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RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA AT NOON ON 11 NOVEMBER 1983 AT
NO. 10 DOWNING STREET

Present

Prime Minister
Mr. Coles

Mr. Trudeau
Mr. Fowler

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Mr. Trudeau said that he believed that he and the Prime Minister were on the same wave length with regard to the general approach to East/West relations. In her Blackpool speech, she had made it plain that the door was open for dialogue since "we had to live on the same planet". That was the premise of his own thinking on these matters. Following the Korean airliner incident, he was worried that if we did not talk to the Soviet Union for several months, the American elections would then intervene and the net result would be that over a period of some 18 months, there would be no high level contact. Earlier, he had worked on the assumption that President Reagan would wish to see Andropov some time in the Spring of 1984 and there had been signs that the United States was preparing for such a meeting. At the Williamsburg Summit he had told President Reagan and Mr. Bush that they were taking too hard a line publicly about the Soviet Union. They had replied that they wanted peace and he believed this. But the hopes of a Summit were reduced by the Korean airliner disaster and the tragedy in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada had not helped. Given that President Reagan would be visiting China in April, the chances of a US/Soviet Summit in the Spring were now remote.

Part of his motive was to try to break the present inertia. President Reagan and the American public now probably thought that it was too late to consider a Summit before the US elections. Unless some of America's friends kept alive the idea of dialogue and tried to inject a greater political input into East/West relations there would be no Summit for 18 months and that seemed a dangerously long period.

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He had therefore come to Europe to discuss a number of initiatives, partly to fulfil the Williamsburg commitment to do everything possible for peace. Although the reception for his initiatives had been better than he had expected, they were not essential to the overall design. They could be replaced by others or simply by the insertion of political leadership into present "accounting" exercises. What could be done to politicise East/West relations at a high level? President Reagan had shown himself on earlier occasions to be open to persuasion by other elected political leaders. If enough of his friends conveyed the message that there had been sufficient hostile talk, the President might still consider holding a meeting with Andropov, if he were available, before the US elections were in full swing. Even if the idea of a Summit was a pipe-dream, it was good in itself and good politics to reassure people that we were concerned at the rising temperature of East/West relations and that we were working for peace.

The Prime Minister said that on his last visit to London, President Mitterrand had been critical of the timing of Chancellor Kohl's visit to Moscow. Mitterrand took the view that a US/Soviet Summit could only be held once and that it should be properly timed. Her own objective was to persuade more Soviet leaders to visit the West. It was worth recalling that Brezhnev, even when he had been ill, had left the Soviet Union from time to time. In several recent speeches she had tried to convey the thought that East/West relations should not be allowed to go wrong because of a lack of understanding. It was possible that they would go wrong anyway because of the Soviet military build-up and because of Russia's economic difficulties. The Soviet leadership might conclude that expansion was the natural course open to them. In that case military deterrence was our only response. But she felt strongly that we did not see sufficient Soviet visitors below the highest level. The Americans perhaps did more in this respect. Mr. Gorbachev's visit to Canada had been a useful contribution, but she was doubtful whether it was possible to proceed straight to a Summit without building up contacts at lower levels.

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It was relevant to ask whether we were indeed misunderstanding the Soviet Union - or did we fear it because we did understand it?

There was some evidence that, over the years, world opinion had influenced the Soviet Union, e.g. through the Helsinki process. The fact that the Eastern European satellites saw the Soviet Union exposed to cross-examination at international conferences must have had an effect.

The convening of a Summit would raise the expectation that the West had something to offer. But the truth was that there was not much to offer in the field of arms control. Should one instead be thinking of a thawing of economic relations? Were there some in the Politburo or the Communist Party who were seeking a period of security in order to improve the Soviet Union's economic performance? This was probably a more urgent requirement now since there was a generation whose expectations had been raised. If one discovered that there was such a body of opinion, then there might be more scope for movement.

In short, she was more cautious than Mr. Trudeau about a Summit. When we deployed INF weapons in Europe, the Russians were likely to break off the Geneva talks. But we hoped they would return to them. One weakness of the dialogue argument was that people had talked to Gromyko for years and had no effect on him.

She was not enamoured of the idea of a conference of the five nuclear powers. If the time came when there had been substantial reductions in strategic weapons, perhaps this idea could be examined. Meanwhile, there were various obstacles on the road to a better East/West dialogue. For example, Europe, the United States and Canada should not compete to sell surpluses to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Trudeau said that there was perhaps a difference between us on how we could bring about a dialogue. He had agreed with President Mitterrand that no initiative should be capable of

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interpretation as a weakening of NATO's resolve to implement the dual track decision. He himself would not contemplate any such initiative. His agreement to the testing of Cruise missiles in Canada was evidence of that. Mitterrand had said that any initiative should be timed to follow the initial deployment in Europe of INF weapons; the Russians would walk out of the Geneva talks and would then need to be tempted back.

He was not seeking a big break-through in East/West relations. His objective was rather to make sure that the political dimension was reintroduced after a period when politics had been absent from the most important relationship of our time. He would not expect a Summit between President Reagan and Andropov to produce a major break-through.

More and more countries were coming round to the idea that the CDE Conference in Stockholm should meet at Foreign Minister level. This would be a sign that politicians were taking a personal interest. For the same reason, we should make one last stab at the MBFR negotiations.

He also wished to mention an idea which he had not discussed elsewhere in Europe because he was uncertain how it would be received. This was that the Stockholm meeting should begin at Summit level. The aim would be that President Reagan and Andropov would attend, with other Heads of Government, for a ceremonial opening. That would not raise expectations too much because it would be clear that little could be achieved at such a ceremony. The Summit would give the Stockholm Conference a deadline, i.e. Ministers might agree to return in the Autumn 1984 to check progress and perhaps set a new agenda. It was possible that this idea was merely a dream, but he was trying to find a way to force Mr. Shultz and Mr. Gromyko to attend the opening of the CDE. The aim was to give a political jolt to the downward turn in the armaments race. He should not be misunderstood. He was not proposing a break-through on START or INF. But perhaps the smaller countries could act in the margin to reduce the shouting match. It was necessary to ensure that the Soviet Union knew both that our intentions were peaceful, but also that if forced to, we should use the deterrent.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that it sounded as though Mr. Trudeau was trying to arrange in Stockholm an event like Tito's funeral. People might see through the hollowness of the idea. Would it not be better for Ministers to attend the end rather than the beginning of the Conference as at Helsinki? Mr. Shultz's meeting with Mr. Gromyko in Madrid had been very unsuccessful. We should not put him in a difficult position with regard to Stockholm. She doubted whether a meeting which was attended on the Soviet side only by Gromyko would achieve anything. Mr. Trudeau was aiming for immediate contacts at the highest level. Her instinct was to follow a more gradual approach. Was Mr. Trudeau saying that no progress could be made until the Soviet Union was reassured? Mr. Trudeau replied that that was indeed his point. The Americans and others were constantly telling Moscow that Communism would wither away. That created the wrong atmosphere. The Prime Minister said that when she had spoken in these terms to President Reagan in September the President had said that, following the Korean airliner incident, the Russians would have to make a move first. Mr. Trudeau commented that the collective response in the West to that incident had simply confirmed the Soviet Union in their feeling of isolation. The Russians knew that they had made a horrible mistake but they could not say so. We in the West knew it was a mistake and was not an act of war and yet we had accused the Russians of all kinds of things. They had not wanted to shoot down a civil airliner. The Prime Minister said that the point was they they did not care if they did. Mr. Trudeau said that nor would he have cared if in similar circumstances a suspicious aircraft had flown over Canada with unknown intentions. The Prime Minister observed that the incident had revealed an inadequate command structure and a lack of political control in the Soviet Union. Mr. Trudeau commented that it also revealed that the Soviet Union's capacity to defend its territory and deal with an intruder was very weak. After a period of 2½ hours when the system had not functioned well, it had become essential to shoot the aircraft down in order to demonstrate that an intrusion of this kind could be handled. This was the psychology of people living in fear. They were afraid of us for technical reasons and for ideological reasons. Because of this fear, they could start a nuclear war

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by accident. The Prime Minister said that they was why we must ensure that there was no misunderstanding. On that point we were agreed but she wished to start the contacts at a lower level. Mr. Trudeau commented that this was to assume that we had unlimited time to deal with the problem. He wanted Foreign Ministers to be at Stockholm from the beginning.

The Prime Minister asked whether the gathering at Tito's funeral had been useful. A series of rapid bilaterals did not achieve very much. Mr. Trudeau said that the better analogy might be Brezhnev's funeral. If Reagan had attended, that would have sent the right signal. It would be a mistake to have Heads of Government at Stockholm for a period of some three days; people would then expect too much. The Prime Minister asked whether the Soviet Union might not refuse to go to Stockholm because of INF deployment. Mr. Trudeau said that that would be a psychological victory for the West. If Gromyko went to Stockholm, Shultz would have to.

The Prime Minister said that we needed to know whether Andropov would be fit enough to attend such a gathering; we should then have to sell the idea to President Reagan. This matter needed further thought.

The discussion ended at 1300 hours and was followed by a working lunch.

A.J.C.

11 November 1983

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From the Private Secretary

11 November, 1983

Dear Peter,

VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

I enclose a record of the conversation between the Prime Minister and Mr. Trudeau at No. 10 this morning and a note of the main points made at the working lunch which followed.

The Prime Minister would be grateful if Mr. Trudeau's idea that the CDE should convene in Stockholm in January at the level of Heads of Government could be further examined. She would be grateful for any views which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence may wish to offer.

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I am copying this letter and enclosures to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

You are

Yours truly,

P. F. Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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