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

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A085/1207

29 April 1985

Dear Shuard,

The French Ambassador called, at his initiative, on Sir Robert Armstrong on Friday 26 April to discuss the forthcoming Economic Summit. The ostensible purpose of Monsieur Viot's visit was to discover British attitudes and views of the prospects in advance of the Summit and much of the conversation was therefore taken up with a general account of Sir Robert's impressions, following the last meeting of the Personal Representatives, which I do not need to record.

On the Summit, the main points made by Monsieur Viot were as follows:

- (a) The French expected United States pressure for a specific date for the start of a new GATT trade round.
- (b) Chancellor Köhl was likely to wish for slightly stronger commitments on the environment because of the pressure from the Greens in Germany (Sir Robert commented that, although he understood the domestic pressures on Chancellor Köhl, the final meeting of Personal Representatives had, in fact, agreed a text, ad referendum, on environmental matters).
- (c) The French were strongly against any additional political declarations eg on Afghanistan or Kampuchea.
- (d) In the course of an exchange on exchange rate problems, Monsieur Viot commented that he hoped that the communiqué would include some form of reference to the need for the Japanese to import more.

/Finally,

Sherard Cowper-Coles Esq

Time Minister  
RTA went a bit  
further than he should  
have on the need for  
a European response  
on SDI research

CSD  
29/4.

MS

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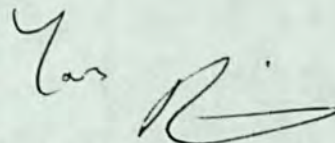
Finally, Monsieur Viot turned to President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) (and this seemed to be the main point of his visit). Monsieur Viot said that he hoped that the French proposal to strengthen co-operation on technological matters between the European countries would be discussed in the margins of the Summit. They regarded this initiative as very important as they were becoming increasingly concerned about the technological gap between the United States and Europe and were afraid that the SDI would widen this gap and would also tempt many European scientists to the United States.

Although the French had proposed a European agency to promote technological co-operation, they understood that some European countries might not favour a new institution of this sort and were very open-minded on the framework which a European initiative might take and on which countries would be involved: it might be confined to "the Ten", or open to any of the Community who wished to take part or might even include one or two countries from outside the Community (perhaps Sweden or Switzerland). It was very important that the European countries should study this initiative closely before responding to the letter from Mr Weinberger.

Sir Robert Armstrong commented that, although we would probably have reservations about the creation of a new agency, the Government was very sympathetic to greater European co-operation in technological matters, especially in the defence area. He referred to the discussions that had been taking place between Mr Heseltine and Monsieur Hernu and also to the progress that had been made on the Channel fixed link. The Prime Minister was very pleased with the progress that had been made on the latter and was likely to mention it to President Mitterrand at the Summit.

Finally the French asked whether there was likely to be pressure from the United States to make a declaration in support of the SDI during the Economic Summit. Sir Robert said that this had been discussed briefly at the last meeting of the Personal Representatives and he doubted whether there would now be pressure for a public declaration at the Summit, although this could not be guaranteed. Monsieur Viot said that the French would very much prefer to discuss the subject separately amongst the Europeans before replying to Weinberger and asked when the British Government planned to reply. Sir Robert noted that Mr Weinberger had withdrawn his original deadline and he hoped that this would make it possible for the Europeans to make a co-ordinated response.

I am sending copies of this letter to Charles Powell at No 10 and Richard Mottram in the Ministry of Defence.



(R P Hatfield)  
Private Secretary

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