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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY, SIGNOR ARNALDO FORLANI, AT THE VILLA MADAMA IN ROME ON 23 NOVEMBER 1980 AT 2000 HOURS

Present:

Prime Minister	Signor Arnaldo Forlani
Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary	Signor Emilio Colombo
Mr. Michael Alexander	Signor Sergio Berlinguer

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East/West Relations

Signor Forlani asked Signor Colombo to describe his recent visit to Moscow. Signor Colombo said that the climate had been extremely cordial. The Russians had made it clear that they wished to develop bilateral contacts with Western countries. They did not however wish to deal with Western groups e.g. the European Community - as such. Signor Colombo agreed with the Prime Minister that the Russians hoped to keep the West fragmented.

Signor Colombo had had five hours of talks with Mr. Gromyko and one and a half hours of talks with Mr. Brezhnev. Mr. Brezhnev was in good health. He had spent twenty minutes reading a prepared document and thereafter had participated actively in a lively discussion. Mr. Brezhnev had asked him to tell his colleagues in the West that the Russians wanted detente. He wanted better contacts with the West because of the opportunity it gave the Soviet Government to improve the living standards of their people. The Prime Minister asked whether Signor Colombo had accepted his hosts' line. Had he taxed them with the recent wave of oppression in the Soviet Union?

Signor Colombo said that he had concentrated on one problem: Afghanistan. Mr. Gromyko had replied on standard lines. Mr. Brezhnev had avoided giving any specific reply. They talked as though detente could be pursued quite separately from events in Afghanistan. They

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regarded the latter as a fait accompli. The Prime Minister commented that they wanted us to regard it in the same light.

Signor Colombo said that the Russians professed to be disappointed about progress in the various talks on disarmament. They had hoped for more from the talks in Geneva. They tended to explain the absence of progress by referring to the fact that we were now in a transitional period. Mr. Brezhnev hoped that the ratification of SALT II could be completed or at least that its main elements could be carried forward. The Russians were not inclined to pre-judge President Reagan's Administration. They had adopted a wait and see attitude.

Signor Colombo commented that he had been in Warsaw the day before his visit to Moscow. This had also been the day before the Polish Supreme Court's decision. He had told the Russians that the Italian Government had pursued a strict policy of non-interference in Polish affairs. They considered that this rule should be a rule for everybody. Interference by one state in the affairs of another was inconsistent with detente. Mr. Gromyko had agreed with him strongly and had said that the Polish problem was one for the Poles themselves to solve.

Middle East

Mr. Gromyko had also described the Iran/Iraq conflict as stupid and useless. In describing Soviet attitudes towards the conflict, Signor Colombo said that when the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq had visited Moscow recently he had been refused arms and spare parts despite the existence of a Treaty of Co-operation between Iraq and the Soviet Union. Soviet spokesmen had not denied the existence of the Treaty but had referred to the fact that their Friendship Treaty with Iran was of far longer standing. The Prime Minister said it would not be surprising if it turned out that the Russians were withholding arms from Iraq and offering them to Iran. Signor Colombo said that he thought that the Russians were hoping to increase their influence in Iran. It was noteworthy that the Tudeh Party were emerging more clearly as the only

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organised force in the midst of the increasing chaos in Iran. Soviet behaviour generally and in particular in the United Nations was consistent with a desire to keep their hands clean so that in due course they could intervene in Iran in support of the Tudeh Party. The only encouraging development was that as a result of the war with Iraq, the position of the army had been re-inforced.

Signor Colombo said that Britain and Italy would face a common problem if and when the hostages were released. What should they do about the spare parts which they would then be in a position to supply to Iran. The Prime Minister agreed that this was a difficult problem. She said that the British and Italian Governments should keep in very close touch. Signor Forlani agreed. He hoped that the release of the hostages might introduce an element of movement into the general situation and would thereby enable the conflict with Iraq to be ended.

The Prime Minister asked whether the Italians were still getting oil from Iraq. Signor Colombo said that they were. They had had an arrangement with the Iraqis for supply from other sources e.g. Saudi Arabia in the event of an interruption of supply. But the Iraqis were now supplying oil at between 70 and 80% of the pre-war level. Italy had been getting about 20 million tonnes a year i.e. about 20% of their total supply. The Prime Minister said that this was good news. If the oil was flowing on this scale it would take pressure off the spot market. It served to confirm other evidence that damage to the oil installations, including the pipelines, was not as great as had been previously assumed.

The discussion ended with a general talk about the new US Administration and about some of the possible office-holders in it. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that it would be wrong to assume that Mr. Haig, who seemed to be the front-runner for the position of Secretary of State, was "just a General". He had run the White House for some time at the end of the Nixon presidency and was a very sophisticated man. The Prime Minister said that she doubted whether there would be much difference

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between a Reagan Presidency and a Carter Presidency on the great issues of peace and war. Both recognised the need to be as strong as the other side. Both would wish to try and establish a balance at a lower level. The conversation ended at 2030.

Paul

24 November 1980

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