



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 May, 1984

Prime Minister.

Copy: Mr. Ingham

A. J. C. 5.1

New John.

No-Passport Excursions to France

In my letter of 16 April I described the background to this problem, and pointed to the possibility of early French denunciation of the Anglo-French agreement on no-passport excursions.

Since I wrote, we have made a number of approaches to the French to stave off a denunciation and preserve the agreement, including a personal message from the Foreign Secretary to M. Cheysson; but the latter's reply was negative and on 27 April the French told us that they proposed to denounce the agreement the following day.

We made a final bid to save something from the wreck by suggesting a postponement of denunciation by one month while we examined the possibility of an entirely new scheme whereby the Post Office might issue excursion cards. Although this would be much less attractive than the present arrangement (it would involve the public in producing documentation to support their application as well as paying a fee) we think that it might be better than nothing for the travelling public and commercial carriers.

The French replied by agreeing to suspend denunciation by one week. Our new ideas will be discussed with the French on 4 May, when the Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry will be in London for talks with Sir Antony Acland. The French give us to understand that if no agreement is reached then they will have to denounce very shortly thereafter: their haste (so they tell us) is to ensure termination before the tourist season of the present arrangements, which they consider open to abuse (though they have not been able to produce any clear evidence). The two months notice required would mean termination in the early days of July.

As a contingency we have prepared the attached draft statement for issue by the FCO/Home Office in the event of denunciation. This has been agreed by Ministers in both Departments. We will also be circulating supplementary material on the implications and consequences of the denunciation, to help in meeting press and parliamentary queries.

We shall also, if necessary, provide a short brief for the Prime Minister's meeting with M. Mitterrand on Friday.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Minister of Transport and (with a copy of my letter under reference) the

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Lord President, the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Whip.

Yes
R B Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The French Government have told us of their decision to end the present arrangements for no-passport excursions to France, which have been in existence for nearly 30 years. In accordance with the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding covering this scheme, two months' notice must be given. The French decision means that the present arrangements will come to an end on 1 July.

2. On 12 August last year the FCO/Home Office issued a statement saying that the French Government were prepared to admit only British citizens on no-passport excursion cards, and that other Commonwealth citizens must travel on a passport, obtaining a visa where appropriate. This holds good until 30 June. But the French denunciation means that, after that date, everyone must carry a standard or British Visitors' Passport.

3. The background is as follows. Last summer the French authorities asked to have discussions about the operation of the no-passport scheme. They were concerned that the scheme was open to abuse by persons not entitled to benefit under it. Since then a series of discussions has been held at official and Ministerial level. We have also been in close touch with the tour operators and carriers.

4. We put forward detailed proposals involving substantial changes in the scheme, designed to meet ~~[the main]~~ French concerns. The French Government, for their part, continue to insist that the only acceptable excursion identity card would be one issued by the British Government which certified the nationality and identity of the passenger. But to do this would involve the same sort of procedures as people have to follow when they apply for an ordinary passport, including the payment of a fee. This would undermine the spirit and purpose of the no-passport excursion arrangements, which is to provide easy and cheap travel to France.



5. The British Government very much regret the end of a scheme which has operated smoothly for so many years to the mutual benefit of all concerned. We shall continue to be in touch with the French authorities in the hope that it may be possible to devise some new arrangement acceptable to them, and which is consistent with our wish to keep no-passport excursion arrangements in being.

France: Anglo/French relations pt 2.

