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RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY AT 1107 HRS ON FRIDAY, 27 JANUARY, 1984 AT THE VILLA MADAMA, ROME

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Present:-

Prime Minister	Signor Craxi
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Signor Andreotti
Mr. A.J. Coles	Signor Badini
Interpreters	Interpreters

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary summarised the discussion which he had just had with Signor Andreotti on the Lebanon. They had agreed on the need to seek to replace the MNF with a United Nations force. Contacts with the Russians had suggested that they were not absolutely opposed to this plan, though they argued that it was for Lebanon and Syria to initiate it. We should use the presence of the MNF to press President Gemayel to pursue reconciliation. We should also ensure that the 17 May Agreement did not become an obstacle; that implied persuading the United States to broaden the Agreement to include other questions. Ideally, the four MNF contributors should act together to present this case and to concert policy. Failing that - and the French were reluctant to attend meetings of the four - we should maintain contact through bilateral meetings.

In reply to a question from Signor Craxi, Signor Andreotti said that France had refused to attend the meeting of the four in Stockholm, perhaps because it was trying to unhook itself from the MNF situation, perhaps because, with the Franco/Egyptian initiative in mind, it wished to avoid appearing to be too closely linked to the U.S.

The Prime Minister said that she did not believe that President Mitterrand would act unilaterally by withdrawing the French contingent. It was difficult to understand why France would not take part in quadripartite meetings. Mitterrand had appeared, at his meeting with her on 23 January, to share the UK/Italian approach to the MNF. He was very conscious of the French losses in

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the Lebanon - unilateral withdrawal on his part would suggest that this loss of life had served no useful purpose. Mitterrand was interested in the idea of a UN force and was actively pursuing it.

Signor Andreotti said that the French had changed their attitude. After the attacks on the American and French troops, it was France which had convened a meeting of the four. The change in attitude might be based on a wish to create pressure for the replacement of the MNF by a UN force. Also, the French, given their historical position in Syria/Lebanon, did not like the prominence which the United States had assumed in that area. Jealousy of the United States presence was a factor in all this.

The Prime Minister said that the French attitude was irritating. But if they did not want to meet à quatre, we should have to go ahead without them. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that Mr. Andreotti had agreed that the meetings in London with representatives of the 3 MNF embassies, together with bilateral talks, made it possible to concert views.

Signor Craxi said that he remained very worried about the situation. We should either pursue a UN force or open up the MNF to broader participation. Perhaps Yugoslavia or a moderate Arab country could join the force. This would give it a better political image. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he feared that the presence of the United States contingent would be sufficient reason for other countries to be unwilling to join the MNF. Signor Andreotti said that Yugoslavia had always declined to take part in the MNF although it was willing to participate in a UN force. So, we must go on trying to set up such a force. On another point, unilateral withdrawal by Israel could be disadvantageous. Unless Israeli withdrawal were accompanied by Syrian withdrawal, the situation could be worsened. The Prime Minister reiterated her view that we should continue to promote the idea of a UN force.

The discussion ended at 1135 hrs.

A-t-c.

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