

PRIME MINISTER

EUROPE AND DEFENCE

Geoffrey Howe's minute (attached) is unexceptionable  
but does not amount to much.

The problems are all too well-known: how to maintain the US commitment to the defence of Europe? How to avoid being excluded from a cosy Franco-German relationship?

But the proposals for action (paragraph 5) hardly measure up to them:                     

- 5(i): you already constantly reassert the scale of Britain's contribution to the defence of Europe. It is hardly a proposal for new action.
  
- 5(ii): talking more about security and defence issues at bilateral summits with Kohl and Mitterrand is sensible. But there is no suggestion as to what new might be said which is not being said already: how to make more impact: nor how to get round the problem of Kohl's inability to discuss these issues productively.
  
- 5(iii): the goal of greater European arms co-operation has been recognised for years. But progress towards it has been patchy. We need more specific ideas on

it. 'Engaging French interest' in improving the European contribution to Alliance force planning sounds a bit craven. They have chosen not to integrate their forces into NATO. We should not run after them. It is more important to tug the Germans back to our side. Thought needs to be given to possible initiatives to achieve this.

- 5(iv): is only a recommendation to go on repeating what we say already.

There is no discussion of some ideas which you have put forward: how to highlight France's non-participation in the military side of the Alliance? how to bring home to the Germans how little the French do for them compared with us? how to make them aware that they cannot continue to take us for granted if they gang up with the French? possibility of a meeting with General Rogers?

Altogether a bit high-minded and soggy. Agree to say that you want to see some more concrete, specific and imaginative proposals?

C.D.P.

Ms - what can we do through N.A.T.O. especially on matters from which the French are excluded etc

26 July 1984