



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 March 1984

MEETING WITH MR. MACGREGOR TO DISCUSS CHANNEL
CROSSING

Mr. MacGregor came to see the Prime Minister today to discuss the Channel crossing. He argued that any crossing must provide for road traffic. The rail only tunnels would perpetuate and even enhance the monopoly power of rail unions on both sides of the Channel and would fail to cater for the predominant form of freight traffic. EuroRoute did not provide a monopoly for any mode of transport.

The Prime Minister put forward the argument in the brief provided by your Department that the technology of bored tunnels was well known while the EuroRoute proposal would involve advancement of technology in a number of areas. Mr. MacGregor challenged this argument. He said that his experience in mining had taught him that bored tunnels were almost invariably much more difficult to construct than at first envisaged. It was extremely difficult to assess rock conditions in advance. He denied also that the technology involved in EuroRoute required major advances. When the proposal had been originally developed by BSC, long span bridges were involved. This reflected the interests of BSC's bridgebuilding subsidiary, Redpath, Dorman, Long. The current EuroRoute proposal was based on piers with spans of only 125 meters. The trenching and laying of pre-fabricated tunnels which was proposed had been used to construct the Bay Area Rapid Transit System in San Francisco and was being employed in the Fort McHenry Tunnel in Baltimore.

The discussion was brief and the cost of EuroRoute and its method of finance were not raised.

I am copying this letter to John Kerr (H.M. Treasury) and Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

ANDREW TURNBULL

Miss Dinah Nichols,
Department of Transport.