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NOTE of a Meeting at the Hotel Cipriani, Venice  
on Monday 23 June 1980 at 7. 30 am

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PRESENT

Sir Robert Armstrong (United Kingdom)  
Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski (United States)  
Herr Bernd von Staden (Federal Republic of Germany)  
Monsieur Jacques Wahl (France)

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Dr Brzezinski started the discussion by telling us how he had been invited to go and hear Mass in the Pope's private chapel in the Vatican three days before. After the Pope had said Mass, he had invited Dr Brzezinski to stay for breakfast. He then invited Dr Brzezinski to return later in the day. When Dr Brzezinski said he could not do so, the Pope invited him to continue their talk there and then. Dr Brzezinski said that he had an appointment to see the Sistine Chapel. The Pope told Dr Brzezinski not to mind about that, and in the end Dr Brzezinski talked with the Pope through the morning, had lunch with him, and was then given by the Pope a personally conducted visit to the Sistine Chapel. The proceedings were conducted entirely in Polish, and Dr Brzezinski was clearly extremely impressed by the Pope's qualities, as well as flattered by the attention which he had received.

Afghanistan

Dr Brzezinski then asked us for our views about Soviet intentions on withdrawal from Afghanistan. Monsieur Wahl embarked on a long and defensively worded account of dealings with the Russians over President Giscard's meeting with Mr. Brezhnev in Warsaw, in which he was concerned to emphasise that the President had made it clear that nothing less than total and permanent withdrawal of Soviet troops and a change of regime would be acceptable. He said that the Russians, including Mr. Brezhnev, had talked about the

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possibility of withdrawal based upon a political solution, but it was clear that the political solution they envisaged included the continuance of the Babrak Karmal regime and negotiations between it and the Governments of Iran and Pakistan. President Giscard had made it clear that not only was the Babrak Karmal regime unacceptable but any political solution would have to be more widely based than that.

Monsieur Wahl said that French intelligence suggested that recent Soviet troop arrivals in Afghanistan consisted of sections of divisions rather than complete divisions. This suggested that the Russians were creating nuclei in Afghanistan, on which they could base a rapid build up if the situation demanded it.

Herr von Staden said that the Germans were extremely sceptical about anything that was said by the Russians about withdrawal from Afghanistan this side of the Olympics. They were still keeping up pressure on the West German Government and West German athletes to change their minds about going to the Olympics. He was not personally optimistic about the prospects for Soviet withdrawal.

Sir Robert Armstrong said that the British Government knew of no reason for thinking that the Russians had any intention of early withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Dr Brzezinski did not suggest that the United States assessment was any different, and he threw out a number of ideas for keeping up the pressure on the Russians in Afghanistan.

- (a) It would be important to keep up the strength of feeling on Afghanistan in the Islamic countries in the Third World.

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- (b) The more that Western Press and television teams could go into Afghanistan and report what was going on there, the better.
- (c) The more that Western Governments talked about the Afghanistan opposition to the Russians as "forces of national liberation", the better.
- (d) Western Governments should have no truck with the Babrak Karmal regime, but he did not view with displeasure the attempts by the mission set up by the Islamic Conference to talk both to the regime and to representatives of the rebels, since that tended to put the two sides on the same plane and to legitimise the "freedom fighters" in the eyes of the rest of the world.
- (e) It was important to get results on the COCOM front.

Somalia

Dr Brzezinski said that the Americans were negotiating with the Government of Somalia for facilities at Berbera. President Barre was at present demanding conditions which the United States had no intention of fulfilling, but he would in the end come to an agreement without those conditions, if the United States wanted to have one. The question was whether it was right to persist. The United States wanted facilities at Berbera to complement those in Oman and Mombasa, but they feared that the presence of United States facilities in Berbera would encourage the Somalis to a more aggressive policy against the Ethiopians in the Ogaden. Fighting in the Ogaden could draw in not only Ethiopian but Cuban troops; and, if the Somalis got the worst of the fighting, the Somalis might call on the Americans for support, and the Cubans might be tempted to invade Somalia and advance on Berbera. There was thus a real danger of the Americans being drawn in to active confrontation with the Ethiopian and Cuban forces, if not with their Soviet allies, in that part of the world, if they went ahead with facilities in Berbera.

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In the discussion that followed there was general agreement that the stationing of United States facilities in Berbera would carry risks of destabilisation in the region - and in this context Sir Robert Armstrong reminded those present that there was a long standing border dispute between Somalia and Kenya, though that was quiet for the moment. On the other hand there was a possibility of considerable benefit: not only would United States facilities in Berbera be valuable for handling situations that might arise in the Gulf or elsewhere in South West Asia; it also seemed unlikely that the Cubans would risk a confrontation which might draw in United States forces in Somalia, and, if it became clear in the region that they were not prepared to risk such a confrontation, or if there was an exchange of fighting in which they came off worse, the West would gain considerably in terms of prestige and influence in that region of Africa, and the Soviets would correspondingly lose it. To sum up the conclusion of the discussion, the stationing of United States facilities in Berbera could produce some immediate destabilisation in the region, but held out the prospect of longer term stability, provided that the United States held firm.

South East Asia

Dr. Brzezinski asked what interpretation the rest of us put on events in South East Asia; was this another area where the Russians were trying to bring pressure to bear upon the West? In discussion it was agreed that Russian support of Vietnamese activities in the area was consistent both with a policy of keeping up pressure on the West along "the arc of crisis" and with keeping up pressure on China.

Libya

Herr von Staden said that German intelligence suggested that the recent Soviet arms sales to Libya amounted to something like \$7.5 billion, twice the amount of their sales to India and significantly more than their sales to Syria. He

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asked how the Americans interpreted this: did they see a measure of "pre-positioning"?

Dr Brzezinski was unfamiliar with the figures. He said that one would need to know where the arms were placed and how they were stored and positioned, before one could interpret the purpose for which they might be intended. He agreed that they might be connected with President Qadhafi's antagonism against Egypt, or even with domestic political uncertainties in Libya, from which President Qadhafi might be wishing to divert attention by some form of external adventure. But he thought that it was also necessary to allow for the possibility that President Qadhafi's actions and decision allowed of no rational explanation: President Sadat, who knew him well, had said that he was an irrational man.

Middle East

Dr. Brzezinski said that it would be the intention of the United States Administration to play the Camp David process slow and low key through the United States election. He personally had welcomed the European Community initiative. If it had gone further, it would have been difficult for the United States not to condemn it; as it was, they had been able to avoid doing so, and he personally had thought it useful. If the European Community's emissary decided to go to Washington, he would be received for discussions. Dr Brzezinski asked who the Community's emissary was likely to be, and suggested that he should be somebody who was not regarded as pro-Arab. The rest of us said that it should be assumed that the emissary would be the President of the Council of Ministers for the time being. This would, from 1st July, be the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Mr Gaston Thorn. It was regrettable that during this period the Foreign Minister of the smallest country in the Community

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would be in the chair, and he might need to be supported by one or two other political colleagues from other countries in the Community.

Dr Brzezinski said that King Hussein was not now objecting to talks with Palestinian leaders, though it would be difficult for the United States to talk to the PLO as such, unless it recognised the right of Israel to exist within secure boundaries.

Dr Brzezinski said that he thought that the political situation in Israel was beginning to change, and to move more in favour of a more accommodating attitude in relation to the Arab world generally and the Palestinians in particular. He had interpreted the killing of the Arab mayors as a sign that the hard men thought that they were losing influence and control and needed to proceed to desperate measures to restore their prestige and try and prop up their position. Dr Brzezinski did not, however, see any prospect of an early fall of the Begin Government, and said that the United States Government were not working to bring that about: though they had many contacts with the opposition in Israel, it was on the whole his view that Begin would be more trouble in opposition than in power. So far as the Americans were concerned, he had not outlived his usefulness.

Dr Brzezinski said American support for Israel was less strong than it had been. But the Jewish community remained an important force to be reckoned with in American politics, and presented a major problem for the Administration in this election year: both Governor Reagan and Senator Kennedy were making statements which sought to detach Jewish supporters from President Carter.

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There was general agreement that it was desirable to continue quadripartite discussion and co-ordination at all levels. The meetings of political directors and the meetings of ambassadors in Washington were both useful, and should be continued. Meetings between the four "Personal Representatives" of the kind now in progress were no substitute for that process. Nonetheless they had proved useful. The Heads of State and Government could not themselves meet without publicity and the creation of expectations; and, though Foreign Ministers met, and should continue to meet when they could, some of the same problems arose. The meetings of the four "Personal Representatives" provided a means of contact between people close to the Heads of State and Government concerned and had proved to be useful. It was agreed that the four should meet regularly - say, twice or three times a year - usually in Europe - and could be prepared to meet at short notice, if a particular situation suggested that the opportunity might be useful. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he would welcome his colleagues in London after the summer break, in the latter part of September or early October.

Cabinet Office

24 June 1980