

RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER, SR COSSIGA, OVER LUNCH AT THE
PREFECTURA, VENICE, AT 1320 ON 12 JUNE

PRESENT:

Prime Minister	Sr Cossiga
The Foreign Secretary	Sr Colombo
Sir Robert Armstrong	Sr Plaja
Mr Alexander	Sr Berlinguer

PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMISSION

1. There was a brief discussion about the possible candidates to succeed Mr Jenkins as President of the European Commission. (This took place without notetakers.) In the course of the discussion it became apparent that Sr Pandolfi would not be a candidate. Sr Colombo said that the balance of the new Italian Government was such that it would be impossible to release Sr Pandolfi. The other names mentioned included Mr O'Kennedy, M. Thorn and Viscount Davignon. No consensus emerged as to which was the preferred candidate.

MIDDLE EAST

2. Sr Colombo said that the Arab/Israel question would not be the only problem in the region which was likely to be raised. He expected that the French would wish to discuss Afghanistan. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he hoped the Nine could include something about Libya in the Communiqué. Sr Colombo said that this would be important for Italy. Sr Cossiga said that Italy's relations with Libya were very complex. He wondered whether a statement by the Nine would make things any easier. He thought that of the Nine, only Italy, the Federal Republic and the UK were really concerned with the Libyan problem. The Foreign Secretary pointed out that the French Embassy in Tripoli had been burnt down. It was agreed that the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government should discuss the problem further.

3. As regards the text on the Arab/Israeli dispute, Sr Colombo said he thought the discussion of the text was likely to throw up two problems:-

- a) the references to self-determination. It would have to be made clear that these were part of an evolutionary process; and
- b) the question of whether the text should refer to a Palestinian state or a Palestinian homeland.

His own view was that it was too soon to refer to a state. The Prime Minister said that she strongly agreed with Sr Colombo on the second point.

4. Sr Colombo said that the Americans, with whom he had just been discussing the problem in Washington, would wish it to be clear that the statement of the Nine did not in any way interrupt or disturb the Camp David process. It would be important therefore for the statement to make it clear that the position taken up by Heads of Government was consistent with the positions they had taken up in the past. The present reference to preceeding resolutions and statements might not be enough. The Americans would also like an explicit reference to Camp David. The existing reference in the first paragraph was too cryptic. The difficulty here was that the French would not accept an explicit reference. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary added that to include such a reference would gravely undermine the chances that the statement would be favourably received in the Middle East. The Prime Minister said that she was in favour of making it as clear as possible that the intention was not to undermine Camp David but to fill the vacuum until the Americans were able, after their elections, to resume the process of negotiation.

5. In response to a question from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Sr Colombo said that he did not think the Americans would regard the statement as undermining their efforts so long as it did not propose changes in resolution 242 and so long as it did not imply that the Camp David process was exhausted or that the Europeans were taking over. The Americans had followed the evolution of European thinking on the Middle East. They would not applaud the statement but would show understanding. From the point of view of Europe's relations with the Middle East, it was of course clear that the Arabs had high expectations and that the disappointment of these expectations would be badly received. The Prime Minister remarked that there was no question of withdrawing from previous positions. It was a question of whether or not Europe moved forward.

6. Sr Colombo said that the problem of the implementation of a European initiative remained to be resolved. Who would carry out the contacts or soundings and how would it be done? He himself was hesitating between two approaches:-

- a) that the soundings should be carried out by representatives of the present Presidency, the preceeding Presidency and the next Presidency; or
- b) that the present Presidency, plus three, or so, representatives or experts should be responsible.

Sr Cossiga added that there was a third possibility, viz that an eminent personality who was not a member of one of the Nine Governments, but enjoyed their confidence, should take on the task. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he preferred Sr Colombo's second option. He did not think it would be possible to identify a personality who enjoyed the confidence of all Nine Governments.

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7. The discussion ended at 1415.