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bc PC

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From the Private Secretary

Sir Robert Armstrong

I have discussed with the Prime Minister your minute of 3 October conveying President Mitterrand's wish to have an informal talk with her later this month about the European Council.

There are some curious features about this request. It is rather early to be talking about the European Council which, anyway looks likely to be uncontroversial, unless the French themselves want to raise Community financing and the 1.4% ceiling. We anyway have a regular Summit with the French Government on 21 November: this meeting would rather upstage it. The secrecy surrounding the request is presumably intended to keep it from M. Chirac.

The Prime Minister thinks that she has no choice but to see President Mitterrand as he requests. But she would like you to establish clearly the relationship between this meeting and the Anglo/French summit. Is it the intention to proceed with both meetings? If so, will President Mitterrand participate in the 21 November meeting as well? She would also want you to stress the informality of the occasion: she proposes to be accompanied only by a Private Secretary, and it would be better if President Mitterrand were not to bring his Foreign Minister, because to do so would emphasise M. Chirac's exclusion. She would also find it helpful to have more specific information on the aspects of the European Council, and indeed other subjects, which President Mitterrand wishes to discuss.

As regards dates, 17 and 21 October are both impossible for the Prime Minister. Her preferences are:

Friday 31 October

Sunday 26 October (at Chequers)

Thursday 16 October (but since it is a Cabinet day, no Cabinet Minister would be able to meet the President on arrival).

Finally the Prime Minister would want the Foreign Secretary to be aware of the request and her proposed reply before you speak to M. Attali. I am therefore copying this exchange to his Private Secretary.

(C. D. POWELL)
6 October 1986