

SUBJECT

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 November 1982

RELATIONS WITH FRANCE

There was some discussion of this question when the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was here today for a general talk with the Prime Minister about foreign policy issues.

With regard to the recent reports of a French agreement with the Soviet Union about exports of subsidised agricultural products (the Minister of Agriculture's minute of 19 November and the Foreign Secretary's minute of 22 November refer), it was agreed that the right tactic was to let the Commission take the lead in dealing with the French. We should of course take any necessary action to make sure that the Commission did intervene effectively.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he thought it would be a mistake to indulge in continuous criticism of the French on too many fronts. The Prime Minister was inclined to agree with this. We should be more selective and on occasion it would be more effective to adopt French tactics, e.g. by quietly impeding their export of a particular product to this country rather than publicly criticising some aspect of their trade policy. For the moment, the important thing was to retain French support on the question of fisheries.

The Prime Minister stated that, while our relations with France were often difficult to handle, we must remember that Mitterrand stood by us on the Falklands affair and that he was sound on nuclear policy. Both these points were important.

I am copying this letter to Robert Lowson (MAFF).

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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