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TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

Prime Minister.

To see.

MR. WHITMORE

I think that providing the outstanding Community problems are cleared up satisfactorily at the forthcoming Aggravation and Foreign Affairs Council meetings, you should convene with

I enclose a copy of my note of my discussion with Jacques Wahl, the Secretary General at the Elysee, on 19th September. This was an essentially private and informal discussion, and I should be grateful if the note could be given only a strictly limited circulation.

2. There is one point under "bilateral co-operation" (see Section (5)) which I have not mentioned in the note. On this point Monsieur Wahl said that France and Britain were the only two nuclear powers in Europe. We had decided to go for Trident as the next generation of our nuclear deterrent, for reasons which the French Government well understood: this no doubt excluded co-operation on systems, but there might be scope for co-operation on associated matters. Monsieur Wahl suggested nuclear reprocessing plants; I said that, if this subject came up in the Prime Minister's talks with the President of the Republic, I thought that she would express readiness to see discussions of the possibility of co-operation or consultation on deployment and targeting.

3. I am sending copies of this minute and of the note to George Walden, Brian Norbury, Michael Palliser and Frank Cooper.

(Robert Armstrong)

22nd September 1980

had Corrington and other colleagues whether you want to take new and positive steps to improve Anglo-French relations and if so, what these steps should be.

*AWH.
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NOTE FOR RECORD

On the morning of Friday, 19th September, 1980, I spent an hour with Monsieur Jacques Wahl, the Secretary General of the Presidency of the French Republic, while the Prime Minister was talking to the President of the Republic. The following were the main points made by Monsieur Wahl.

- (1) The President would in effect be proposing to the Prime Minister that they should put behind them the differences that had disrupted Franco-Britannic relations in recent months and make a new start: put those relations on a better and more normal footing. I said that I knew that the Prime Minister would welcome this, and respond positively.
- (2) France was keen to be as close to Britain, and to work as closely with Britain, as she was with the Federal Republic of Germany. The Franco-German entente was of course indispensable to the cohesion of Europe, but neither of them wanted it to be exclusive: they wanted Britain to be in it, and each would like the same sort of relationship with Britain as they had with each other. The President of the Republic felt that he had offered this to the Prime Minister at an earlier time, but the offer had not been taken up. I said that Britain also wished to work closely with France and the Federal Republic, both inside the Community and more widely; I hoped that this would become easier to achieve, now that the Community problems resolved by the Agreement of 30th May had been settled. Perhaps we should consider meetings of the President, the Prime Minister and the Federal Chancellor, though it was necessary to have regard to the susceptibilities of other members of the Community.
- (3) The French Government had felt that the British Government was inclined to be too starkly pro-American and anti-Soviet, and to follow the sometimes inconsistent and inconstant vagaries of American policy-making too closely. Even when Britain consulted France and Germany, it sometimes seemed as if the object was not to define a European position but to bring pressure or influence to bear on the Americans. The French and the Germans saw a need, imposed by history and geography, for Europe to define its own political position.

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This did not mean that the French position and perception was ^{exactly} the same as the German position, which was affected by its closeness to Eastern Europe and the division of the two Germanies. Nor did it mean that the French were anti-American. On the contrary, the President of the Republic had always been an Atlanticist and he himself was perhaps the most American-orientated person to hold the office of Secretary General of the Presidency. They knew that France was dependent on the United States. A Gaullist had recently said to him that the correct Gaullist line was to support the United States to the hilt when the United States was weak and uncertain; it was only when the United States was strong and positive that France enjoyed real freedom to differ ^{from her}.

- (4) The President would like to see another Guadeloupe-type quadrilateral meeting. He had taken the initiative for Guadeloupe, and had been much criticised by the Russians for doing so. The President thought that it had been very valuable, and had hoped that President Carter would call another like it. Mr. Carter had not done so, but the President of the Republic still thought that another such meeting would be valuable, though it was not for him to call it this time. The clear implication was that we should consider doing so - though obviously not until after the American Presidential election.
- (5) We needed to find new fields and projects for bilateral co-operation: the existing generation of projects was nearly complete. Monsieur Wahl thought that there were possibilities for a joint military aircraft project. I suggested that, now that we had decided to go for the Challenger in place of the MBT 80, our need for a next-generation tank would more or less coincide with theirs. Monsieur Wahl doubted whether there would be scope for Anglo-French co-operation on this: the French were committed to a project with the Germans, and it would not be desirable to reopen this for fear of reopening the field to the activities of pressure groups for alternative solutions.

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- (6) Monsieur Wahl said that one possible field for co-operation which we should consider - though he had not discussed this with the President yet - was that of the communications media. If it were possible to develop joint or shared ventures in this field - exchanges of radio and television programmes, for instance, or exchanges of journalists, the French and British perceptions of each other might be significantly improved.

RH

22nd September 1980