



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

5 March 1984

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cc. Lebanon: Int  
Foreign Pol  
East/West

Visit of President Mitterrand

I have sent to you separately a record of the discussion which took place at Chequers today about European Community issues.

I should record that over lunch there was also a brief discussion of the situation in the Lebanon and the Gulf and an exchange about East/West relations.

On the Lebanon, President Mitterrand said that the French were contemplating withdrawal but the problem was that withdrawal from the particular part of Beirut where French troops now were could result in an upsurge of fighting and many deaths. His present pre-occupation was therefore that suitable arrangements should be made to avoid this.

Taking up a reference by the Prime Minister to Syria, the President said that there had certainly been an attempt at a coup d'etat. But it was not clear whether President Assad's brother or some other general had been behind this.

The discussion on the Gulf provided no new insights.

With regard to East/West relations, President Mitterrand said that he expected no dramatic changes in Soviet policy following the change in leadership. He expressed the view that the Soviet system would crack before the year 2000 - though he later modified this and spoke in terms of a serious crisis occurring before then. His fear was that the Soviet Army would then take over. They were now the real party - and there was less corruption in the Armed Forces than elsewhere.

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