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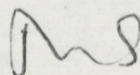
MR POWELL

In my conversation with Monsieur Attali we had some discussion of the French political scene.

2. Monsieur Attali said that, although the latest opinion polls appeared to show a turn in voting intentions back towards the Socialist Party, the general view (from which he did not dissent) was that that trend was not strong enough to produce Socialist majority for the elections to the National Assembly on 16 March 1986. The most likely outcome was probably that the Right would secure an absolute majority without the support of the extreme Right. In that case Monsieur Chirac would become the Prime Minister and Monsieur Giscard d'Estaing the Finance Minister. If the outcome of the election was that the Right did not have an absolute majority without the extreme Right, then the situation would be more open, because the Right would not be prepared to work with the extreme Right; the President would then be freer in his choice of Prime Minister. I had the impression that this was the outcome which the President would regard as best of all. Monsieur Attali said that President Mitterrand would complete his mandate, whatever happened in the Assembly elections. This was for "high political" reasons: if the President gave up because the Assembly elections had gone against his Party, it would mean that Parliament was supreme and could turn out the President at will. That would never do. The only circumstances in which the President might have to go prematurely would be if, during the two years between the Assembly elections and the next Presidential election, another Assembly election was called, either because the President

decided to call it or because the Prime Minister resigned, and that election went very much against the President and his Party.

3. I am sending copies of this minute to Len Appleyard and Sherard Cowper-Coles.



ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Approved by Sir Robert
and signed in his absence

5 November 1985