

PRIME MINISTER

Meeting with President Giscard d'Estaing

You told Lord Carrington last week that you could agree in principle to the suggestion that you might pay a short visit to Paris, before the meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg (21/22 June), for an introductory meeting with President Giscard.

President Giscard took the initiative, when H.M. Ambassador in Paris called on him on 10 May to present his credentials, in suggesting that you might do this. The French envisage that you might arrive in Paris one morning, have a session of talks with President Giscard before lunch, continue them for a short time after lunch if necessary and then return to London in the late afternoon. The dates which the French would prefer would be either Tuesday, 5 June or Thursday, 7 June. 7 June is, of course, the date of the European Elections and I imagine that you might prefer to remain in the U.K. on that day. Would you like to accept the French invitation for Tuesday, 5 June? Your only commitment so far on that day is to an Audience at 1830 and we would ensure that the programme allowed you to return to London in good time for that.

Would you like Lord Carrington to accompany you? We will of course aim to keep the party as small as possible but I think it might be helpful if Sir Michael Palliser were to be included.

14 May 1979

They are all recess  
diary

1 must look into  
do keep a few days  
free.

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FM PARIS 110930Z MAY 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 228 OF 11 MAY

Ente na Ben  
17/5

YOUR TEL NO 125

POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT GISCARD

1. WHEN I WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT GISCARD YESTERDAY HE SAID THAT HE HAD ON A PREVIOUS OCCASION SUGGESTED TO MR CALLAGHAN THAT THE LATTER SHOULD COME TO PARIS FOR AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION. IN WHICH THE TWO SIDES COULD FRANKLY EXPLAIN THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INCLUDING THEIR VIEWS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS INSTITUTIONS. FOR HISTORICAL AND OTHER REASONS THE VIEWS OF FRANCE AND BRITAIN ON THE WAY IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY SHOULD EVOLVE SEEM IN PRINCIPLE TO BE VERY SIMILAR AND PRESIDENT GISCARD HAD THOUGHT THAT A FRANK DISCUSSION COULD LEAD TO IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONDUCT OF COMMON MARKET BUSINESS. UNFORTUNATELY THE MEETING WHICH HE HAD ENVISAGED HAD NOT TAKEN PLACE BUT HE HOPED THAT NOW THAT THERE WAS A NEW GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO MAKE EARLY CONTACT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND SO PERHAPS OPEN THE WAY TO THE SORT OF DISCUSSION WHICH HE HAD IN MIND.

2. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD LIKE TO VISIT PARIS FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM ON A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT DATE BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING AT STRASBOURG. THE PRESIDENT IMMEDIATELY WELCOMED THIS IDEA AND SUGGESTED TO MONSIEUR FRANCOIS-PONCET, WHO WAS PRESENT, THAT ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE MADE FOR A MEETING IN THE EARLY DAYS OF JUNE. HE HIMSELF WOULD BE AWAY FROM FRANCE AT THE END OF MAY. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT YOU WOULD BE ACCOMPANYING THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. I HAVE THIS MORNING BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ELYSEE WITH A VIEW TO ASCERTAINING DATES ON WHICH THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE FREE. THE SECRETARY GENERAL SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD LIKE THE MEETING TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS. POSSIBLE DATES WERE FRIDAY 1 JUNE, TUESDAY 5 JUNE, THURSDAY 7 JUNE, FOR FRIDAY 8 JUNE. MONSIEUR WAHL SAID THAT HE IMAGINED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD ARRIVE DURING THE MORNING SO THAT THE CONVERSATIONS COULD BEGIN BEFORE LUNCH.

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THE PRESIDENT COULD THEEE THEN GIVE A LUNCH IN HER HONOUR AND THE CONVERSATIONS WOULD BE CONCLUDED IN THE AFTERNOON. ALTERNATIVELY, MRS THATCHER MIGHT PREFER THE FORMULA WHICH HAD BEEN USED ON SOME PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, THAT IS TO SAY ARRIVAL IN PARIS IMMEDIATELY AFTER LUNCH, CONVERSATIONS DURING THE AFTERNOON AND THEN A DINNER, AFTER WHICH SHE WOULD RETURN TO LONDON. MONSIEUR WAHL SAID THAT A PROGRAMME OF THE LATTER SORT WOULD NOT BE ENTIRELY CONVENIENT ON 8 JUNE BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAMME COULD BE CHANGED TO SUIT MRS THATCHER'S CONVENIENCE ON THAT DAY ALSO SHOULD THIS BE NECESSARY.

4. YOU WILL NO DOUBT LET ME KNOW IF ONE OF THE DATES SUGGESTED SUITS THE PRIME MINISTER AND WHAT SORT OF PROGRAMME SHE WOULD PREFER.

5. I SHOULD ADD THAT I HAVE BEEN CORDIALLY AND WARMLY RECEIVED HERE AND THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS LEFT ME IN NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS DESIRE FOR EARLY CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE NEW BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

HIBBERT

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

FILES

WED

EID

PS

PS | SIR. I. GILMOUR

PS | PUS

SIR. A. DUFF

SIR. A. PARSONS

MR BULLARD

MR BUTLER

MR FERGUSSON

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Extract from: —

CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN AND  
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY AND THE LORD PRIVY SEAL IN 10 DOWNING STREET  
ON 8 MAY 1979 AT 1230

Talk with President Giscard

Lord Carrington said there would be great advantage in the Prime Minister having at least a short meeting with President Giscard before the forthcoming meeting of the European Council on 21/22 June. The Prime Minister agreed to pay a short half-day visit to Paris for this purpose at a convenient time.