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Ref. A085/2824MR POWELL

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Pine Minister
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I had a conversation with Monsieur Attali in Paris yesterday.

2. I said that the Prime Minister was looking forward to President Mitterrand's visit on 18 November. I explained that it was probable (though not certain) that she would have to make a statement in the House of Commons that afternoon; and that the proceedings would therefore need to be over by 3.00 pm. Monsieur Attali showed no signs whatever of concern about that.

3. We briefly reviewed a number of bilateral problems which had been disturbing the Anglo-French relationship recently.

4. Monsieur Attali raised the matter of the British Government's reaction to the "Rainbow Warrior" affair, which had upset the President. I said that we had abstained from any reaction until the French Government had formally acknowledged its involvement; and then we had said as little as we could, given the strength of public feeling and the volume of media activity on the matter. Monsieur Attali commented that other European partners had not felt obliged to say anything. I reminded him that "Rainbow Warrior" was a British registered ship.

5. Monsieur Attali said that the President had been "very upset" by the sentence in the CHOGM communiqué which recorded that Heads of Government "stressed the need for the early independence of New Caledonia". I explained in detail the problems which the Prime Minister had faced at the meeting, the success of her achievement in arriving at a declaration on South Africa which was acceptable to us, despite overwhelming odds,

and the difficulty of pushing every point in the communiqué. I said that the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had tried to get the offending sentence deleted, but had met very stiff opposition from members of the South African Forum because the sentence had already been included in the communiqué issued by that Forum. Monsieur Attali said that we could at least have used the "most of us stressed" formula that we had succeeded in using in the paragraph on nuclear free zones. I said that I was gratified that the President had read the communiqué in such detail: I thought that he was one of only very few who had done so.

6. Monsieur Attali referred in passing to the French Government's concern about the tactics which British Ministers were supposed to have used in seeking to persuade the Americans to buy Ptarmigan rather than Rita.

7. On the United Nations Falklands resolution, Monsieur Attali was at some pains to explain that the policy described in Monsieur Dumas's recent letter to Sir Geoffrey Howe was not new: it reflected the statement which the President had made in public when President Alfonsin visited Paris in September. In the relevant sentence of that speech, President Mitterrand said (my translation): "Our situation in the European Community authorises me to declare here that we shall approve any initiative which promotes a negotiated solution between the Argentinians and the British on the subject of the Falkland Islands. Indeed, I am convinced that no solution is possible apart from negotiation without any bar on any subject. To refuse to lend oneself to that will only delay the coming of peace".

8. I think that Monsieur Attali was making this point largely in order to establish that French policy on this matter antedated the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting communiqué. I said that the Prime Minister had been very upset

[? Did you know]

by the French Government's decision to vote for the draft Argentinian resolution. She recalled that President Mitterrand had been the first Head of State or Government to express his support for Britain at the time of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands. It was the more disappointing that he should now feel it necessary to support the Argentine draft resolution in the United Nations. She was bound to take a very serious view of the matter, since the French decision would undoubtedly encourage others to follow suit. I had no doubt that she would want to take this matter up with the President.

9. We agreed, however, that these no doubt troublesome bilateral issues should not be allowed to detract from the major matters on which the British and the French positions had much in common.

[?]

10. I said that I thought that the Prime Minister would want to concentrate in her meeting with President Mitterrand in the first instance on East/West relations, arms control, the forthcoming Reagan-Gorbachev summit and Mr Gorbachev's recent visit to Paris. I had no doubt that she would be extremely interested to hear the President's personal impressions of Mr Gorbachev; she had noted with admiration the President's firm stand against attempts to divide the Atlantic Alliance.

11. Monsieur Attali remarked that Mr Gorbachev had said very little to the President in private which he had not also said in public. The President had been much on guard against attempts to divide the Alliance. Monsieur Attali's own personal impression of Mr Gorbachev had been that he was extremely well informed and articulate. He agreed that Mr Gorbachev's approach was pragmatic, but that he remained through and through a Marxist. Mrs Gorbachev had also greatly impressed those who had met her.

12. Monsieur Attali said that the President would also wish to discuss the Middle East with the Prime Minister. Mr Peres had been in Paris the previous week, and King Hussein is due to be there this week. The President would wish to consider with Mrs Thatcher the prospects for getting a dialogue going between the Israeli Government and the Jordanians without the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). He asked whether we knew why the two PLO leaders had withdrawn their commitment to eschew violence and therefore denied themselves the ability to talk to Sir Geoffrey Howe. I said that we thought that it was as likely as anything to be a matter of personal fear.

[?] 13. I said that I thought that the Prime Minister would wish to discuss European Community affairs with the President, and particularly how he saw the development of the Intergovernmental Conference in relation to the forthcoming meeting of the European Council in Luxembourg. I thought that our own hope would be that the European Council could at least agree to some kind of set of principles, arising out of the work of the Intergovernmental Conference. I said that it seemed to us that the French and British positions in the Intergovernmental Conference were in practice pretty close to each other. We had not excluded the possibility of Treaty amendments, though we would on the whole prefer not to amend the Treaties unless there was very good reason for doing so. Monsieur Attali did not comment on any of this, save to say that he agreed that the French and British positions were not far apart. I had the impression it was some time since he had had to involve himself in this subject.

[?] 14. Finally, I told Monsieur Attali, making it clear that I was speaking for his and the President's ears only, that it was likely that the British and Irish Governments would conclude an agreement shortly: indeed, it was for the purpose of making a statement on this that the Prime Minister would have to conclude her time with the President on 18 November not later than

3.00 pm, if an agreement had (as we expected) been concluded before then. I described briefly the reasons why the two Governments had decided to embark on negotiations for the agreement, the nature of the agreement which now appeared to be in sight, and the problems and opportunities that might be encountered as a result of it. I said that I was sure that both the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach would hope that, if an agreement was reached, the French Government would be able to give it a positive welcome as a hopeful development in relations between two members of the European Community. Monsieur Attali said that he understood that there was some question of a fund. I said that the agreement was likely to contain a commitment by the two Governments to work together for purposes of economic reconstruction and development, particularly in Northern Ireland, and would envisage the possibility of international support for that. There were indications that the United States Administration might be willing to make a contribution for this purpose, and the intention was that the two Governments should set up a fund to administer contributions so received. Contributions would of course be welcome from other Governments and from the European Community.

15. I am sending copies of this minute to Len Appleyard and Sherard Cowper-Coles.



ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Approved by Sir Robert and
Signed in his absence

5 November 1985



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OK.
am

10 DOWNING STREET

Charles,
RTA's office.
rang to say that Sir
Robert would like to
be involved in the
11pm^{plenary} meeting with the
French and the lunch
thereafter. If you are
content can you
arrange to have him
added to the guest-list.

AP 5/11/85.