

Ref. A084/173

MR COLES

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c Mr Fall

I shall be reporting tomorrow on the substance of my conversation with Monsieur Attali this afternoon, but I should report at once on the practical aspects of it.

2. Monsieur Attali said that in the French Administration no-one outside the Elysee and very few people inside it knew about the Prime Minister's visit. (For what it is worth, it appeared that Monsieur Dumas, with whom I also had a meeting, did not know that the visit had been arranged.) It was for this reason that he had been disturbed to be contacted by Sir John Fretwell about the announcement and the arrangements for the visit. I explained to Monsieur Attali that it was really not possible for the Prime Minister to undertake such a visit without telling the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the British Ambassador in the country concerned. But we would of course respect the confidence of the French Government, and the British Ambassador was under strict instructions not to mention the forthcoming visit to anyone. One of the reasons why the Ambassador needed to know was because there were a number of practical arrangements to be made. I hoped that Monsieur Attali would be able to give me the name of someone in the President's entourage with whom the Ambassador could be in contact on these practical details. Monsieur Attali gave me the name of Monsieur Jean Glavany, the Chef de Cabinet, and I subsequently passed this name on to Sir John Fretwell.

3. As to the announcement, Monsieur Attali said that in envisaging no prior announcement the President had thought that he was meeting the Prime Minister's wishes. He certainly did not wish to make a mystery of the visit or to arouse suspicions. We discussed the timing of an announcement, and eventually agreed that it should be on the afternoon of Friday 20 January at 4.00 pm GMT (5.00 pm Paris time). Monsieur Attali said that the President would not



want the announcement made during the morning, when the President would be on an official visit to Monaco. This arrangement is subject to confirmation with the President, but Monsieur Attali had no reason to suppose he would object.

4. As to the text of the announcement, Monsieur Attali is to ring me tomorrow. I should be grateful to have, as soon as possible tomorrow morning, the up to date version of the text we have in mind.

5. I agreed with Monsieur Attali that there should be no communique after the visit and no press conference. Monsieur Attali asked about a photocall. I said that I thought that the Prime Minister would have no objection to being photographed shaking hands with the President on her arrival, but thought that she would be entirely content to accept the President's decision on that.

6. Monsieur Attali said that he thought that he would meet the Prime Minister at the airport and accompany her to wherever the lunch was to be held. I suggested that this could perhaps be discussed as part of the practical arrangements: I thought that it was possible that the Prime Minister might wish to travel with the Ambassador.

7. Monsieur Attali said that the President had still not finally decided where the lunch would be held, but it would probably be at either the Chateau de Marly or at the Elysée. He asked whether the Prime Minister would wish the lunch to be tete-a-tete. I said that she would be accompanied by you, and would be perfectly content for the President to be accompanied by Monsieur Attali himself. As to interpretation, Monsieur Attali said that the President would be perfectly content for his interpreter to work both ways, if the Prime Minister was content.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17 January 1984