

RESTRICTED



10 DOWNING STREET

file 1/10
(44)
a file P Cadore

From the Private Secretary

13 December 1985

CHANNEL FIXED LINK

I see from the telegrams that the French Government are thinking that the proposed meeting between the Prime Minister and President Mitterrand in January to announce the choice of project for the Channel Fixed Link should be followed by a lunch and speeches. If this is indeed to be the case, it would be helpful to set work in hand now on a draft speech, and in particular have some research done into projects for a Channel tunnel in earlier centuries, which might provide some interesting and witty historical allusions.

I am copying this letter to Richard Allan (Department of Transport).

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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 FM PARIS
 TO IMMEDIATE F C O
 TELNO 1111
 OF 111224Z DECEMBER 85

PARIS TELNO 1084: CHANNEL FIXED LINK

1. THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL TELEPHONED TO DISCUSS ARRANGMENTS FOR THE MEETING OR MEETINGS BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND MITTERRAND. HIS OBJECT WAS TO SOUND US OUT ABOUT ONE OR TWO NEW SUGGESTIONS.
2. THE FRENCH ARE LEANING TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE OF OUR PROPOSED DATE OF 20 JANUARY FOR THE FIRST MEETING. THEY WOULD CLEARLY LIKE IT TO BE HELD IN LILLE, BUT AWAIT A REACTION FROM US BEFORE MAKING A FIRM PROPOSAL. THIS WOULD REPLACE THEIR EARLIER IDEA OF MEETING IN CALAIS. THEY ENVISAGE A SHORT MEETING, FOLLOWED BY A PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH THE CHOICE OF THE SUCCESSFUL PROJECT WOULD BE ANNOUNCED. THEY THINK TENTATIVELY THAT THIS MIGHT BE FOLLOWED BY A LUNCH WITH SPEECHES.
3. THE FRENCH NOW SEEM INCLINED TO THINK THAT THE SECOND MEETING, FOR SIGNATURE OF THE TREATY, SHOULD BE IN THE UK INSTEAD OF HOLDING BOTH MEETINGS ON THIS SIDE OF THE CHANNEL. THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL VOICED THE THOUGHT THAT IF IT TOOK AS MUCH AS FIVE WEEKS TO PREPARE THE TREATY FOR SIGNATURE, THIS WOULD BE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE FRENCH ELECTIONS ON 16 MARCH. IF THE TREATY WERE READY IN SAY THREE WEEKS, THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE LESS OF A PROBLEM. HE READILY ACCEPTED THAT DECISIONS ON THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE SECOND MEETING COULD BE TAKEN SEPARATELY FROM THE DECISION ON LILLE AND IN SLIGHTLY SLOWER TIME.
4. I AM NOT SURE WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER WISHES TO HOLD THE SECOND MEETING IN THE UK. IF SO. WE SHOULD AIM TO MAKE A PROPOSAL FAIRLY SOON, TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE LATEST ESTIMATE OF THE TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE WORK ON THE TREATY. EVEN BEFORE THEN IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE A FIRM DECISION ON THE SUGGESTED MEETING IN LILLE ON 20 JANUARY, WITH ANY PROPOSALS WE MIGHT WISH TO MAKE ON ARRANGEMENTS OF TIME.
5. FCO PLEASE ADVANCE IMMEDIATE TO PS AND WYBREW (NO 10), AND LYALL AND NOULTON (TRANSPORT).

FRETWELL

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PS LADY YOUNG

PS MR EGGAR

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MR DEREK THOMAS

MR BRAITHWAITE

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MR O'NEILL

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