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Prime Minister

CONVERSATION WITH MONSIEUR RAYMOND BARRE

On January 29th I went to see Monsieur Raymond Barre in Paris, both out of general interest and because I had heard it said on several occasions that although he may turn out to be the next president of France, he never meets any Englishmen. I found Monsieur Barre extremely relaxed and very clear. He plainly is nothing like so dynamic as Monsieur Chirac, but I expect he is more trustworthy. For that reason alone the French who have suffered from experiments under Mitterand, are surely more likely to choose him as their next president.

Monsieur Barre said that he thought the next presidential election might very well be next year, 1986, since he could not imagine Mitterand staying on if he loses (as looks likely) the parliamentary elections.

Monsieur Barre was extremely encouraging about his hopes to create in France, despite its history of .. an overweening state, what he calls a liberal society in which government intervention in the country and society generally is progressively reduced. He thought that the experience of socialism had convinced the nation (and many socialists) that the less the state bossed people around the stronger the economy would become. He himself initiated an extension of these views by referring to the need to complete the internal market in the Community. He agrees absolutely with you on the importance of giving this subject priority. He thought that the European Community, like France, was at a stage where it wanted practical solutions not ideologies (nous sommes tous dans l'époque du fin d'ideologie). Unlike Monsieur Chirac, he strongly supports the entry of Spain to the European Community providing the proper transitional stage can be reached. He was a little more cynical about Monsieur Mitterand's attitude towards the Soviet Union than the rest of us generally are.

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He adjured me to read Mademoiselle Ney's biography about Mitterand "Le Noir et le Rouge" which I hope to read shortly.

For what it is worth, my sister-in-law who is married to a French scientist confirms that their circle of alarmingly avant garde computerised frenchmen all look to Monsieur Barre as a good prospect for the future.

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(From  
Hugh Thomas)

January 30, 1985