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SUBJECT
RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY AT 1040 HOURS ON FRIDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER
AT No. 10 DOWNING STREET

Present

Prime Minister	Signor Craxi
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Signor Andreotti
Sir Julian Bullard	Signor Bottai
Lord Bridges	Signor Badini
Mr. Coles	Interpreter
Interpreter	

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary explained that he and Signor Andreotti had discussed in detail the situation in the Lebanon. Their views were very close. They had also both had exchanges recently with the French Foreign Minister.

He and Signor Andreotti had agreed to draw up a document setting out our common view on the Multi-National Force. This would be discussed with the French shortly and could then be used in presenting our position to other countries such as the United States, Lebanon and Syria.

The essence of our position was that the Multi-National Force was in Lebanon in order to support the Lebanese Government on the basis that that Government represented the majority of the Lebanese people. It should be made plain that that was the basis of our support. We were committed to maintaining the Force at its present level. But we would be concerned at any deeper involvement, for example at Suq Al-Gharb, which might lead to an escalation.

The Prime Minister said that it was necessary to be clear that support for the Lebanese Armed Forces did not mean that the MNF would become involved in fighting. Signor Andreotti said that military support for the Lebanese Armed Forces was excluded. It had also been agreed that the area of activity of the MNF should not be broadened - and Italy was circumscribed in this

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respect by the terms of the Italian Parliament's agreement to her participation in the Force.

There was a question of how the MNF should react in the case of massacres of the civilian population. It was clear that if these took place far away from the MNF's area it would not intervene but if there were such occurrences on the very border of the area it might be difficult for the MNF to detach itself. Signor Craxi said that the MNF would therefore have a humanitarian role. But it should be clear that it would not engage in military action unless it was attacked. Signor Andreotti said that if, for example, there was turmoil around a barracks occupied by the MNF the latter would try for humanitarian reasons to separate the opposing forces. The Prime Minister commented that the MNF's first move in such circumstances should surely be to call on the Lebanese Armed Forces. This was a very dangerous and difficult situation. The MNF did not have a single command structure. Not only the Syrians, with Soviet advisers, but Iran and Libya were involved and Israel might become involved. We must keep very closely in touch but could not fight someone else's battle.

Agreeing, Signor Craxi said that we were not in a position to do so. Our Forces were organised only for police action.

Passage deleted and retained under
Section 3(x). CWayland
11 April 2014

Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(u)
Wayland, 11 April 2014

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Signor Andreotti then described their earlier conversation on a possible United Nations Security Council Resolution on the Lebanon. On Iran/Iraq, Signor Andreotti said that Italy had expressed its concern to France about the supply of Super Etendard Aircraft to Iraq. The fear was that Iran would react by closing the Straits of Hormuz. Until now, Italy had managed to maintain reasonable relations with Iraq and Iran. The Italian military assessment was that neither was likely to win on the battlefield. All mediation efforts had failed and he did not know whether a European initiative was possible. The real problem was that both Khomeini and Saddam Hussein wanted the other to fall. Signor Craxi commented that perhaps only the Lord could solve this matter.

With regard to the forthcoming UNGA debate on the Falklands, the Prime Minister said that Italy had been very helpful at the time of the Argentine invasion. She knew that Italy had special problems but she would be very concerned unless those who could not join us in opposing the Argentine resolution did not at least abstain. It was intolerable that a country that had tried but failed to secure its aims through invasion should try to do so through the United Nations.

Signor Andreotti said that all condemned the Argentine aggression but a distinction could be made /^{between} unacceptable military action and an aspiration that Argentina would one day obtain the Falkland Islands. Argentina was trying to build up a democratic, civilian system. The UN vote would probably take place after the appointment of a civilian president. He wondered whether it would not be possible to have a text, different to the one now circulating, which said that the United Nations, without prejudice to the sovereignty question, asked Britain and Argentina to discuss the creation of a status of greater autonomy for the population of the Islands.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that it might be better if the discussion of this matter did not proceed since we were unlikely to agree. For her, it was the people of the Falkland Islands who mattered and it was the principle of self-determination which was sacrosanct. There was no question of our discussing sovereignty with Argentina nor of compromising the right of people to live as they wished. We had done everything possible to normalise relations with Argentina. We had unblocked its assets in this country; our banks had helped with the IMF loan; we had supported the restoration of trade and in services, but Argentina had refused; we had supported the total lifting of the trade embargo but Argentina had again refused just as she had refused to announce a formal cessation of hostilities. We would take it very hard if under these circumstances the UN supported Argentina. The advent of a different government in Buenos Aires could not alter the fact that all the people in the Falklands were British and wished to stay British. Signor Craxi commented that we needed to allow time to elapse before this matter could be discussed. The Prime Minister agreed.

Turning to the European Council, the Prime Minister said that she believed that strenuous efforts would need to be made to solve the problems of the budget and the CAP. By the time we got to Athens the Community would be facing a financial crisis. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he and Mr. Andreotti had had little time to discuss the prospects for Athens but officials would meet in Rome on 5 October and the two Foreign Ministers would have a longer time than had been possible today for a discussion later in October. The Prime Minister said it was important to avert disaster at Athens. She was anxious that the Community should be seen in the difficult world situation to be making progress. She was committed to the European Community as a bastion of democracy in an uncertain world. Mr. Andreotti said that he believed that the guidelines laid down at Stuttgart were

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useful. It was not just a matter of dealing with the financial problems but of having a global view of the Community's future. This would involve new agricultural and industrial policies, a step forward in energy policy and the accession of Spain and Portugal. This approach would more easily convince public opinion that efforts had to be made on behalf of the Community. Italy wanted not just to maintain the EC but to develop it. We should try between now and December to isolate the essential points for decision at Athens. If we could not reach agreement there, we might more easily do so during the French Presidency.

The Prime Minister said that she believed that final decisions must be taken at Athens. The Community's problems could not be resolved by constant delay. The financial crisis would be upon us by the time of Athens. Signor Andreotti said that he agreed but he had found that the problems had not changed since he had last dealt with them four years ago. Could we really settle them in the next few months? If agreement could be reached on essential points then a solution might be possible. Signor Craxi said that the problem appeared to arise from the fact that the Community conferred on some member states excessive advantages and on others excessive disadvantages. The Prime Minister agreed and said that this situation could not continue. Part of the problem was the way the CAP worked. It produced enormous surpluses which upset the world agricultural economy. We could not now take the view that solutions could not be found in Athens. There would be a crisis with us if we did not. The United Kingdom and Germany were the only two contributors to the budget. Signor Andreotti said that he was convinced of the need to solve the problems but it was not just a matter of the budget, rather of the whole balance of advantages and disadvantages.

In concluding the meeting, the Prime Minister thanked Signor Craxi for visiting London and looked forward to further such meetings.

The discussion ended at 1130.

A. J. C.

16 September 1983

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