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From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

15th April, 1980

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Quadripartite Meeting

The enclosed minute records the main points of yesterday's quadripartite meeting here between representatives of the White House, Elysee, Bundeskanzleramt, Cabinet Office and the four Foreign Ministries; and of the dinner which Robert Wade-Gery and I had with David Aaron the night before.

It also, I think, updates your and my brief for Sardinia on the idea of a political day at the Venice Summit a 7. No collective discussion of this subject will be possible in Sardinia because the American, French and German Sherpas will not be briefed or qualified to handle it. Since you and I are (by contrast) so qualified, it will fall naturally to us to explain this privately to the Canadian, Italian and Japanese Sherpas. If you agree, we might add that the question of whether there should be a political day and how to stage-manage it will no doubt need to be pursued on a very discreet basis between the right people in the seven Governments nearer the time; and we could ask who would be the right contact for this purpose in Ottawa, Rome and Tokyo.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Clive Whitmore at No. 10.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Home Minister.

The attachment is interesting and well worth reading once you are past the bureaucratic stuff of the first few paragraphs.

Sir Michael Palliser, GCMG

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15.11.80

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Four-Power Consultations

Mr Braithwaite is preparing a record of this morning's quadripartite meeting here. As you know, it was set up at White House instigation and was attended by Mr Aaron, Mr Vest, M Leleq, M Dupont, Herr von der Gablenz, Herr Schenk, Mr Braithwaite and myself. The following main points emerged.

2. Political discussion at Venice Summit a 7

a. The French made clear that they had not agreed to this (page paragraph 2e of Mr Bullard's minute of 12th March recording the quadripartite meeting of Political Directors on 10th/11th March); that they did not know what President Giscard's views on it might be; and that they were without instructions. Herr von de Gablenz told me afterwards, however, that President Giscard had recently intimated to Chancellor Schmidt that he was in fact in favour of a political day at Venice.

b. The Americans, supported by the Germans and French, made clear that the Sardinia meeting of "Economic Sherpas" on 16th April would not be the right forum in which to consider the idea of a political element in the Venice Summit. In all three cases, their representatives would not be qualified to go beyond consideration of the normal economic agenda. The French representative would simply refuse to discuss anything else.

c. I explained that our position was simpler in that you and Sir Michael Palliser were (jointly) both our representatives on the Economic Sherpa group and the right people on our side to consider political discussion at Venice. There was general agreement that embarrassment might be spared if, in view of your dual role, you were able and willing privately to warn the Italians, Japanese and Canadians against trying to raise the political discussion issue in Sardinia.

d. I then said that you had previously been intending to float in Sardinia the idea of the political discussion focussing on "Western foreign policy following Afghanistan"; and that we would be willing to prepare a paper on this, covering both substance in outline and procedure, which we would wish to discuss quadripartitely before circulating it to the Seven. It was agreed

that we should now do this (the Foreign Office are preparing a draft). We were asked to circulate it only on the direct link between the four Heads of Governments' offices and specifically to Mr Aaron, M Wahl and Herr von Staden, who would show it on a very restricted basis to their Foreign Ministries.

e. It was agreed that views on this draft should be exchanged on the same network. A further quadripartite meeting could be arranged to consider it if that proved necessary, which everyone hoped would not be the case. Assuming the French had by then agreed to the principle of a political discussion, our paper might be circulated to the full Seven in mid-May (which would involve first identifying appropriate "Political Sherpas" in Rome, Tokyo and Ottawa). Everyone stressed the need to restrict to an absolute minimum the number of people who knew that the idea of a political discussion was even being considered.

f. It was recognised that there would be a problem over the lesser allies, who would resent exclusion from political discussion even more than from a purely economic Summit. Mr Aaron thought that something might be done for them by previous consultation in NATO (eg if there was a meeting of Foreign Ministers in May as well as one of Defence Ministers) and in the EC (eg at the Luxembourg European Council on 27th-29th April). But he and Mr Vest argued strongly that the political discussion at Venice should be openly reflected in the communiqué. No one would believe that the leaders of the Seven could in fact meet in mid-1980 and avoid political discussion. So the suspicions of non-participants would simply be exacerbated if the communiqué referred only to economic subjects.

g. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for President Jenkins to participate in any political discussion at Venice.

3. The Arc of Crisis. As planned, this part of the meeting resumed discussion of topics broached at the Paris quadripartite meeting on 8th February. It was largely a monologue by Mr Aaron. The French hardly spoke at all. Mr Aaron avoided sensitive operational issues arising out of the 8th February meeting (which he had told me privately he was content should be followed up bilaterally when Mr Carlucci came to London later this month). His main points were as follows.

a. Afghanistan. Guerilla resistance would continue at a satisfactory level. The Russians could quell it only if they doubled the number of their troops, which seemed inconceivable. The guerillas were being adequately supplied with arms, mainly from internal sources eg defecting Afghan Army units. More could be done to publicise Russian atrocities and other events in Afghanistan, particularly in the Third World. The Americans would contact the other three Governments bilaterally about this. Britain's neutrality idea was welcome as an instrument of political warfare.

b. Iran. The Russians were building up their forces on the Caucasus frontier, presumably in case disintegration in Iran offered them scope for intervention eg in support of a pro-Soviet separatist government which might emerge in Azerbaijan. Such intervention would be easier for the Russians if the Western response to Afghanistan had been less robust than the Americans wanted. Khomeini was very ill. The hostages had now become a major political factor in President Bani-Sadr's struggles both with the left and with the clerics. Iran was ~~essentially~~ drifting leftwards. United Western sanctions might ~~actually~~ halt this by playing on the moderates' fears of being left friendless apart from the Russians. The moderates had been signalling to Washington that tough measures against Iran would actually strengthen their own hand.

c. N. Yemen and Saudi Arabia. In both cases the Americans seemed somewhat less worried than before, at least about the immediate future.

d. US facilities. Negotiations with Oman and Kenya were going well. Those with Somalia were trickier. The Americans were willing to provide the Somalis with an air defence system, but not to support operations against the Ogaden.

4. General. At no point did the Americans ask what had passed between President Bani-Sadr and the European Ambassadors on 12th April. Nor during the meeting itself did they call for more allied support over Afghanistan or over Iran. But as you know Sir Aaron repaired this omission at the subsequent working lunch over which you and Sir M Palliser presided. He was sharply counter-attacked by Herr von de Gablenz, who said that Germany had done much more than the Americans recognised, would do more still (eg coming out for an Olympic boycott) but inevitably disliked economic measures against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where she had much more at stake than any of her allies.

5. After lunch I asked Mr Vest privately about Mr Vance's dislike of this particular quadripartite forum, about which he had spoken to Mr Bullard on 1st April. I made clear that we had no wish to champion it but had merely responded to White House prompting. Mr Vest said that Mr Vance was now quite relaxed on the subject and he himself was no longer worried about wire-crossing. But our exchange was a hurried one, and he may only have been being polite.

6. Dinner with Mr Aaron As a tail piece it may be convenient if I record the main points which Mr Aaron made when he dined privately with you last night.

i. Germany Chancellor Schmidt's visit to Washington had been "a disaster". The Chancellor had spoken to the President with apparent sympathy and friendliness but had then told the American press representatives that the President was an impossible idiot. Worse, the Chancellor's obsession with "mini-detente" in Central Europe seemed to take priority over his loyalty to the Alliance, from which he was perhaps preparing to distance himself. That way lay Finlandisation. The Germans always claimed to be doing their best to lessen France's reservations about Alliance solidarity and American leadership; but it was beginning to look as though the Germans were actually more hostile than the French and egging them on.

ii. Detente was not working as intended. It was meant to inhibit ~~the~~ Russian misbehaviour. All it was actually inhibiting was a robust reaction by the Allies, particularly the Germans.

iii. NATO Summit President Carter had disliked getting identical replies from the Chancellor and Mrs Thatcher to his original proposal. The White House were also annoyed that the Chancellor's office had told the German Foreign Ministry about the proposal (by implication, the White House had not told the State Department, at least at that stage); and that either the Germans or the British appeared to have told the Italians (we have since established that it was not us). As regards the current proposal for a NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in May, Mr Aaron favoured the British idea that they should meet without Defence Ministers present, in order to make it possible for the French to be there.

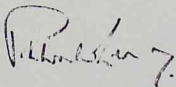
iv. Quadripartite consultation. Mr Aaron was unimpressed with my suggestion that there was particular value in the quadripartite forum now established in Washington between Mr Christopher and the three Ambassadors. Inside the State Department, circles of knowledge widened too quickly, leading to leaks. No one in Washington had much confidence in the German Ambassador. In any case, it was not Ambassadors the Americans needed to consult about policy matters but those who were directly involved in national decision-taking. US policy-makers would need to travel more in search of such consultation. They should learn from the growing frequency and intensity of consultation meetings within the EC framework.

v. US-EC relations. Mr Aaron had come to the Ditchley Conference on 11th-13th April under instructions to complain about the difficulty the US found in consulting EC members, who would not express any views until they had consulted their Community partners, and were thereafter unwilling to alter a comma of whatever formula they had managed to hammer out. This was a real problem. But he had not meant to provoke Sir M Palliser into believing that the Americans were now hostile to the development of the Community.

vi. Political discussion at Venice. Dr Brzezinski was determined to keep preparations for this under his own control. He would not want Mr Owen involved and would not be willing to hand the subject over to the State Department.

vii. Iran. President Carter's television reference (on 13th April) to a date by which united action by the allies against Iran would be needed had referred only to the view set out in his message of 25th March that there was little time left and would be none at all by about mid-May.

14th April 1980



R L WADE-GERY