

Ref. A03756

MR. ALEXANDER

I have seen a copy of Paul Lever's letter of 1st December about the proposal that Monsieur Barre should be invited to visit Britain between now and the next Anglo-French Summit.

2. It may be that Monsieur Barre is unlikely to continue as Prime Minister after the Presidential elections, even if President Giscard wins. But we do not know: it is only speculation. Even if it happens, Monsieur Barre is likely to remain a force in French politics. He could make the sort of comeback that President Pompidou made after he ceased to be de Gaulle's Prime Minister in 1968.

3. As we know, he is an effective and influential speaker, whose trenchantly expressed views we do not always welcome. Even in the shorter term, his coming here as the Prime Minister's guest might enable her to modify some of his views - or at any rate the expression of them - to our advantage. He will also have an important voice in the discussions leading up to the 1981 CAP price fixing.

4. I think that the balance of advantage is in favour of inviting him, as proposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5th December, 1980



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-233 3000

5th December 1980

M O'D B Alexander Esq.
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

La - [Signature] - 5/11

Dear Michael,

Paul Lever sent me a copy of his letter to you of 1 December about an invitation to M. Barre, the French Prime Minister, to visit Britain between now and the Anglo-French Summit.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer would welcome a talk with M. Barre if he is invited to come to London. Perhaps therefore you would bear in mind that the Chancellor himself hopes to visit Paris and to make a speech there on 27 January.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of Paul Lever's letter.

yours ever

John Wiggins

A.J. WIGGINS
Private Secretary

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PM

3 December 1980

Possible Visit of M. Barre

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 1 December. She has commented that she would prefer to postpone a decision on a possible invitation to M. Barre until the New Year when we can see more clearly how the relationship between M. Barre and President Giscard is developing.

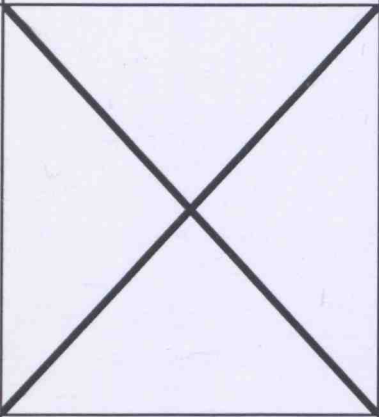
MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Cab off.

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DEPARTMENT/SERIES <i>PREM 19</i> PIECE/ITEM <i>2183</i> (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract details: <i>Lyne to Alexander dated 1 December 1980</i>	
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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

The Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary
is not pushing this at all hands.

Delay decision until New Year not
My own view is that on the evidence now available it would not be a sensible use of your time - particularly if you agree that we should suggest a visit by Giscard in time. (The Derby is on 3 June, Royal Ascot a fortnight later.) Delay a decision until the New Year when we can see how the Barre/Giscard relationship is developing?

Amul - 2/11

I understand that the Prime Minister has agreed, in principle, that M. Barre, the French Prime Minister, should be invited to visit Britain between now and the next Anglo-French Summit. No proposal has yet been put to Ministers about the timing of that Summit, but our initial thoughts are that a sensible timing might be early to mid-June, ie before the British Presidency of the European Community and after the French Presidential elections in early May. In practice M. Barre would have to come before the French Presidential election campaign gets under way. The two rounds of the elections are on 26 April and 10 May, and HM Ambassador at Paris has recommended that we think in terms of late January or early February for M. Barre.

The Prime Minister may have seen recent speculation in the press that M. Barre is unlikely to continue to head the government after the Presidential elections. This speculation is probably well founded, but, as HM Ambassador, Paris has pointed out (see Paris telno 161 Saving attached), there are no substantial differences between M. Barre and the President and M. Barre would be M. Giscard d'Estaing's obvious replacement as a Presidential candidate in the unlikely event that the latter decided not to stand for re-election. In other words, M. Barre has a political future; but aside from that, the effects of his present policies will continue to shape the French economy for some time to come. There will also be a number of Community problems to sort out with the French before May, and M. Barre's influence in that area will continue to be powerful.

If the Prime Minister agrees, we would authorize HM Ambassador, Paris to issue an invitation to M. Barre on her behalf within the period he has suggested. It would of course be helpful if the Prime Minister could suggest specific dates. Lord Carrington suggests that the extent of her involvement would be a meal and one session of talks lasting say one and a half hours. In addition, M. Barre might have talks with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the

/Secretary

M O'DB Alexander Esq
10 Downing St

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Secretary of State for Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, if they were available.

I am copying this letter to PS/Chancellor of the Exchequer, PS/Secretary of State for Industry, PS/Secretary of State for Trade, PS/Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours *abr*

Paul

(P Lever)

Private Secretary

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