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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Telephone conversation between Sir Robin Butler
and M. Vedrine, 3.30 p.m. 29 November 1991

M. Vedrine expressed his profound regret that he would be unable to attend the talks between President Mitterrand and the Prime Minister. As events had turned out, it was impossible for him to leave Paris.

CFSP/Defence

2. Sir Robin Butler ran through the agenda for the Prime Minister's talks with the President. On the Inter-governmental Conferences, the Prime Minister, following his recent discussions with Signor Andreotti and Chancellor Kohl was now more hopeful of success though there remained some difficult areas, especially concerning CFSP and defence. The Prime Minister wanted agreement but was worried that, on defence in particular, there might be too much work to do in the short time remaining. The UK still hoped that it would be possible before Maastricht to agree on a text between the two sides. Depending on how far Mr Wall had got in his talks with M. Morel earlier in the day it might be helpful for officials to get together after the Prime Minister and President had talked.

3. M. Vedrine said that he would first wish to talk to M. Morel about his talks with Mr Wall and then approach the President. He could not give his agreement to this proposal without the President's authority. He agreed that the idea of a meeting of officials could be looked at again in the light of the discussion between the Prime Minister and the President.

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Other Maastricht issues

4. Sir Robin said that overall, the Prime Minister felt that the outlook for the treaty on EMU looked positive. The Prime Minister remained concerned strictly to limit extensions of Community competence and hoped he would have the President's support, especially in those areas where significant expenditure could be involved for countries like the UK and France. On the European Parliament, the Prime Minister wanted tight restrictions on the areas in which the Parliament would be able to exercise a blocking power. He thought that the President was in agreement. M. Vedrine said that this catalogue corresponded to the areas the President wanted to cover.

GATT

5. Sir Robin said that the Prime Minister was concerned that the Round might be losing impetus. He hoped that Mitterrand might join him in an initiative to keep the talks moving to a conclusion before the end of the year.

6. M. Vedrine said that the President agreed that GATT should be discussed. France was worried about the immobility of the Americans and was open to making an approach to President Bush.

Lockerbie

7. Sir Robin said that the Prime Minister welcomed the close co-operation with France and agreed that the role of the United Nations was important. Vedrine interjected that it was very important to France. Sir Robin continued that in this respect our thinking was more in line with Paris than Washington though the Prime Minister did not underestimate the difficulty of getting a UN Security Council

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Resolution. For this reason he attached importance to action in the Group of 7 given the Venice Declaration and the EC as well. The Prime Minister would stress the importance of continuing to co-operate closely.

Soviet Union

8. The Prime Minister would say that he attached importance to a common position of the Twelve on recognition of the Ukraine. (Vedrine agreed.) The Prime Minister also thought that President Mitterrand's initiative could be very timely in the context of the control of nuclear weapons and would want to lend his support. The UK would like to start talks trilaterally.

9. Vedrine said that this was very good news. France was much concerned by developments in the Soviet Union and it was necessary to find a good procedure for talks. They wanted the four nuclear powers to meet, but it would be important to prepare a trois and also perhaps at sixteen. France foresaw a "combined approach" with the nuclear powers, having a special responsibility, playing a special role. President Mitterrand was anxious to get things going.

10. Sir Robin Butler said that the Prime Minister wanted food aid to the Soviet Union speeded up.

Yugoslavia

11. Sir Robin Butler said that the Prime Minister would welcome Anglo-French co-operation over Security Council Resolution 721 and would underline his concern that any commitment to peacekeeping should be limited in time. The UK wanted to stay in close touch over recognition of Slovenia and Croatia.

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Anglo-French Frigate

11. The Prime Minister would want jointly publicly to welcome the project for the Anglo-French frigate.

12. M. Vedrine once again regretted his non-attendance. He looked forward to welcoming Sir Robin Butler in Paris in January.



Miss L P Neville-Jones

Cabinet Office
29 November 1991

Distribution: Sir Robin Butler
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Mr Well



CABINET OFFICE

With the compliments of

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