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EUROPEAN COUNCIL, VENICE

12/13 JUNE 1980

PREPARATION FOR ECONOMIC SUMMIT: POLITICAL ASPECTS

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

OBJECTIVE

1. To gain support for display of political solidarity at Seven-power economic summit at Venice, and to reassure the smaller partners that major decisions affecting them will not be taken over their heads.

POINTS TO MAKE

2. Relations between Western Europe and the US strained this year. Agreement on condemning Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but important differences on how to react to it.

3. Economic Summit of Seven later this month should not be turned into political summit, but should take opportunity to reassert basic unity of West in face of Soviet aggression.

4. Would like to know views of those who will not be at Economic Summit.

5. Responsibility for preparation of Economic Summit (political as well as economic aspects) lies with Italy.

BACKGROUND

6. In these terms, this should not be a controversial line since main potential objectors, the French, have now not only overcome their earlier reservations about discussing political

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issues at the seven-power summit, but are prepared to be seen to do so. However, President Giscard's conversion to this line is probably recent and may not yet be deep. He may not be ready to display in the European Council the same readiness as his officials have shown in private. It would be best therefore at this stage to tread softly.

7. Those who will not be at Venice may regard the prospect of political discussions there with the usual mixed feelings. It would be best not to suggest that the discussions are likely to be extensive or to produce major new initiatives. (In any case neither is likely). Best tactic is to give them a chance to air their views, and take note without commitment, leaving the subsequent responsibility as far as possible with the Italians.

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