

*SUBJECT  
CC MASTER*



*ATC*

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*From the Private Secretary*

1 November 1988

*Dear Lynn,*

PRIME MINISTER'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH M. ROCARD

M. Rocard telephoned the Prime Minister this morning and they had a brief talk. The issue was, as you predicted, the proposed creation of a new international/environmental organisation.

M. Rocard said that he and President Mitterrand had developed a proposal which they were keen to see the Prime Minister join in supporting. Next year would be the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights which marked the beginning of the French Revolution. He and the President believed that a new human right should be created to mark that anniversary, the right to a safe environment. Before launching such a proposal, he hoped to obtain the support of 12 or 15 heads of government who would be co-signatories of a letter. That letter would propose the creation of a world organisation for the environment which would act as a regulatory authority. If the Prime Minister supported the principle, he would be ready to send her various preparatory documents. He had already talked to a number of colleagues including Chancellor Kohl, Mr. Gandhi, President Sarney and Mrs. Bruntland and they had indicated their agreement. He would be interested to hear the Prime Minister's reaction.

The Prime Minister said that several points immediately occurred to her. First of all, you could not have a human right to a safe environment since there were many threats to the environment which were beyond the powers of any human agency to control, for instance typhoons. It would be better not to try to create a specious link between practical proposals on the environment and human rights. The Prime Minister continued that there were two aspects to environmental problems. First there were the global problems such as the greenhouse effect and damage to the ozone layer. There was mounting international concern about them. Secondly there were more local or regional problems such as pollution in the North Sea, and of rivers, and acid rain. There were already a number of international conventions for dealing with most of these problems and they were regularly discussed at the United Nations and in the European Community. She would not wish needlessly to cut

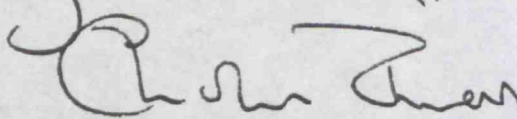


across existing work. Indeed she was rather surprised that M. Rocard had not mentioned a role for the United Nations. Finally, she was very hesitant about the idea of an international agency with executive powers. However, she would be grateful if M. Rocard could send her the papers which he had prepared so that she could reach a more informed judgement on his proposal.

M. Rocard said that his proposal was intended to deal only with global problems of the atmosphere and perhaps the ocean rather than the second category of environmental issues mentioned by the Prime Minister. He had no wish to cut across existing international work on these issues, nor to exclude the United Nations. In confidence he could say Chancellor Kohl had raised objections to involving the United Nations but he would see him at the Franco-German Summit tomorrow and try to argue him out of these. However, the concept of an organisation with executive powers was at the very heart of his proposals: they would not mean much without it. He would, as the Prime Minister requested, send her the papers.

As you will see, the Prime Minister was careful not to reject the proposal out of hand while raising the obvious difficulties which it presents. The timing of M. Rocard's call presumably means that the French intend to go public with the proposal at the Franco-German Summit tomorrow. The Prime Minister has commented that this development makes it all the more important that we should move ahead very quickly with our own proposed initiative.

I am copying this letter to Roger Bright (Department of the Environment), Alex Allan (HM Treasury) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,*  
  
(C.D. POWELL)

Lyn Parker, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.