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*You should note*

*J 118*

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*Am 4/3*

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Your reference

Our reference

Date 9 March 1981

*John Nick*

DISCUSSION OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE ISSUES AT EUROPEAN COUNCILS

1. You will recall the strong injunction we were under after the last European Council in Luxembourg on 1/2 December to say nothing to the Press about the important exchange on European defence, notably TNF. In the event, there was no leak until President Giscard's interview in 'Le Figaro Magazine' of 28 February, which has let the cat out of the bag. In the interview, Giscard says that one of the worst impressions that he had received at the last European Council was to have heard 'a certain Head of Government' put forward neutralist arguments. There was speculation among journalists here about the identity of the Head of Government in question. The mystery was 'solved' when the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr Van Agt, told a visiting group of Brussels correspondents unattributably last week in The Hague that it was Anker Jørgensen.

2. All this is worth noting for at least three reasons:

- (i) a taboo has been broken. At future European Councils, we can expect to be interrogated about any exchanges on defence and security matters and it will lack credibility to argue that these are outside the scope or competence of the meeting;
- (ii) it may well be raised at Maastricht in a fortnight when you and Bernard will need a line;
- (iii) 'qui accuse, s'accuse?'

*[Handwritten signature]*

D H Colvin

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