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OTTAWA ECONOMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE

RECORD of a Plenary Session held in the
East Block, Parliamentary Building, Ottawa
on TUESDAY 21 JULY 1981 at 1500 hours

COMMUNIQUE

The meeting took note of the remaining amendments to the communiqué, agreed by Personal Representative during the lunch interval, and approved the text for issue.

FUTURE OF SUMMITS

Mr Trudeau (Canada) (Chairman) said that his decision to hold this year's Summit at Chateau Montebello had been taken in response to the general desire expressed at the Venice Summit to make the Ottawa Summit as informal as possible and to avoid its being dictated to by the press and the bureaucracy. Personal Representatives had prepared and submitted to Heads of State or Government a note on the Future of Economic Summits; he invited the Federal German Chancellor, as the Doyen Summiteer, to open the discussion.

Herr Schmidt (Federal Republic of Germany) said that he thought that his colleagues were more or less united in thinking that the effort of coming to Economic Summits was worth making: this was shown by the fact that they had accepted the invitation of the President of the French Republic to come to another Summit in France in 1982. He commended the conclusions of the paper by Personal Representatives: that Summits should be held about once a year, that they should provide an opportunity for strategic and general discussion and where possible agreement, rather than seeking to reach definite decisions and specific commitments, and the communiqué should be structured accordingly; and that the tendency for the preparations to become bureaucratized should be reversed. As to the arrangements at the Summit Conference, Heads of State or Government were much in the hands of their hosts. He thought that it had been valuable to meet in the more relaxed atmosphere that was possible in Chateau Montebello, and he hoped that the French Government would find it possible to hold the next meeting somewhere outside Paris. He also agreed with Personal Representatives that, while the opportunity of such conferences should be taken for political discussions, the Summits should maintain their characteristic as primarily economic.

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Herr Schmidt expressed his warm gratitude to Mr Trudeau for the arrangements that had been made for the Ottawa Summit, and in particular for the possibility of holding the meeting in the relative seclusion of Chateau Montebello. He would leave Ottawa with a feeling of personal enrichment, whatever the press might say. In future it would be useful to play down the advance expectations of the press about such occasions. This Summit had proved extremely valuable as an opportunity for enabling the Heads of State or Government, four of whom were new since Venice, to get to know each other. Even if the communique was still a little on the long side, the preparation and discussion of it had brought to light the differences and hidden contradictions, and it had therefore been useful.

President Mitterrand (France) said that he was among those participating in a Summit conference for the first time; he was therefore learning from the experience. His conclusion was positive. He warmly congratulated Mr Trudeau on the way that they had all been welcomed. For another year it would be desirable not to increase the size of national delegations. From a human point of view he had derived very great benefit from getting to know his colleagues. It had been a particular pleasure to meet President Reagan, and it had been very useful. He welcomed the opportunity to deepen his relationships with his colleagues. Fundamental values were at stake. He and his colleagues were round this table because they shared the same convictions as to the superiority of human beings over any system that tried to dominate them. They did not agree on everything; that was natural. But they were able to discuss their differences, and that meant lively relationships and a spirit of conciliation.

Mrs Thatcher (United Kingdom) said that the Ottawa Summit had been a great success, and a particular personal success for Mr Trudeau. She was grateful for the arrangements that had been made; she was grateful to Mr Trudeau for the way in which he had chaired the meetings, and for leading them to a workmanlike communique. The arrangements had worked extremely well, and had enabled Heads of State or Government to get to know each other, unmolested by the press. The meeting had covered a wider range of subjects than previous summits, partly because (unlike Tokyo and Venice) it had not been dominated by a single subject. She had been particularly encouraged by the discussion on the evening of Sunday, 19 July about defence and political matters.

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Mr Suzuki (Japan) said that this was the first Summit in which he had participated. He was the only representative from Asia. The nations of Asia had great expectations of the Ottawa Summit. He had therefore particularly welcomed the candid exchanges of views among Heads of State or Government, and the fact that common goals had been reaffirmed. He complimented Mr Trudeau on his outstanding chairmanship.

Signor Spadolini (Italy), also speaking as a newcomer to Summits, said that his experience had been very positive. There had been a good exchange of discussion. He was very grateful for the admirable organisation, and for the excellent discussion, in which divergences had been faced and overcome. It was right for the industrialised countries to maintain a platform of unity and solidarity. He thought that for the future Summit meetings of these countries should maintain their economic and financial character, without neglecting the wider political aspects. The industrialised countries represented were responsible for 80 per cent of the GNP of the industrialised countries as a whole, and they had responsibilities towards developing countries. It might be possible to think in terms of shorter communique in future. Perhaps there was scope for more political discussion, because the countries represented round the table were rooted in a common concept of humanity which united them. The Ottawa Summit gave great reason for hope for the future.

President Reagan (United States) expressed his appreciation, and that of his colleagues, for the meticulous planning and excellent arrangements. It had been a wonderful meeting. With due regard for all the detail and hard work that had gone into the communique, how important it was that the Heads of State or Government should have a mental picture of human beings whom they knew as friends. Most of the world's ills had arisen because people talked about each other and not to each other. He looked forward to the continuation of Economic Summits in the future.

Monsieur Thorn (European Commission) thanked Mr Trudeau and the Canadian Government for the way in which they had received the participants in the Ottawa Summit. The excellence of the results, including the communique, were due not only to the hard work of the Personal Representatives but also to Mr Trudeau himself. Reaching agreement was not always essential; what was

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so valuable was getting to know each other. If Economic Summits continued to be held once a year, as proposed, that should make it easier to avoid catastrophes. He thought that all concerned agreed that they should continue on that basis.

Mr Trudeau (Canada) (Chairman) thanked his colleagues for their expressions of appreciation and gratitude, and promised to convey them to those who had assisted in the preparation of the meeting. Looking to the future, he said that he hoped that those responsible for organising the next Summit would benefit from the failures of this one. In arranging the Ottawa Summit, he had had the problem of deciding how to arrange seating. In the end he had decided to adopt protocol order for the formal meetings and alphabetical order for the working meetings. For the future it might be worth considering whether more could be done with simultaneous translation, so as to avoid the problems of "whispering". He also wondered whether there might be a case for holding rather more informal meetings. As to the risk of over-bureaucratisation, he thought that all Heads of State or Government were aware of it. Ottawa had been better in that respect than Venice, partly because Personal Representatives had started communique drafting much nearer the time of the Summit itself than in 1980. He thought that the Economic Summits would continue to need the Personal Representatives. Indeed, since they had been meeting rather more frequently in 1980-81, it was for consideration whether they could be used as a means of communication by Heads of State or Government. There were problems, both of practicability and of presentation, about Heads of State or Government meeting more frequently themselves, but they might want to use the periodic meetings of Personal Representatives to convey certain concerns that they wanted to share. As an example of good crisis management, Mr Trudeau referred to the preparations in NATO for the possibility of a crisis in Poland: that had been handled much better than the Afghanistan crisis. Finally, he thought that the success of the Ottawa Summit had been partly attributable to the fact that he had been able to go round beforehand and meet so many of his colleagues. That had been easier for him to do, as the Prime Minister of a relatively small country. It had certainly helped to resolve difficulties in advance; and he thought that the consensus at the conference was in large measure due to the readiness and friendliness with which his colleagues had received him beforehand.

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Sir Geoffrey Howe (United Kingdom) said that he and his fellow Finance Ministers had much appreciated the way in which the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada had organised their discussions. He thought that the informal discussions among the Finance Ministers had been extremely valuable, and he welcomed the fact that there had been more opportunity for such discussions at Ottawa than at the previous Summits.

Mr Trudeau (Canada) said that the fact that Finance Ministers had been meeting that way had enabled Heads of State or Government to concentrate on strategic issues and general goals, rather than detailed and specific commitments.

After a brief report by Mr McGuigan on the agreed statement issued the previous evening on hi-jacking and terrorism, Mr Trudeau declared the conference adjourned.

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