

SUBJECT

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY ON SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 1981
AT 1045 HOURS

PM: Hello Peter.

FCS: Hello. You got Reagan's message?

PM: Yes, it was so vague I didn't think it was worth reading last night when it came in about half eleven.

FCS: I haven't seen it I'm afraid. I've had it read to me.

PM: There's nothing in it.

FCS: Yes, it's sort of cataclysmic isn't it.

PM: He says he's sending someone over to talk about what we can do between us to tackle this situation. But it's simply an internal situation.

FCS: He was coming anyway you realise.

PM: Oh, was he?

FCS: Yes. There's a quadripartite meeting in London on Tuesday. This has been set up for at least a week.

PM: Well, what ... the time has come to avert this tragedy, measures we can take now ... of Soviet intervention.

FCS: Haig's message, which came in this morning, is not really so much more specific either.

PM: Well, it just says Secretary Haig is in touch with your Foreign Minister about developing a specific set of measures. Now this came in about quarter past eleven last night and I got on to our Duty Clerk to see your Resident Duty Clerk to see if you had anything. But quite honestly it didn't look to me that urgent to telephone you last night. But I doubt very much whether they have

/ any proposals

any proposals.

FCS: Well, what Haig says is that Eagleburger is coming over with proposals and would we please have our proposals ready. What I suspect, I may be quite wrong, but what I suspect is that the Americans are moving, he's talking about implementing some of the measures which we had all agreed in NATO in the case of Soviet intervention. And I think they may be moving to a situation in which they're going to take it out on the Russians. That's just a guess because my message consists of a lot of stuff about nobody can suppose that the Russians aren't in it too.

PM: Well, it seems a bit absurd if the Russians aren't actually in the front line of it to take it out on them when they're not.

FCS: Well, it might be a bit unwise too.

PM: Yes.

FCS: However we've got to see about it ..

PM: It looks as if all the private information we've had has been more and more concerned. But it really is, in a sense, it's the new way of Czechoslovakian/Hungary, crushing the first signs of freedom, isn't it.

FCS: Yes, but when one sits down and thinks about it, I mean what is there we can do. There's nothing we can do to help the wretched people. We can, I suppose, say nasty things, well I suppose we've got to do that.

PM: I think the only thing you can say, Peter, is look if you go back to the pre-military circumstances in Poland we will send in more food and we'll reschedule debts and we'll put an aid programme. If you don't we won't.

FCS: I think that's the way we're all moving. I'm sure that's right.

PM: And that, I think, is the only thing we can do.

/ FCS:

FCS: One doesn't want to encourage them to think they are going to get help from us and then let them down and really incite them to have a fight. Because I don't think one is helping them in that way. I mean there are cries of how feeble you're being but it's quite easy to use hard words which encourage other people to go to their death.

PM: Yes, but you see everyone else has been using hard words, harder than we have.

FCS: I used some fairly hard words in Strasbourg.

PM: Yes, but the press and commentators are now on to it and what are you going to do. But the German banks are pretty well exposed aren't they already.

FCS: Very well exposed. The other thing that's happened is that the Americans have once again gone and made a mess of it. And let it be known that there's a quadripartite meeting in London.

PM: Well this of course is appalling.

FCS: And the Italians are now up in arms which accounts for this thing you heard in the news this morning about people going over all over Europe. Wretched Eagleburger is now going to go to Rome.

PM: Well, he would have reason to go to Rome because of this terrible kidnapping of the general.

FCS: Yes, but on the Polish thing. And the difficulty is going to be that I think there's got to be a meeting in London and Eagleburger has more or less said that there wasn't. So I mean really if he says that and then there is - I said they can have Chevening so I suppose you can say it's not exactly London but it's a pretty weak excuse.

PM: Well, Peter, what's the point of going all the way down to Chevening if it's public?

FCS: Well it won't be as public as London.

/ PM:

PM: You might as well have Chequers.

FCS: Well the only thing you can say is that it wasn't in London. I mean that's the only thing. I mean Chevening is perfectly all right from that point of view. But I think the Italians are going to get very cross again.

PM: Well, so do it but it was very silly to let this ... particularly as we don't know whether anything can come out of it.

FCS: And we'd have to consult others as well.

PM: I mean you know what the tendency of these meeting is, you look at all roads and they are all closed.

FCS: That's right. I'm having a meeting in the Foreign Office first thing tomorrow morning about nine o'clock

PM: I think we've got to decide what we're going to do about .. you see the beef is going through for Christmas isn't it.

FCS: Yes, I think we want to leave that.

PM: I think everything goes through for Christmas, then we have to say look nothing else. Because it's getting through to a repressive regime.

FCS: Yes, but I think we also have to make up our minds .. there is a debate in the Commons on Tuesday, but I think we really ought to have a statement before we go away, don't you?

PM: Yes, so do I. But there will be a statement at the beginning of that debate surely?

FCS: Well there will be a speech. I just wondered whether we oughtn't to have one tomorrow perhaps.

PM: Look Peter, what have we got to say tomorrow.

FCS: Well we haven't got anything to say but if we don't say it we shall be blamed.

/ PM: It might

PM: It might be as well to have one tomorrow in preparation for the debate on Tuesday.

FCS: I mean we can say a sort of tougher statement tomorrow.

PM: Well we can say a tougher statement, we can say everything, I had quite a lot to give on Tuesday and get the right questions about what has gone through, what we're letting go through and then there's a great big gap and nothing further is going. ... if knowing there's a meeting of four of us we dash into a statement to say anything on Monday.

FCS: Well it would have to be provisional. The problem is you see the four won't actually meet until Parliament's up. Nothing will come out of it.

PM: Parliament will not be up until Wednesday night.

FCS: Oh, I thought it was up on Tuesday night. Well we might be able to do a statement on Wednesday.

PM: Yes, Wednesday is the adjournment day.

FCS: I thought Tuesday was.

PM: No, Tuesday we have a debate on Poland and the Golan and then on Wednesday we have adjournment day.

FCS: Can you have statements on adjournment day?

PM: Yes.

FCS: Well that might be the day to do it.

PM: Well I would think Tuesday Peter.

FCS: Well, they're not meeting, they won't have cooked anything up by the time..

PM: No, they won't.

/ FCS: On the

FCS: On the other hand it's too stupid to have a statement immediately after the debate on Tuesday. I don't think we can do that really. Anyway I'll think about it ..

PM: No, we'll think about it, what we've got to say. Certainly there is quite a lot of information to give about the stuff that's been going out over BBC External Services, and the planes etc to get our people out.

FCS: I just have a feeling we may have to do something on Monday.

PM: But there is quite a lot to say, Peter, on the logistic side that they don't know. I would have thought we ought advise our people to get out. You know our chaps have been in asking if our planes can land to get them out.

FCS: So far we've said anybody who wants to go, we would advise them to get out.

PM: Well I personally think we ought to advise them to get out. They're not going to be able to get proper food or anything. There are only about 500.

FCS: Yes, I don't know as a matter of fact what the Germans or the French are doing, do you?

PM: No. But they can go overland.

FCS: Well so could ours.

PM: Yes so could ours, I suppose.

FCS: But I think it's more difficult to go overland than by air.

PM: Yes. They are pouring into East Germany aren't they? And Czechoslovakia.

FCS: Anyway, what I will do is, I'll have a run down on all this at nine o'clock tomorrow morning then let you know. Shall I do that.

PM: Yes, OK. Bye.