



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

27 July 1981

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 10 July about the Franco-British Council Meeting in Edinburgh next year. I shall be glad to have a word with President Mitterrand next week about the Council. I would not, however, expect to be able to carry the matter very far at this stage. Your more detailed ideas will have to be discussed further, in the light of the general attitude of the French Government, between my Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the period before President Mitterrand's next visit in September.

I shall, of course, try to fit in with whatever arrangements seem most likely to ensure a successful meeting. However, I hope you will bear in mind that, as I mentioned in my letter of 3 March to Lord Thomson, I will not be able to make a major speech to the Council. As you know, I shall be addressing the Conservative Scottish Conference in Perth on the evening of Friday, 14 May.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Sir Philip de Zulueta.

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Michael

Have you had advice
on this?

Kay
23/1/81



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 July 1981

JS
20/7

Dear Francis

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Sir Philip de Zulueta about next year's meeting of the Franco-British Council in Edinburgh. We here will be considering the diary implications of what Sir Philip proposes. I should be grateful for early advice from you, however, as to whether or not the Prime Minister should raise this issue with President Mitterrand, on 29 July. I note that Sir Philip claims to have discussed his letter with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

I am, incidentally, a little anxious on one point. The Prime Minister made it clear when she wrote to Lord Thomson on 3 March accepting this engagement, that she would not be prepared to make a major speech to the Council. I enclose a copy of her letter for ease of reference. I see little reflection of the Prime Minister's wish in Sir Philip's letter. I should stress that the condition attached by the Prime Minister to her acceptance is a real one: there is no chance of her being prepared to focus on a substantive foreign affairs speech in the period before the Scottish Party Conference or of her being prepared to deliver one a mere twenty-four hours after she has addressed that Conference.

Yours ever

Michael Alexander

Francis Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SIR PHILIP DE ZULUETA
CHAIRMAN

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10th July, 1981.

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Dear Prime Minister

Franco British Council: Meeting in Edinburgh

You may perhaps be aware that the Foreign Secretary recently appointed me Chairman of the British Section of the Franco British Council in succession to George Thomson who felt that he could no longer carry on. I am therefore writing in that capacity about the proposed meeting of the Council in Edinburgh in May 1982. We have provisionally reached agreement with the French on the dates of May 14th to 16th and we were much influenced in our suggestions by the fact that you will, I believe, be at the Scottish Conservative Conference in Perth on May 14th and had told George Thomson that you would be prepared to speak to the Franco British Council in Edinburgh on May 15th.

Earlier this month I went up to Edinburgh to look at the provisional arrangements. We are kindly being allowed to hold meetings in the Parliament Hall and in the Library of the Writers to the Signet which is adjacent. This will provide a very splendid and appropriate setting and everyone in Edinburgh seems enthusiastic. One complication, however, is that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland have advanced the date of their annual meeting by one week and are having their Opening Session on the evening of May 14th. This means that the City of Edinburgh are now thinking of giving a luncheon for the Franco British Council on Saturday instead of a dinner on Friday. Our present plan is for the Friday evening to be relatively informal after a reception at the Castle by the Secretary of State for Scotland, and to have a dinner at Hopetoun House, which can be hired for such occasions, on the Saturday evening.

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.

10th July, 1981.

We cannot proceed any further now until we are sure of the attitude of the new French Government. In particular the present French Chairman, Geoffroy de Courcel, is anyway retiring on October 1st and his successor has not yet been appointed. Also we do not know whether M. Mitterrand will be favourably inclined towards the work of the Council.

As you know the French are very conscious of status and there is no doubt that the success of the May meeting will depend on how much support, moral as well as financial, the French Government give it. Obviously it would be very desirable if M. Mitterrand would agree to come to Edinburgh but I realise the difficulties. If he cannot come himself it will really be essential to persuade M. Mauroy to come and of course your willingness to do so will be crucial. It occurs to me that it may be a little difficult to persuade either M. Mitterrand or M. Mauroy to come to Edinburgh merely for luncheon on Saturday May 15th and that we should therefore consider whether you would be prepared to speak not at the lunch on May 15th but in the evening at Hopetoun. The French President or Prime Minister might then be invited to come and also speak at that dinner and perhaps to stay the night. It occurs to me too that this might be an opportunity for some discussions with yourself or for some other engagement in Scotland. I understand incidentally that the Secretary of State for Scotland has a suite at Bute House in Charlotte Square where a French dignitary could be worthily accommodated.

I wonder, therefore, if you would be prepared to raise this whole question of the Franco British Council with President Mitterrand in the near future, perhaps at Prince Charles' Wedding, to secure his support for the Council and, if possible, his agreement to come to Edinburgh. I wonder also whether you would be prepared to offer to speak on the Saturday evening rather than at luncheon, if this would be more attractive to the French. We really must get some decisions from the French in September at the latest because of the need to make bookings and invite participants; it is also obviously very important that they should appoint an appropriate Chairman for the French Section of the Council.

I have discussed all this with Peter Carrington and agreed with him that I would write to you on the above lines. I should, of course, be very grateful for your continuing interest in the work of the Council and in particular for your intervention with M. Mitterrand.

Yours sincerely
Philip de Zureña