

Ref.A083/3169

MR COLES

The Prime Minister has
now sent a message to
President Mitterand.

A.S.C. - 9/11

I should record my transactions with Monsieur Attali, the Special Adviser of and the Personal Representative of the President of the French Republic, last weekend about the French attitude to the Falklands resolution in the United Nations General Assembly.

2. On the evening of 5 November, shortly after his arrival, Monsieur Attali said that the President had been thinking of ringing up the Prime Minister but had decided to co-convey his message through Monsieur Attali and me as Monsieur Attali was coming to London. It related to the Falklands resolution. The President was aware of the importance of this for the Prime Minister and her Government, and was anxious to try to avoid doing anything which would increase her difficulties. He was minded to instruct the French Ambassador to the United Nations to abstain from voting on the resolution, though he was under some pressure from some members of the Government to vote for the resolution. It was possible, however, that the Argentine Government might be persuaded to excise from the draft resolution the references at the beginning of it to "a colonial situation" in the Falklands. The President wondered whether, if the Argentine Government could be persuaded to delete that clause, the Prime Minister would be very angry if France voted for the resolution. Mr Attali repeated that the President wanted to consult the Prime Minister about this, and to try to avoid doing anything to make life more difficult for her. He said that the President's understanding was that most if not all of the Europeans would be voting for the resolution.
3. Having consulted the Prime Minister, I responded to Monsieur Attali the next morning on the following lines. The Prime Minister was grateful to the President for consulting her on the matter, and for his desire to be helpful. She



would never forget his early pledge of support when the Argentines first invaded the Falklands. Her position was that the draft resolution was fundamentally unacceptable, and that the sort of drafting change envisaged by the President would not make it less so. Her impression from her conversation with Mr Papandrecu on 4 November had been that most of the Europeans would abstain from the resolution. Her fear would be that, if the resolution was modified, a number of those at present minded to abstain would come under pressure which they would find it difficult to resist to vote for the resolution. We should prefer that as many as possible of our friends and allies abstain on the resolution, if they could not vote against it. If the French Government changed its position and voted for the resolution, that would undoubtedly be taken by many others as giving them a lead which they should follow. Remembering President Mitterrand's early support for the British position on the Falklands, the Prime Minister very much hoped that the French Government would not seek to modify the draft resolution and would abstain from voting upon it when it came to the vote at the General Assembly. She would be very upset if the French Government decided to vote for the resolution.

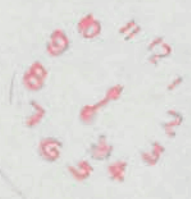
4. Monsieur Attali promised to report what I had said to the President immediately upon his return to Paris later that day.
5. I am sending a copy of this minute to Peter Ricketts at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

8 November 1983



8 NOV 1984



COMPTON

A J Coles Esq



CABINET OFFICE

With the compliments of
Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO
*Secretary of the Cabinet
and Head of the
Home Civil Service*

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS

Telephone 01-233 8319

CONFIDENTIAL



Note

Text of message approved - At JB's request passed this onto HO + asked him to despatch. ETA's PE of the told.

70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A083/3177

8 November 1983

Falklands at the General Assembly

I am writing separately to John Coles, with a copy to you, to record my transactions with Monsieur Attali over the weekend about the French position on the Falklands resolution. I am glad to be given a chance of commenting, in the light of those transactions, on the draft message to President Mitterrand enclosed with your letter of 7 November, which was not copied to us at the time.

Clearly the message to President Mitterrand should be modified to take account of my conversations with Monsieur Attali. I enclose a revised draft. The main change is to the introductory paragraph, but there are one or two minor changes down the line to reflect the points which the Prime Minister asked me to make to Monsieur Attali.

I am sending a copy of this letter and the revised draft to John Coles.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

P F Ricketts Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

File No.

Department

Drafted by
(Block Capitals)

Tel. Extn.

OUTWARD

TELEGRAM

Security Classification
CONFIDENTIAL

Precedence
IMMEDIATE

DESKBYZ

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

Despatched (Date)
(Time)Z

POSTBYZ

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.) (Restrictive Prefix)

(Security Class.) (Caveat/
Privacy marking)

(Codeword) (Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE (precedence) PARIS (post) Tel. No. of

AND TO (precedence/post)

AND SAVING TO

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Distribution:-

[TEXT] My tel no to Rome: Falklands at the General Assembly

Please pass the following message from the Prime Minister to President Mitterrand.

Begins:

When you were here on 20/21 October we had a word about the debate on the Falkland Islands at the United Nations General Assembly. You were good enough then to give me an assurance that France would not vote for the draft resolution as currently circulated by Argentina. Since then I have of course received the message which you conveyed to me at the weekend. I was most grateful to you for getting in touch with me again on this matter, and for your wish to know my personal attitude on the possibility of changes in the draft resolution and their implications for the voting intentions of our friends and allies. What Sir Robert Armstrong said to Monsieur Attali, speaking on my instructions after he

Copies to:-

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had transmitted your message to me, will have been reported to you. Nonetheless, with the vote due on 10 November, I thought that I should send you this message, to underline the great importance to us of the position to be adopted by France, whose support at the outset of and throughout the conflict in the South Atlantic I remember with deep gratitude.

Our attitude to the draft resolution is not affected by small details; its fundamental unacceptability to us would not be diminished by drafting changes such as (for example) the excision of the reference to "a colonial situation". What I am concerned about is Argentina's evident determination that the negotiations called for in the draft should have only one possible outcome: the transfer of sovereignty over the Islands to Argentina, regardless of the principle of self-determination which I know France always upholds and which applies to the people of the Falklands as much as to anyone else. France will surely understand the problems we face.

We all welcome the successful holding of elections in Argentina on 30 October. We in this country have been trying to develop a more normal relationship with Argentina and will be hoping for a better response from the new Government than we had from the military. I can understand the desire of European partners to make a gesture of encouragement and support to the emerging democratic Government in Argentina. But there are many ways in which this could be done. It should not be done in the context of the Falkland Islands or at the expense of the United Kingdom.

A switch to a positive vote by a country as important as France would send the wrong signal to the incoming Government. It would suggest to them that they should continue to follow the present sterile course and that we could eventually be brought to negotiate the transfer of sovereignty

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

File No.

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[TEXT]

against the wishes of the Islanders. This can only serve to maintain the present tension. I need hardly tell you with what dismay a positive vote by so close a partner and ally as France would be received in this country. It would also send the wrong signal to other Governments: we should be concerned that, given such a lead by France, others now minded to abstain would be emboldened to follow France's example. We are not asking you to vote with us and directly opposite to Argentina, but I do ask you most earnestly not to vote with Argentina and directly opposite to the United Kingdom.

Ends.

Copies to: -