

France

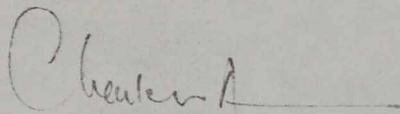
cc Mr Alexander

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO FRANCE: MEDIA

You agreed to give answers to four questions which the main regional newspaper in Bordeaux, 'Sud-Ouest', wish to ask you for publication on the eve of your visit to Bordeaux. 'Sud-Ouest' has a circulation of 400,000 and its chief editor will be taking part in the Bordeaux colloquy.

2. I attach the questions and answers on which Bernard Ingham has done some work and would be grateful for your approval.



CHARLES ANSON
PRESS OFFICE

12 September 1980.

Question 1:

We no longer hear very much of the Entente Cordiale. Do you think that inter-state relations should still take account of emotional considerations or does economic and political realism alone count?

Answer:

I am not sure that we talk less of the Entente Cordiale these days. But we should remember its origin - a reconciliation after late 19th century colonial rivalries. Today we do not need to be reconciled. After all we were allies in two World Wars and today we are allies in the European Community.

We have a close relationship. Of course we defend our national interests vigorously. But we should not let the problems which do exist obscure the enormous amount we have in common. In this increasingly dangerous world Franco/British solidarity, as part of wider Western solidarity, is imperative. This underlines the importance of the Conference organised by the Franco/British Council in Bordeaux. My aim in coming to Bordeaux will be to strengthen the Entente Cordiale.

So far as the second half of your question is concerned, I assume you mean that we have all become so mercenary now that we simply pursue our own narrow interests. That is a very cynical view and I do not think it is justified by the facts. Of course nations must safeguard their political and economic interests. But nations as close as Britain and France share, as allies, many ideals not the least of which is freedom under the law. We therefore have much in common and political and economic realism requires us to act in concert over so many fields - just as we act in concert with our other allies and partners in the European Community.

/Question 2:

Question 2:

Sentimental attachments count especially in our part of France which was English for three centuries. Do people in Britain remember that as vividly as we do?

Answer:

Aquitaine occupies an important place in our history books and we British value our historic links with Aquitaine. It is, however, difficult to say whether the Plantagenet Kings were more English than French. But today's links do not simply consist of having been ruled by the same Kings many centuries ago. Some of the largest scale school exchange programmes in Europe are between the cities of Bristol and Bordeaux. More than one thousand young people travel each way each year.

There are also many twinings of towns and counties: Norton Radstock; Bristol; Wansdyke; Dunstable; Cumbria County; Bury; Glastonbury; Wedmore; Sutton; Woodbridge; Harrogate; Monmouth; Denny; and Dalkeith.

What is more, last year Britain was the second largest importer of Bordeaux wine after Belgium and the top importer of Sauternes and Barsac.

I should add that Britain is one of the leading consumers of maize from the region (383m tonnes in 1979 worth £40 million approx.). Indeed, Britain is good economic news for Aquitaine for you have a favourable balance of trade with us; we take 8.2% of your exports and you take 6.9% of your imports from us.

There are also 5000-6000 British residents in Aquitaine - it is in fact a feature of Aquitaine that for centuries there has been a strong British "colony".

/Question 3:

Question 3:

Particularly close traditional links remain between Bordeaux and Britain in the wine trade. The Bordeaux wine business deplores British protectionist taxes which, with respect, we consider excessive. What is your view of this complaint? Incidentally are you fond of Bordeaux wine and, if so, which ones in particular?

Answer:

The taxes Britain applies to wines cannot be regarded as protectionist. They are determined by internal tax policy and apply equally to all wines for all parts of the European Community including Italy, West Germany and, indeed, to the increasing number of wines produced in the UK itself. The British have imported Bordeaux's delicious wines since the Middle Ages and our imports have increased steadily in recent years.

Prime Minister to fill in a personal answer about Bordeaux wines.

Question 4:

If you had the time and leisure what would you like to visit in our region?

Answer:

This is my first visit to the Bordeaux region which in the past has had such a long and fascinating association with us in Britain. Your area offers so much, not just historically but in its scenery, its food and its wine that I find it difficult to single out one particular aspect which I would like to come to know better. But I hope that sometime I will have the opportunity to return to the Bordeaux region again.

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The fact that we ^{may} not refer to the Entente Cordiale every day does not make it any less real

!!

France + Britain

both belatedly & within the European Community

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But the destinies of Britain & France have been linked for a thousand years. We have shared in many great achievements & we share today many ideals, not least of which is an attachment to the principle of freedom under the law. Emotional considerations point in the same direction as economic & political realism - the direction of closer cooperation between our countries.

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My ambition is to return here at some future date and explore the area, its historic sites, its coast, its vineyards, its rivers at my leisure. When I have done so I shall be better placed to give a detailed answer to your question.