

GRS 340

CONFIDENTIAL

FM PARIS 111204Z FEB 80

TELEGRAM NO 195 OF 11 FEBRUARY

TO PRIORITY FCO

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS

INFO ROUTINE OTHER EC POSTS

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*Phut**MB**P.L.**Mo 10**This would be well worth
considering. The F.C.O. will submit
advise.**Phut*
*12/2*BRITAIN AND THE EC: PUBLICITY IN FRANCE

EVERYWHERE I GO IN FRANCE I AM STRUCK BY THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ADMIRATION EXPRESSED AT ALL LEVELS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER PERSONALLY AND THE DEAF EAR TURNED TO THE BRITISH INTERESTS FOR WHICH SHE ARGUES. THE COMMON WISDOM IN FRANCE NOWADAYS IS THAT BRITAIN IS DOING FINE BECAUSE IT HAS NORTHSEA OIL AND MRS THATCHER. I HAVE EXPLAINED ELSEWHERE HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO GET A HEARING FOR THE BRITISH CASE ON COMMUNITY MATTERS. THERE WOULD BE A VERY LARGE AUDIENCE IN FRANCE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER IF SHE WERE TO ADDRESS THE FRENCH PUBLIC DIRECTLY IN SOME WAY. I AM WONDERING IF SHE WOULD BE PREPARED AT SOME KEY MOMENT TO PUT THE BRITISH CASE ACROSS ON THE CARRIER WAVE OF HER REMARKABLE POPULARITY.

2. THE TIMING WOULD I IMAGINE NEED TO BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN THE RUN-UP TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AT THE END OF MARCH. IF GOOD PROGRESS IS MADE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS IN CONSTRUCTING A PACKAGE FOR THE COUNCIL AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, AS I ASSUME, CONTINUES TO PROCRASTINATE AND SO FAR AS POSSIBLE OBSTRUCT, A WELL TIMED TV INTERVIEW IN FRANCE COULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR PRESIDENT GISCARD TO TAKE UP A HARD AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE. FAILING A TV INTERVIEW, A FULL-SCALE INTERVIEW WITH LE MONDE WOULD SERVE THE SAME PURPOSE.

3. I BELIEVE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS CONSIDIOUS OF THE RISKS OF OVER-EXPOSURE TO THE MEDIA, BUT AS SEEN FROM PARIS THERE IS A STRONG CASE FOR A SPECIAL EFFORT VIS-A-VIS FRANCE. THERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH HER FROM FRENCH PRESS AND TV FROM WHICH A CHOICE COULD BE MADE IF IN PRINCIPLE SHE WERE PREPARED TO AGREE. I CAN THINK OF NO OTHER WAY WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE AN AUDIENCE IN FRANCE FOR THE BRITISH POINT OF VIEW. I WOULD NOT PROMISE THAT THE AUDIENCE WOULD ACCEPT THE MESSAGE AND BE CONVERTED, BUT THEY WOULD BE SHAKEN IN THEIR CONFIDENCE THAT BRITAIN HAS NO CASE AND THEY WOULD SENSE THAT IT IS NO USE ADMIRING LEADERSHIP AND THEN REFUSING TO BE EVEN A LITTLE BIT LED.

4. AN INTERVIEW WOULD BE IN ENGLISH AND, DEPENDING ON THE NETWORK CHOSEN, WOULD EITHER HAVE AN INTERPRETATION OVERLAID OR SUBTITLES.

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PS/LPS

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SIR D MAITLAND

MR BULLARD

MR HANNAY

MR FEGUSSON

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Phnt 12/2

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FM PARIS 111935Z MAR 80

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 285 OF 11 MARCH 1980.

AND TO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS

INFO SAVING TO BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN DUBLIN ROME LUXEMBOURG
AND THE HAGUE

Read in full.

ofo

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH ANTENNE 2

1. THE PRIME MINISTER IS TO BE CONGRATULATED ON A VERY CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL SUCCESS IN HER FIRST TELEVISION BROADCAST TO FRANCE. THIS JUDGEMENT IS SUPPORTED BY THE SYMPATHETIC AND SOMETIMES ADMIRING COMMENTS IN THE FRENCH PRESS AND RADIO WHICH HAVE DRAWN ATTENTION TO HER DETERMINATION, HER CLEAR EXPOSITION OF THE BRITISH CASE ON THE BUDGET AND HER EVIDENT CONVICTION OF ITS JUSTICE. THERE ARE REFERENCES TO AN OPERATION CHARM. JEAN-PIERRE ELKABBACH IS QUOTED IN FIGARO AS SAYING THAT HER "RADIANT PERSONALITY MASKS A GREAT AUTHORITY AND A GREAT DESIRE TO BRING BACK WARMTH TO ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS". ALAIN DUHAMEL'S DAILY COMMENTARY ON THE MUCH LISTENED TO MORNING RADIO PROGRAMME ON EUROPE 1 WAS FULL OF PRAISE FOR HER DIRECT APPROACH AND HER MASTERY OF THE DOSSIERS. THE MOST QUOTED PASSAGES HAVE BEEN THOSE IN WHICH SHE REJECTED THE THE IDEA OF BRITAIN LEAVING THE COMMUNITY OR PRACTISING AN EMPTY CHAIR POLICY. ALL ACCOUNTS ALSO DRAW ON HER DEFENCE OF THE REASONABLENESS OF BRITAIN'S CASE ON THE BUDGET. THE WORD "EQUITABLE" HAS BEEN DRIVEN IN TO FRENCH CONSCIENCES.
2. IN ORDER TO STAY FRENCH, COMMENTATORS HAVE OF COURSE INTERLEAVED THEIR COPY WITH OCCASIONAL CAUTIONARY COMMENTS AND A FEW SNIDE REMARKS. BUT THIS SIMPLY ESTABLISHES THEIR CREDENTIALS FOR QUOTING AN UNFAMILIAR CASE FAIRLY UNCRITICALLY.
3. THIS AFTERNOON'S LE MONDE HAS AN ARTICLE SUMMARISING THE INTERVIEW WITHOUT COMMENT AND LETTING THE EXTENSIVE QUOTES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. THE HEADLINE IS QUOTE MRS THATCHER: WE ARE FULL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY AND WE WANT TO REMAIN SO UNQUOTE. ALONGSIDE IS A PIECE BY THE PAPER'S TV CRITIC WHICH ALTERNATES COMMENTS ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S FEMININITY WITH REFERENCES TO QUOTE A FORMIDABLE STATESMAN UNQUOTE AND QUOTE THE VOICE OF COMMON SENSE UNQUOTE.

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4. A SLIGHTLY IRRITATING FEATURE TO ENGLISH EARS WAS THE RELAYING OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VOICE UNDERNEATH THE VOICE OF THE INTERPRETER AT A JUST-AUDIBLE LEVEL. THIS HAS BEEN CRITICISED IN THE GUARDIAN. THIS TECHNIQUE IS USUAL ON ANTENNE 2 AND IS FAMILIAR TO FRENCH LISTENERS WHO ACCEPT IT WITHOUT PROBLEMS. ENGLISH VIEWERS PROBABLY FOUND IT FRUSTRATING, BUT THE BROADCAST WAS NOT AIMED AT THEM.

5. I HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO FOLLOW UP THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION TO ADDRESS THE FRENCH AUDIENCE DIRECTLY BY ARRANGING ONE OR TWO MORE MINISTERIAL INTERVIEWS, INCLUDING PERHAPS ONE BY YOU. THE MESSAGE THAT BRITAIN IS NOT GOING TO GOAWAY AND INSISTS ON BEING ACCOMMODATED FOR REASONS OF HIGH POLICY HAS MADE A POWERFUL IMPACT AND DESERVES TO BE REPEATED AS OFTEN AS THE CONTROLLED FRENCH INFORMATION SYSTEM WILL TOLERATE.

HIBBERT

FLO/WHITEHALL

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[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

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Press Office: Have you submitted on this yet?

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

M. Alexander

London SW1A 2AH

This copy attached

Prints 19/2

Chaker A

19/2

18 February 1980

Dear Michael,

French TV Interview with Prime Minister

Paris telno 195 of 11 February (copy enclosed) suggests that the Prime Minister might consider giving a television interview to be broadcast in France.

Lord Carrington supports this suggestion. A well-timed interview by the Prime Minister, whose reputation in France is high, could have a very useful effect on putting our case across to public opinion there. In particular, if French opinion-makers can be brought to appreciate the seriousness of our budget situation by understanding the facts of the case, this may help to undercut French Government arguments that they have no room for manoeuvre domestically.

If the Prime Minister agrees in principle, we will examine the detailed arrangements and timing with the Embassy in Paris. Our initial thought is that the screening should take place about the end of the first week in March.

I am sending copies of this letter to Martin Hall (Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

PP (P Lever)
Private Secretary

M O' D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON

CONFIDENTIAL



cc: Mr. Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 February 1980

French TV Interview with the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 18 February on this subject. She has agreed to give a television interview for transmission in France. The Press Office here will be following this up.

I am sending copies of this letter to Martin Hall (HM Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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