

SECRET

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 1033

OF 221223Z OCTOBER 88

INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS, WASHINGTON, BONN
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL CSCE VIENNAMIPT (NOT TO ALL): MY CALL ON THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER:
EUROPEAN DEFENCE

SUMMARY

1. EUROPEAN DEFENCE THE MAIN SUBJECT COVERED. ROCARD RECOGNISES THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UK NUCLEAR DETERRENT AND UK'S GOOD FAITH IN PURSUING FRANCO-BRITISH COOPERATION. HE SEES UNOBTRUSIVE FRANCO-BRITISH NUCLEAR COLLABORATION AS A CONDITION FOR EUROPEAN CONVENTIONAL ARMS REDUCTION WHICH HE REGARDS AS ESSENTIAL WITH FRANCE PLAYING A LEADING ROLE.

DETAIL

2. ROCARD RAISED THE SUBJECT OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE. HE SAID THERE WERE ONLY TWO REALLY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN EUROPE: ONE WAS THE QUESTION OF A COMMON CURRENCY (WHICH WE DID NOT DISCUSS AT ALL), THE OTHER DEFENCE. I SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME MISCONCEPTION IN FRANCE ABOUT BRITAIN'S DEFENCE STRATEGY AND ITS RELATION TO FRANCE AND THE REST OF EUROPE. IT WAS IMPORTANT, ON THE FRENCH SIDE, TO BE AWARE OF UK SENSITIVITIES. IT WAS UNHELPFUL, FOR INSTANCE, IF FRENCH SPOKESMEN SUGGESTED THAT THE UK NUCLEAR DETERRENT WAS NOT GENUINELY INDEPENDENT. IT WAS, AND WAS KNOWN TO BE. THERE WAS CLOSE PRACTICAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN BRITAIN AND FRANCE ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF DEFENCE ISSUES. WE WERE SENSITIVE TO FRENCH SUSCEPTIBILITIES AND WERE THEREFORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT DRAWING TOO MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION TO IT. THIS COLLABORATION, AS THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD KNOW, HAD NUCLEAR ASPECTS, SOME OF WHICH I CITED. SOME AREAS OF POTENTIAL COLLABORATION, SUCH AS THE JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEXT STAGE OF ASMP, WERE DIFFICULT BUT FOR TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL, RATHER THAN POLITICAL REASONS. THERE WAS NO LACK OF WILL ON OUR PART TO WORK FOR FURTHER PRACTICAL MEASURES OF ANGLO-FRENCH COLLABORATION.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE AGREED. HE FULLY ACCEPTED THAT THE UK NUCLEAR DETERRENT WAS INDEPENDENT AND THAT WE HAD MADE A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO ANGLO-FRENCH COLLABORATION IN THE DEFENCE FIELD. HE WENT ON TO SKETCH OUT RAPIDLY HIS APPROACH TO EUROPEAN DEFENCE.

THREE FACTORS LAY BEHIND HIS THINKING:-

(I) THERE WAS A REAL RISK THAT GORBACHEV'S VARIOUS DEFENCE PROPOSALS WOULD BEGUILE THOSE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHICH DID NOT POSSESS NUCLEAR WEAPONS BUT WERE TROUBLED BY STRONG PACIFIST MOVEMENTS. THIS WAS DANGEROUS AND COULD DIVIDE EUROPE:

(II) THE INF AGREEMENT AND THE PROSPECT OF A STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION AGREEMENT MADE IT ESSENTIAL TO MOVE SPEEDILY TO DISCUSS CONVENTIONAL ARMS REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE:

(III) THE COUNTRIES MOST IMPLICATED IN SUCH DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE THOSE WITH LARGE CONSCRIPT ARMIES ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT. (WHEN ROCARD REMARKED THAT THE UK AS AN ISLAND WAS LESS CONCERNED, I REMINDED HIM OF THE SIXTY THOUSAND UK TROOPS STATIONED IN EUROPE).

4. ROCARD CONTINUED THAT FOR THESE REASONS AS WELL AS GEOGRAPHY ITSELF, FRANCE HAD A PRINCIPAL ROLE TO PLAY, AND HE KNEW THAT CHANCELLOR KOHL SHARED THIS VIEW. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ACHIEVE A BREAKTHROUGH IN CONVENTIONAL ARMS NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WOULD-:

(I) ENSURE A COMMON EUROPEAN POSITION:

(II) SATISFY THE PACIFIST MOVEMENTS IN SOME COUNTRIES (BY DISTRACTING THEM FROM NUCLEAR MATTERS):

(III) CONVINCING NATIONAL CIVIL AND MILITARY LEADERS OF THE NEED FOR CONVENTIONAL ARMS REDUCTIONS:

(IV) SATISFY THE WAVERERS AMONG CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

5. HE ARGUED THAT AN UNSTATED ASSUMPTION BEHIND SUCH A PROCESS (WHICH THERE WAS NO TIME TO TRACE OUT IN DETAIL) WAS THAT THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NON-NUCLEAR CONTINENTAL EUROPEANS WOULD BE PRESERVED BY THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY REMAINED PROTECTED BY A EUROPEAN-BASED NUCLEAR DETERRENT CAPABILITY AND THAT FRANCE AND BRITAIN WORKING TOGETHER WERE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING IT FROM THEIR NATIONAL RESOURCES.

FERGUSON

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
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OF 221154Z OCTOBER 88
INFO IMMEDIATE EC POSTS

YOUR TELNO 1005 : MY CALL ON THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. EUROPEAN DEFENCE THE MAIN SUBJECT COVERED (SEE MIFT, NOT TO ALL). 1992, NISSAN, MONTREAL (BELOW) AND OUR INVITATION TO ROCARD TO GIVE A JEAN MONNET MEMORIAL LECTURE (SEPARATE TELEGRAM) ALSO COVERED.

DETAIL

2. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS UNDER HEAVY TIME PRESSURE BUT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DRAG HIM AWAY FROM DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ROYAL VISIT TO FOCUS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY PETIT HIS DIPLOMATIC COUNSELLOR) AND DOMINIQUE PERREAU (ADVISER ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS). IN VIEW OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH HE IS CURRENTLY FACING (MY TELNO 1027) HE WAS REMARKABLY GOOD TEMPERED.

1992

3. ROCARD REFERRED TO HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ON 10 JUNE WHEN HE HAD SAID THAT A CONFEDERATION OF EUROPE WOULD BE ACHIEVED IN 25 YEARS' TIME. HE WAS PREPARED TO CONCEDE THAT THIS MIGHT BE OPTIMISTIC - IT MIGHT TAKE FIFTY YEARS (EXCLAM) - BUT IT WAS INEVITABLE AND WOULD NOT WAIT UPON THE UK. I SAID THAT THERE WAS MUCH LOOSE RHETORIC ABOUT EUROPEAN-NESS: IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT MEMBER STATES ACTUALLY DID. THE UK HAD A GOOD RECORD, NOTABLY DURING ITS OWN PRESIDENCY, IN PUSHING FORWARD TOWARDS THE OPEN MARKET. ROCARD ACKNOWLEDGED OUR CONTRIBUTION. AGRICULTURE WAS DIFFICULT FOR FRANCE, FOR EXAMPLE. ANOTHER DIFFICULT AREA WAS TAX HARMONISATION. BUT THE DIFFICULTIES HERE WERE TECHNICAL AND WOULD BE RESOLVED.

NISSAN

4. I JUST HAD TIME TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF NISSAN IMPORTS TO EUROPE. I SAID THAT I HAD BEEN OVER THE GROUND WITH M. FAUROUX, THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY, BUT WISHED TO REGISTER WITH THE PRIME MINISTER THE GREAT POLITICAL IMPORTANCE WHICH WE ATTACHED TO THE ADMISSION OF THESE CARS INTO FRANCE. ROCARD REPLIED THAT FRANCE WAS A QUOTE GOOD EUROPEAN UNQUOTE AND WOULD ABIDE BY EUROPEAN RULING.

BUT THERE WAS A TECHNICAL DEFINITION TO BE AGREED. IN THE ITALIAN CASE, FIAT HAD EXAMINED THE CARS AND FOUND THAT 52 PERCENT OF THEIR COMPONENTS WERE JAPANESE. I SAID THAT WE WERE SATISFIED THAT THE PERCENTAGE REACHED WAS GENUINE. OUR OWN INTEREST LAY IN MAXIMISING LOCAL CONTENT.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

5. I HANDED OVER A COPY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROYAL SOCIETY SPEECH. I SAID THAT FRANCE AND BRITAIN HAD A SHARED INTEREST TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: IN PARTICULAR WE HAD A COMMON APPROACH ON NUCLEAR MATTERS. ROCARD AGREED. THE PRESIDENT HAD DEFINED THE ENVIRONMENT AS ONE OF THE SEVEN PRIORITY AREAS OF HIS SEPTENNAT. HE SUGGESTED I MIGHT DISCUSS FURTHER WITH M. LALONDE, THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE. ALTHOUGH M. LALONDE WAS ONLY A JUNIOR MINISTER HE WAS ATTACHED TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND CARRIED A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL WEIGHT. I WILL ARRANGE TO CALL ON HIM IN DUE COURSE.

GATT MID TERM REVIEW

6. THERE WAS NO TIME TO RAISE THIS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER BUT I HAD A WORD WITH PERREAU ON THE WAY OUT. I SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE UK AND FRANCE TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE MTM. THE BILATERAL ON 20 OCTOBER BETWEEN M. NALLET AND MR MACGREGOR SEEMED TO HAVE GONE WELL. I HOPED THAT FRANCE'S CONCERN WITH GLOBALITY WOULD NOT RESTRICT MOVEMENT IN SPECIFIC AREAS, NOTABLY AGRICULTURE. BUT THE EC NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD IN RESPONSE TO RECENT US STEPS. PERREAU TOOK NOTE.

FERGUSSON

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