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✓ Foreign & Commonwealth Council



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

2 June 1982

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The Hon. Mr. Ardagh  
Foreign & Commonwealth Council  
14/6

Mr. J. Ardagh

Thank you for your letter of 26 May. The quotation from your interesting book "The New France" went down very well at the Edinburgh dinner, even in its censored form. I note your view that my caution may have been unnecessary. I shall look forward to reading your new book "France in the 1980s".

Yours sincerely

John Ardagh, Esq.

Raymond Stiller

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The Prime Minister,  
the Right Hon. Margaret  
Thatcher, M.P.,  
No. 10 Downing Street,  
London SW1.

26th May 1982

Dear Prime Minister,

I am flattered that you should have quoted from my book "The New France", towards the end of your speech to the Franco-British Council at the dinner in Edinburgh on 15th May.

Nor am I especially dismayed that, on the advice of your staff as I learn, you excised the phrase, "the French had berets and bidets and the English did not", although it was in the text of the speech as distributed.

I understand that it was felt that the reference to bidets might have caused offence to the French Prime Minister and to other French guests at the dinner. Personally, I am not sure that this fear was justified: the jovial Pierre Mauroy might more probably have been amused by my remark. But never mind. I forgive you for your censorship of my text.

My new book, "France in the 1980s", is being published next month by Secker & Warburg and Penguin Books. I shall ask them to send you a copy shortly, in the hope that one day you may be able to give this book too some publicity. It contains no reference to bidets.

Forgive a frivolous letter in such distressful times. I take this opportunity of congratulating you on your courageous and honourable stand over the Falkland Islands.

Yours respectfully,  
John Ardagh