



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL London SW1A 2AH

20 June 1990

06
Jean Chirac,

France: Call by M. Jacques Chirac

M Jacques Chirac, RPR leader, Mayor of Paris and former Prime Minister of France, is calling on the Prime Minister at 5 pm on Thursday 21 June. M Chirac will be accompanied by his international relations director, M Quentin.

M Chirac is to be presented with a Japanese-sponsored international prize (the "premium impériale") at Claridges on 21 June. His programme also includes a meeting with the Lord Mayor of London and a tour of Docklands and the City. A personality note is enclosed.

Although M Chirac's political position is not strong (see below), he remains a significant leader of the French Opposition and we do not write off his influence or prospects. The meeting falls just after the 50th anniversary of de Gaulle's Appeal from London of 18 June 1940 which has been extensively and publicly commemorated in France.

M Chirac's position

M Chirac was re-elected President of the RPR at the movement's triennial congress on 11 February, but only just achieved the two thirds vote of confidence he had asked for. The main threat to his position came from two of his former Ministers, Philippe Séguin and Charles Pasqua. The latter is attending the celebrations in London to mark the fiftieth anniversary of de Gaulle's call to arms - 18 June 1940 - and is calling on the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Since creating the RPR in 1976, M Chirac has tried to modernise the movement and make it more liberal in economic policy and pro-EC. The Séguin/Pasqua initiative was an attempt to steer the RPR towards more traditional Gaullist views and recreate a populist, nationalistic, dirigiste movement, which would be pro-European only if France could play a dominant role in it. Their strategy was to recapture voters lost to Le Pen's Front National and to differentiate the RPR more sharply from M Giscard d'Estaing's UDF. Some on the left of the RPR have been attracted to a new umbrella organisation, "Force Unie", whose aim is the formation of a single opposition party to fight the next Presidential elections behind a single Presidential candidate.

/France Internal

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

France Internal

France faces a long period without a major election. Parliamentary elections are due in 1993, and Presidential election in 1995. On the left, as well as the right, the electoral vacuum has provoked policy squabbles and personal rivalries as potential presidential candidates manoeuvre for position. The Socialist party congress in March ended in disarray, and, although a compromise was patched together shortly afterwards, the impression was one of preoccupation with the succession to President Mitterrand (M Rocard emerged as the most likely contender) to the detriment of policy.

The main domestic political issues are:

- a) How to tackle immigration in the face of increased pressure, notably from the Maghreb countries and from Turks displaced by German unification, and how to meet the growing challenge from Le Pen's far-right Front National (attracting around 11% overall support, but much higher in certain by-elections) and a rise in racist feeling (apparent even before the desecration of a Jewish cemetery on 10 May); and,
- b) How to maintain an influential European role for France in the face of German unification and developments in Eastern Europe. Differences are emerging on the right between M Giscard d'Estaing, who favours new initiatives on political union to anchor the Germans within the Community and M Chirac, who, influenced by the right of the RPR, is taking a more nationalist line.

On "Political union" the Right in France are now arguing that anything smacking of federalism risks an unacceptable loss of national sovereignty and national identity. The Socialist government cannot afford to ignore such arguments: hence their recent emphasis on the role of national parliaments and the Council. Subsidiarity is an area where M Giscard d'Estaing has been much more prominent than M Chirac. The former is the European parliament rapporteur on the subject.

Defence policy is the subject of debate on the French right. Some argue for closer integration with NATO while others favour still more autonomy. M. Chirac has said little on the issue recently but as Prime Minister he worked for closer Anglo-French defence cooperation and a reciprocal purchasing agreement, allowing defence firms in each country to tender for contracts in the other, was signed in 1987, when he was Prime Minister.

/Our

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

Our special advisers will write separately on the party aspects of the meeting.

I am copying this letter to Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Richard Gozney

(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

CHIRAC, JACQUES

Former Prime Minister: President of the RPR; Mayor of Paris.

Born 1932. Education included a summer course at Harvard. Fought in Algeria. Ecole Nationale d'Administration. First came to notice as an energetic member of M. Pompidou's Cabinet in 1962. Entered politics in 1967 winning from the Left a constituency in the Corrèze. Retained his seat in subsequent elections. Junior Minister for Social Affairs and Employment in 1967. Junior Minister under Giscard d'Estaing at the Ministry of Economy and Finance 1968-71. Subsequently Minister responsible for the government's relations with Parliament. Minister of Agriculture (1972-74) and briefly Minister of the Interior before being appointed Giscard's first Prime Minister on 27 May 1974. Secretary-General of the Gaullist UDR from December 1974-June 1975 and thereafter Honorary Secretary-General. Resigned as Prime Minister in August 1976. President of the new Gaullist movement, the RPR, in December 1976. Mayor of Paris since 1977. Member of the European Parliament 1979-80. Appointed Prime Minister for the second time after the March 1986 elections. Ran for President in 1988 but defeated by Mitterrand in the second round.

Chirac rose meteorically. He began as an ambitious technocrat, bent on making it to the top. He made some early mistakes; he was a failure when handling the government's relations with Parliament. But he rapidly acquired a keen political sense. He is a tireless schemer; his calculation that Chaban-Delmas would be a bad candidate in the 1974 presidential elections and encouragement of defections from the Gaullist camp put Giscard in his debt and helped to make him the obvious choice for Prime Minister. Despite a scrupulous façade of loyalty to Giscard, Chirac began to fall out with him at least a year before his resignation as Prime Minister. Their differences were both temperamental and political. Chirac resented Giscard's monarchical tendencies and became increasingly convinced that his strategy of winning over the soft fringe of the Left by liberal reform was mistaken. The crunch came in the cantonal elections in March 1976, which were a severe defeat for the President. Characteristically, however, Chirac moved too quickly to take advantage of Giscard's set-back, and the latter, after losing his footing for a moment, fought back, progressively reducing the powers of his Prime Minister to a point where Chirac had little alternative but to resign.

Chirac quickly relaunched himself in national politics. In an attempt to revitalise and rejuvenate the UDR, he changed its name to the RPR and was elected President of the new movement in December 1976. His victory in 1977 in the first direct election for the Paris Mairie against the Ellysée candidate, d'Ornano, further aggravated his relations with Giscard.

Chirac campaigned energetically and effectively for the govern the 1978 legislative elections. Subsequently, he considered that Giscard and Barre did not give the Gaullists sufficient credit for their part in the Majority victory. In February 1981, Chirac announced his decision to stand against Giscard for the presidency. He received 17.99% of the first round vote.

Chirac is a man of action rather than reflection; his nickname, the bulldozer, is apt; but there is no doubt that his combination of authority, drive and nationalism appeals to a wide range of conservative opinion. Although the RPR/UDF majority in the March 1986 elections was smaller than they had hoped, Chirac operated effectively to block Mitterrand's hopes of finding another candidate for Prime Minister who could command a parliamentary majority, and then to form a government in which the RPR had the upper-hand over the UDF. Despite their temperamental and political differences, Chirac and Mitterrand made cohabitation work, Chirac wanting enough time to show that his government's policies could succeed, Mitterrand posing as the champion of constitutional propriety and hoping that the government's policies would fail and Chirac become unpopular.

CONFIDENTIAL

Chirac declared his candidature for the 1988 presidential elections early, and succeeded, through an energetic campaign, in overtaking Barre to become the Right's candidate against Mitterrand. But in its closing stages his campaign took on a frenetic air which compared badly with Mitterrand's reassuring calm: his "coup de théâtre" in effecting the release - on the same day - of three French hostages from the Lebanon and a number of gendarmes held captive by Kanak separatists in New Caledonia, did nothing to change the growing impression that he seemed too erratic, desperate and personally ambitious to make a good President. Since losing the election (46-54%) Chirac has kept a low profile but lost none of his taste for politics. He retains control of the RPR through his loyal supporter, Juppé, the Party's Secretary-General.

He is married to an attractive and socially assiduous wife, Bernadette, niece of de Courcel. Two daughters. He speaks reasonably good English.

