. Bernard Ingham	Signor Lcy
Mr. Michael Alexander	Signor Masala
Mr. David Gladstone	Signor Santini
	Signor Ortona

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The Prime Minister said that in the restricted session, most time had been spent on the Community Budget. Signor Cossiga had said he would try to resolve the problem as President. There had been no time for discussion of world affairs and she would be interested in an account of Signor Cossiga's visit to Washington.

Signor Cossiga said he had thought it important as President of the Community to accept promptly the invitation from Washington, although he had stressed that he had no mandate from the Nine. Apart from stressing the importance of a close military relationship as a principal component in US/Italian relations, he had told President Carter that Italian foreign policy rested on three institutional bases: the Atlantic Alliance, the European Community and US/Italian relations. These three were inextricably linked. He had gone on to explain that Italian foreign policy had a security and a detente component. The former embraced the security of the West as a whole and not

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just Italy; the latter was an essential component in the political and military balance between East and West. Detente was an essential instrument for achieving a more secure peace, but it was not an umbrella under which the Soviet Union could extend its influence. A political and military balance in Europe was an essential component of detente. Moreover, detente was indivisible: there could be no global detente if it did not hold in each separate region of the world. If the process was now temporarily suspended, that was not the fault of the West. The US and Europe had conducted an honest policy of detente.

The Prime Minister said she agreed with the general framework set out by Signor Cossiga in every particular. Signor Cossiga said that apart from a short spell at the time of Mussolini, the United Kingdom and Italy had been in agreement since 1848.

Signor Cossiga said he had told President Carter that there was a general crisis against the background of which individual problems had to be judged. The common thread which linked the problem areas in the world (S.E. Asia, Caribbean, Middle East, Afghanistan) was Soviet involvement in each of them. What was the Soviet Union seeking? Why had it invaded Afghanistan when that country was already under its political control? The object had presumably been to send a message to the countries of the region, to the United States and to the West generally, that the Soviet Union was ready to resort to military force in pursuit of its interests. Perhaps there were internal reasons, too. He thought that Afghanistan was also linked to the TNF modernisation issue. He did not understand why Brezhnev in his East Berlin speech had claimed that there was balance between East and West. Perhaps in Soviet eyes an underlying imbalance (in their favour) in Europe was now an integral part of a balance in the world as a whole. If so, it implied that, as far as the Russians were concerned, Western Europe did not matter. It was a pawn, a marginal factor in the relationship with the United States. The less

/Europe

Europe mattered the happier the Russians were. The invasion of Afghanistan, and the consequent threat to Western oil supplies, could be seen as promoting the basic imbalance in Europe.

The Prime Minister interjected that the United States must also be affected: the West as a whole would be in a hopeless position to fight without oil.

Signor Cossiga said that the invasion of Afghanistan did not necessarily mean that the Soviet Union wished to interrupt detente. But they certainly intended to exploit the situation to gain advantages elsewhere. He had emphasised to President Carter that, whereas on the Eastern side only the Soviet Union conceived and executed policy, in the West there was more than one. It was impossible to ignore Western European interests. In Europe there was a strand of neutralist thought, as the TNF debate had shown. Therefore, it was essential for the United States and Western Europe to forge a unified strategy. This would help to prevent Europe becoming more neutralist. Moreover, once there was such a strategy, Europe could, where appropriate, pursue different tactics. There were areas where Western Europe was better equipped than the United States. He instanced relations with Iran, Iraq and the PLO. It was not the United States that had solved the Rhodesia problem. Some European countries had better relations with states in South America than did the USA. However, the key point was that it was dangerous for each country to pursue its own policy except in the context of a common strategy. History showed that wars broke out owing to the mistaken assessments of others. Would Hitler have started World War II had he foreseen that the United States and Britain would unite against him? The Soviet Union must be clear about the closeness of links between Europe and the USA. On the other hand, it was also very important not to arouse unnecessary fears in the Soviet Union. All totalitarian states feared attack and encirclement.

/Signor Cossiga

Signor Cossiga said he had told President Carter that one must have a global strategy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. One could not take a fresh initiative every day without giving the impression of an absence of coherent strategy. The aims of that strategy must be firstly to convince the Soviet Union that the West would maintain its own security, and secondly to find a way of continuing detente. The alternative to detente was war or the cold war, and he doubted whether Europe was ready for either. The West had invested much in detente: many links had been created between East and West. Some progress had been made. But detente separated from security was capitulation. Detente had to offer advantages to both sides. It could be used by the West to expose Soviet aims to the Third World: by contrast, if Europe abandoned detente, this would tend to increase Soviet influence in the Third World. In MBFR and CSCE the Soviet Union would be on the defensive following Afghanistan, and ^{might} thus provide political capital which could be put to good use in e.g. Italy, the FRG and the Netherlands.

Signor Cossiga said he had therefore proposed to President Carter that there should be a high level Western meeting to evaluate the situation. A global strategy could not be sustained if the Europeans were not associated with its formulation and execution. Such a high level meeting would be a signal to the Soviet Union ^{they would not divide Europe and the US.} that/President Carter had favoured bringing forward the Venice Summit. Signor Cossiga thought that the inclusion of Japan would enhance Soviet fears of encirclement. He therefore favoured a meeting of the Six.

The Prime Minister asked whether Signor Cossiga thought that the Western response to Afghanistan had been adequate. The Soviet Union was watching to see whether the Europeans supported the United States with action.

Signor Cossiga thought the response had not been adequate because it was not united. In his view, the unity of the response was more important than the level.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister asked what more could be done? The British Government had taken and announced a number of measures. Signor Cossiga said that he had cancelled the Ivanov mission to Italy though this was contrary to Italian economic interests. However, the day after he had conveyed his decision to Ivanov, he had visited France. The Prime Minister said that Gromyko would not be coming to Britain.

Signor Cossiga said that Italy was doing its bit but the Soviet Union would be bound to see disunity in the varying Western responses. The United States had made a mistake in raising the Olympics issue because sporting concerns were not prepared to see sport mixed with politics. The Prime Minister said HMG had supported the US administration on this issue because if one was cutting off cultural contacts it was only logical to include sport.

Lord Carrington said that it was striking that the Nine Foreign Ministers had not met immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan because of Christmas. He would be discussing ways of preventing this happening again at the political cooperation meetings the following week. They would also discuss the Italian Presidency's ideas. But he thought it a mistake to set up high level meetings without knowing what one wished to achieve. The ground must be carefully prepared.

The Prime Minister said that a system was needed which would cope with any emergency. Asked by Signor Cossiga how one could coordinate European and American views, Lord Carrington said this could best be done in NATO. He saw a danger of establishing too many fora.

Signor Ruffini said that the USA sometimes took measures, announced them, and expected their allies to follow. Some form of consultation machinery was needed to ensure that this did not happen.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister suggested that the press should be told that the Heads of Government had discussed the Community Budget together with the problem of responding quickly and in concert with the USA to world crises. They could also say that they had reviewed world problems.

The discussion ended at 1200.

AmS

30 January 1980