

SECRET AND PERSONALPRIME MINISTERUNITED STATES

Antony Acland came to see me this evening to raise a number of points. His main message was that the Government - and you in particular - were getting a very bad press in the United States at the moment. He left me the attached extracts. The general theme was that you were increasingly isolated and embattled in Europe and that in consequence the special relationship was no longer what it was. The US Administration was paying more attention to President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl. I said that this was a classic example of short-termism. The issues on which you were "isolated" in Europe were issues on the substance of which the Americans would be entirely in agreement with you. Moreover, you had always foreseen that there would be a period early in the new Administration when there would inevitably be some re-balancing of American relations with the UK, Germany and France. You continued to believe that, when things got difficult, the Americans would soon find out who their true friends were.

Antony accepted this but nonetheless thinks you need to go over to Washington in the reasonably near future for a proper visit and to deliver one or two speeches to set the record straight. I said that I thought you would find it difficult to get over there in the autumn given all your other commitments, particularly if major speeches were involved. I thought the earliest you could contemplate would be the first part of 1990. Antony clearly thought this was a bit late but would welcome a visit as soon as possible in the New Year if that is the earliest you could manage. He thinks in terms of the inside of a week in the United States, with a formal visit to Washington and speaking engagements in two major cities, as well as a lot of media activity.

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It would be very helpful to have a steer from you on this. In particular, would you be ready to contemplate a visit to the United States early in the New year?

*There would have to be some purpose not*

Antony also mentioned a concern he has that the FCO and MOD are being too bureaucratic and niggling on some minor issues and irritating the Americans considerably, to the point where it could be damaging to our much more fundamental interests like Trident. He cited as an example our performance over the counting rules for aircraft in the CFE negotiations. It was quite clear that the Americans would do nothing to interfere with our dual capability aircraft: but they seemed to have a valid point on the definition and inclusion of training aircraft, yet our officials had fought them tooth and nail. He thought that we ought to be more discriminating in the battles we chose.

I said that I knew you were very aware of this consideration: indeed, it had governed your decision to be the first to support President Bush's CFE initiative at the NATO Summit in Brussels. There was some feeling on our side that the Americans were a bit cavalier when it came to the detail, but I accepted that there were only a limited number of battles we could fight and that we must make sure they were really important. I would report his misgivings to you and you might mention them to the Foreign and Defence Secretaries.

Would you be prepared to do this?

*Yes not*

*e.s.?*

CHARLES POWELL

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BRITAIN'S POSITION: US MEDIA: EXTRACTS

New York Times: 1 June : Whitney from London

"But the hopes Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once had of achieving a special position of seniority among the European allies, and of becoming a trusted intermediary between Mr Bush and President Mikhail S Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, will clearly never become reality, according to both European and American diplomats here . . .

In the corridors in Brussels, American voices made a similar point. They were whispering not about the need to give ground to Mrs Thatcher, as in Mr Reagan's day, but about the need to accommodate Chancellor Kohl's serious domestic political problems. There was an undercurrent of impatience with the Briton's arrogant style; one United States policy maker said he had "heard one lecture too many from her."

New York Times: 2 June: Apple from London

"President Bush made it sound today as if nothing had changed (in the special relationship)... But in fact things have changed and they will probably keep right on changing ...

The United States is going to pay more attention to the continental powers and a little less to Britain ... A top American official predicted that Mrs Thatcher will find Mr Bush a much less automatic supporter ...

Yet beneath the unity achieved by the alliance this week there lurks a new competition for European leadership, and the United States appears increasingly preoccupied with what West Germany thinks as it shapes a European policy for the new era. Partly, the change reflects geography. Germany is the center of Europe, Britain on the periphery ...

Mrs Thatcher is a reluctant European, resistant to many of the implications of the greater integration that is scheduled for completion in 1992. That undercuts her country's standing in NATO as well as the European Community, and that makes it hard for Washington to visualize London as the avenue into the new Europe."

Washington Post: 2 June: Broder from London

"The policy of caution toward Gorbachev that Mrs Thatcher urged on Bush and that he first seemed inclined to accept has been swept aside by European - especially German - enthusiasm to test the Gorbachev promises."

USA Today: 20 June

"Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's revolution has met the voters - and lost."

Wall Street Journal: 20 June

"Earlier this year Mrs Thatcher was the strongest leader in Western Europe ...

Six months later Mrs Thatcher seems to be loosing her grip. At last month's NATO Summit, West Germany assumed Britain's role as main interlocutor between East and West. Add the British Conservative Party's setback in the EC parliamentary vote Sunday .. It hurts her as much in Europe as it does in Britain."

New York Times: 28 June: Lewis from Madrid

"She remains clearly out of step with the renewed determination of the other members to coalesce their economic power .. Mrs Thatcher, like many others worries about the future drift of Germany. But her antidote is to cling to an increasingly illusory "special relation" between Britain and America.

The dominant continental view including that of the Bonn Government, is to anchor West Germany ever more firmly in a well-defined European Community, so it can deal with the East without risking its bearings. (But) Mrs Thatcher sees only immediate political maneuvering .. These summit conferences do involve a lot of petty haggling and posturing. But there is movement under way, bringing long-term change in the European order. Mrs Thatcher's lonely attempt to stop the tide is more evidence that it is running."