

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Mr Powell  
CDP 25/3

This note sets out my notes of the Prime Minister's press conferences at the Chateau de Benouville, near Caen, and later in Bonn after her meetings respectively with President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl on Monday, March 23, 1987.

President Mitterrand, opening an informal press conference, said that they had had 1-1/2 hours discussions mainly bearing on disarmament and arms control and Mr Gorbachev's proposals. They accepted the idea of negotiations to which they were not a party but they nonetheless felt able to contribute an opinion on the points at stake.

"We are concerned with the importance of pursuing the security of Europe and that has been the essence of our conversations" he said.

They also took the opportunity to discuss the Middle East and the future prospects for Europe, in particular a possible increase in its resources.

The Prime Minister thanked the President for inviting her to the talks in such a beautiful castle. The talks had been very useful indeed in clarifying their position on arms control negotiations. Although they may not be a party to those negotiations the whole of Western Europe would be deeply affected by their outcome. It was important for Europe's future that those negotiations were "right".

They had also discussed wider E/W relations "because when you are entering into arms control negotiations you get further if you can have trust and confidence with those with whom you are negotiating, and that comes about not by declarations of intent but by what countries do".

The Prime Minister added that she and President Mitterrand were very interested to see if there could be a way of getting the Israel/Arab negotiations under way against the background of an international conference.

She added that they were both concerned about events in the Lebanon.

They also discussed the future of Europe. "So much depends on getting some discipline into the Budget and in sorting out some of the agricultural problems which affect all our countries", she added.

In the course of answering questions the following points were made:

President: No formal proposal had been made for a EuroSummit on arms control. The countries of Europe could in any case discuss the issue between themselves.

Prime Minister: UK and French nuclear deterrents were not involved in the arms control negotiations. They were crucial to the defence of their respective countries.

Prime Minister, in response to a question about the arms imbalance in Europe after an INF agreement as compared with 1979, said: In considering the defence of Western Europe a number of things had to be considered, including the preponderance of SRINF on the Soviet side, the concept of follow on negotiations and conventional and chemical weapons. And it was necessary to look at the effect of the negotiations on the capacity to defend freedom and justice and the Western Alliance.

BONN

Opening the press conference in Bonn. Chancellor Kohl said it was extremely important that the Prime Minister should go to Moscow with the support of her European friends. The visit was taking place at a highly important moment. In the Soviet Union a good many things had started to move but no one knew where that movement would lead to. They expected words to be followed by deeds. It was most important that Mr Gorbachev should be well informed on our hopes and expectations for disarmament by one of the leading representatives of Western Europe.

The Prime Minister said she recognised the importance of her visit to Moscow. The preparation for it had occupied a considerable amount of her time and consulting both President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl was an important part of that preparation. She added: I cannot stress too much how important it has been to have these conversations with Chancellor Kohl to talk through the larger issues. We have all read speeches and we are awaiting to see exactly what will happen."

The Prime Minister said that she and Chancellor Kohl had talked in details about arms control negotiations, being very much aware that they were responsible for the defence of their countries and of NATO. Defence weaponry was so complicated today and could take so long to produce that if you made a mistake it might not be possible to catch up. That was why it was so important to talk through such matters in great detail.

The purpose of arms control was to enhance security and not to diminish it. The talks had been extremely useful.

Points made in answer to questions were:

Prime Minister: In discussing INF we must have restraints on shorter range weapons in any agreement on intermediate weapons. There would have to be follow on negotiations on SRINF, but it was not possible to say precisely what they would cover before they started. They were also concerned about the great imbalance in chemical and conventional weapons. The defence of freedom and security in Europe depended not only on nuclear but also on chemical and conventional weapons and a change in one form of weapons might require a change in others.

Prime Minister: "Obviously the way you approach arms control negotiations depends upon the trust and confidence you can build up in the country you are negotiating with. Whether you can develop that trust and confidence depends on how they treat their own people - with freedom of speech, freedom of worship, human rights and how they implement Helsinki Basket 3. The greater the freedom, independence, justice and tolerance the greater the feeling of trust that you can have that arms control agreements will be honoured. But when you come to arms control agreements you must not leave anything to chance. You have to have very good verification and strict balance at all stages of the negotiations. And balance is about more than weapons in one particular sector".

B Ingham  
March 25, 1987.