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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE INDIAN MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT 1650 ON WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 1983 AT 10 DOWNING STREET

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Present:

Prime Minister	Mr. Narasimha Rao
Mr. Giffard	Dr. Seyid Muhammad
Mr. Coles	Shri Pushkar Johari

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The Prime Minister said that she had much enjoyed seeing Mrs. Gandhi in New York. She had appeared to be very well on that occasion. It was good to have Mr. Rao here now. How did he see the prospects for CHOGM?

Mr. Rao said that Grenada would be one of the most important issues. It need not necessarily take much time but it would be a significant item for discussion.

The Prime Minister said that at present the Commonwealth was split on the issue. We had been put in a difficult situation. We had first heard that the OECS was seeking intervention. Then the CARICOM had appeared to take a different view. The United States made precautionary naval movements but so did we with HMS Antrim. Our impression at that stage was that intervention was not being contemplated. At 7.15 p.m. on Monday 24 October she had received a message from President Reagan saying that he was thinking of intervening militarily and seeking her views. The drafting of a reply had been set in hand and it had been agreed to meet to consider the reply at 11.00 p.m. But before then we had received a further message from President Reagan saying that he proposed to intervene. We had then urgently despatched our views and she had telephoned the President personally. In essence we had been taken by surprise. We now gathered that United States consideration of intervention had changed decisively on Sunday 23 October.

Mr. Rao asked whether the Americans had taken their decision before consulting the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister confirmed

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that in effect they had. On 23 October, when a British representative had visited the Governor General of Grenada, the latter had given no hint that he was thinking of requesting military intervention. It now seemed that a preliminary decision in favour of intervention had been taken by the United States Government on the evening of 23 October. Whatever one thought of the American decision, and we had made our views public, the handling of the matter was very worrying. The lack of adequate consultation had given rise to very considerable concern. But we had to keep our relations with our major ally.

The Prime Minister asked Mr. Rao to regard all the foregoing as private between them.

How would the matter be introduced at CHOGM? Mr. Rao said that Mr. Ramphal had spoken to Mrs. Gandhi on 1 November about the possibility of Commonwealth intervention. Mrs. Gandhi had said nothing definite on that occasion but she had since told the press that so long as American troops were in Grenada it was more a matter for the United Nations than the Commonwealth. India had taken no position on the question of a Commonwealth force. The Prime Minister commented that if a force were contemplated, we should need to know its precise objectives and command structure and there would have to be a time limit on its duration. There were rather a lot of multi-national forces around and experience showed that they could delay solutions to problems. The Commonwealth would probably remain split on the propriety of the intervention. The fact was that there were quite a lot of Governments which we did not like; but it was necessary to think very carefully before intervening. Mr. Rao said that was precisely his view.

The Prime Minister asked when Mr. Rao thought the issue of Grenada would arise at CHOGM. Mr. Rao said that much depended on what happened between now and then. But the episode was causing great concern to everyone. If this kind of action was permitted, what was the meaning of sovereignty? The Indian Parliament would resume on 15 November and would "blast off" with this issue.

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/ Mr. Rao

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Mr. Rao said that he would be seeing Mr. Ramphal on 3 November. It would be helpful to know what his ideas were. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Ramphal had spoken of an "interim security force". The catchphrase "Commonwealth force" had been taken up by the media but there were difficulties in this idea, as illustrated by our experience with the MNF in the Lebanon. We would consider any request sympathetically but the force would have to meet the criteria which she had already outlined. Mr. Rao observed that even if a force had a clearly defined framework, the progress of events might invalidate the framework. Lebanon illustrated this. The Prime Minister said that we did not wish to get entangled in the situation. We were therefore considering whether, if we were asked, we could provide help with elections and police training. Mr. Rao remarked that it was a little odd that the idea of a Commonwealth force should emerge from the Commonwealth Secretariat before anyone had asked for one. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Trudeau had telephoned her about the possibility of a force. She had told him that the United States must be allowed to finish the job. It would be wrong for Commonwealth troops to go into Grenada while fighting was continuing. Mr. Rao said that the latest reports suggested that the American military presence would continue for some time.

Reverting to CHOGM, Mr. Rao said that, Grenada apart, he thought it would be a fairly routine meeting. It would be useful if Heads of Government could concentrate on international economic issues.

The Prime Minister asked whether the Indians had any recent information about Mr. Andropov. So far as we knew he had not been seen in public for over two months. Mr. Rao said that he seemed to recall that Andropov had made one public appearance recently. But it was clear that he would not be able to undertake arduous tours. No date had been fixed for his visit to India.

Turning to other details of her programme in India, the Prime Minister said that she would be arriving early on 22 November and would be available all that day to help smooth over problems if that was necessary. She understood that Mrs. Gandhi would be

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opening a textile exhibition at 0930 on 22 November; if Mrs. Gandhi personally very much wished to be accompanied, she would be glad to do this.

Mr. Rao said that he was delighted that the Prime Minister was to present a literary award during her visit. He himself was a member of the selection committee.

The Prime Minister said that we would all wish to concentrate on making CHOGM a great success. It would be important, especially in present circumstances, to give enough time to the problems of small islands, both those in the Caribbean and those in the Pacific. Mr. Rao said that when he had been to the regional CHOGM in Suva, there had been a strong move to prevent regional CHOGMs in the future but it had been agreed that at a time when new countries were trying to establish a national identity it was desirable that these meetings should continue.

The Prime Minister said that during our own election campaign various Sikh representatives had come to see her. She had told them that there was no point in their talking to her about their wish for a separatist state. It was not her business. Mr. Rao said that Sikh demands did not really present a major problem. It was more a matter of a scramble for power than a desire for a genuinely separatist state.

The Prime Minister then said that she hoped that there would be an opportunity for a bilateral meeting with Mrs. Gandhi when she was in Delhi. If Mrs. Gandhi wanted her to help in any particular way, she had only to let her know.

Mr. Rao then reverted to the situation in Grenada. He asked whether the Governor General acted under the British Government's instructions. The Prime Minister said that we issued no instructions at all to the Governor General. He was not responsible to us but to The Queen as Queen of Grenada. He had been appointed on the advice of the Government of Grenada and had full delegated powers. Following a series of detailed questions about the position of the Governor General, Mr. Rao

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asked whether it was true that he had signed a letter requesting intervention. The Prime Minister said that no request had been passed through us or through Her Majesty The Queen.

The discussion ended at 1745.

A.J.C.

2 November 1983

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

2 November 1983

*Dear Peter,*

Call on the Prime Minister by the Indian Minister  
for External Affairs

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Mr. Narasimha Rao called on the Prime  
Minister this afternoon. I enclose a record  
of the conversation.

*Yours ever*

*John Colson*

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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