

CC No.

CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister (4)

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To note. The Conference seems to have gone quite well, though we had to concede 5% p.a. growth in the ESA science budget.

ESA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: ROME 30-31 JANUARY 1985

You will I am sure have seen from press and television reports that the Rome meeting of the ESA Council went remarkably smoothly. In fact Robin Nicholson and I, thanks to the decisions at E(A) last week, were able to present the British stance in a much more positive way than has been possible in the past. This was widely noted, both by the press and by the other delegations. I am confident that we are now perceived both within ESA and in the US as being back with some force and influence in European space policy.

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As to detail, we were able to accommodate the French requirement for expressions of ultimate European space autonomy without any real changes of substance or danger of causing offence to the US. Indeed I understand that NASA are pleased with the European response. I was able to use the French insistence on recognition of their decision to proceed with their Hermes manned spaceplane to incorporate similar recognition of UK studies of the future generation HOTOL project: this excited considerable interest and the recognition that, if the technology works, this totally reusable runway-to-orbit spaceplane could be a world-beater.

As foreshadowed last week, I was able to secure the agreement of our major partners that British Aerospace would lead on the Phase B1 studies of the Columbus astronaut-tended platform elements which will take the UK well into the new technologies of robotics, docking, in-orbit repair and maintenance, and advanced data systems, and I was able to announce this publicly. The French, who are undoubtedly shrewd judges of these matters, are anxious to have as large a share as possible in the platform studies and this suggests that they too have identified platforms as the most commercially promising and useful elements of the Columbus programme. The Council meeting agreed with no difficulty a resolution welcoming and accepting President Reagan's invitation to join the space station programme which incorporated the safeguards which we have ourselves set to determine the success of Phase B.

Although we were able to contain with some difficulty the ESA general budget for the next five years to the minimum foreseen, the science budget is now set to rise by 5% a year for five years, ie the maximum we were prepared to contemplate. We did manage, however, to get rid of any reference to further rises after this period. After extensive consultations outside the meeting, Robin and I came to the conclusion that we would be

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unable to shake the firm determination of some of the smaller states to stick at 5% and that the other large members were not prepared to hold out for a smaller figure.

I am copying this minute to those who attended the E(A) meeting on Monday 28 January 1985.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Geoffrey Pattie", with a horizontal line underneath.

GEOFFREY PATTIE

5 February 1985

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