

PRIME MINISTER

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL

We have to decide whether you should attend the Franco-British Council in Cardiff on 29 May. The French have indicated that M. Chirac will attend if you do.

My advice is that you should not attend, for the following reasons:

- (i) at the last meeting in December 1984, it was noticeable that the calibre of French participation was well below that of the British side. You agreed following that meeting that I should tell the FCO that it should no longer be considered indispensable for Prime Ministers to take part in its meetings. Foreign Ministers should be regarded as the natural representatives.
- (ii) the change of government in France does not, to my mind, alter this decision. Relations with Chirac are good: you had an unprecedented number of meetings with French leaders last year: will be seeing Mitterrand and Chirac at the European Council only a month after the Franco-British Council meeting: and will probably have to pay a brief visit to Paris in the summer to exchange instruments of ratification of the Channel Tunnel Treaty.
- (iii) you may well have a lot of other engagements at the end of May: you would have to make a speech: and the date in question is anyway in the middle of the Whitsun recess.

If you agree not to attend, it is only fair to give Chirac as long notice as possible and to try to present it as a joint decision by you and Chirac (to avoid any impression of a snub, or of us trying to downgrade the meeting in the face of French

enthusiasm). I would like, therefore, to speak to Chirac's chef de cabinet, explain to him frankly what our problems are, and try to secure a pact whereby you both decide to stay away this time and leave it to Foreign Ministers, without prejudice to what happens in two years' time.

Agree?

Yes

CDP

CHARLES POWELL

16 January 1987

EL3BQX

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file VSCADV
cc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

19 January 1987

From the Private Secretary

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL: CARDIFF CONFERENCE, MAY 1987

I last wrote to your predecessor on 4 September last year, about the question of the Prime Minister's attendance at the Franco-British Council in Cardiff on 29 May.

As the Office will be aware, the Prime Minister concluded immediately after the last meeting that it should no longer be considered indispensable for Prime Ministers to take part in meetings of the Franco-British Council, any more than in Königswinter Conferences, and that the "natural" level of representation ought to be Foreign Ministers. The organisers were consequently told that they should not count upon the Prime Minister's attendance.

In addition, as I said in my letter under reference, the date is a most inconvenient one for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has now firmly decided that she will not be able to attend. I have informed M. Bujon, in M. Chirac's office, of this as a matter of courtesy. My impression is that M. Chirac equally will be unable to attend.

Clearly it would soften the blow if, at the same time as telling the organisers of this decision, we could say that the Foreign Secretary would be able to attend. I should be grateful to know if this is the case; and whether you would like me to write or would prefer to write yourselves.

I should add that M. Bujon said that M. Chirac would very much like a chance to meet the Prime Minister at some point in the late spring/early summer, after her visit to Moscow. We shall need to give thought to this.

CHARLES POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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File 11b
adrl Cradock

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

4 September 1986

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL:
CARDIFF CONFERENCE, MAY 1987

Thank you for your letter of 2 September. I now discover that 29 May is in the middle of the Whitsun recess. This would be a most inconvenient date for the Prime Minister and further increases my conviction that we should not plan on her attendance.

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 September 1986

① ~~Mr~~ Ryder
We don't need to
take a decision now:
we can consider in
December.
But it might be prudent
to phcil 29 May into the diary pro
Dear Charles, memos. It could always be
combined with a political visit.

Franco-British Council: Cardiff Conference May 1987

We duly noted the Prime Minister's wish to postpone the decision on whether or not to attend the Franco-British Council's Conference in Cardiff in May 1987 until it became clearer who would attend on the French side. You may however like to know that M Chirac's office have told the Embassy in Paris that M Chirac would attend the Conference if the Prime Minister did so. The Embassy were careful not to suggest that any decision had been taken that she would do so.

You may also wish to note that the Council have now decided, in conjunction with the Welsh Office and Cardiff City Hall, that the dinner to which they are inviting the Prime Minister and M Chirac will be on the first night of the Conference, ie 29 May.

② CF

Yours ever,

Please bring

forward on 10 December

Colin Budd

CDD
5/9.

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

Mr Powell

This is the
middle of the
Whitton recess
so most inconvenient.
But noted.

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

9 July 1986

Der Dher,

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL: CARDIFF CONFERENCE MAY 1987

Thank you for your letter of 9 July about the preparations for the next Franco-British Council, to be held in Cardiff in May 1987.

As you will see from earlier correspondence a decision was taken in 1984 that it should no longer be considered indispensable for Prime Ministers to take part in meetings of the Franco-British Council. This stemmed from the Prime Minister's experience of the meeting in Avignon, where the French Government had been represented throughout at a significantly lower level than the British Government. The Prime Minister continues to believe that we should not automatically assume that she will attend, and I recently had an exchange of correspondence with Sir Philip de Zulueta in which I said that any decision about her participation in the 1987 Conference would have to wait until nearer the time. The prospect of the Prime Minister's attendance should not, therefore, be held out to the French Government as a bait to attract M. Chirac.

Yours sincerely
Charles Powell

(Charles Powell)

R.N. Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 July 1986

Dear Charles,

Franco-British Council (FBC): Cardiff Conference May 1987

* in fact
Colin Budd's
Earlier correspondence about the Prime Minister's possible attendance at this Conference ended with my* letter to you of 10 December 1985, in which I said we might wish to recommend her attendance if there were a new French Prime Minister who decided to attend.

The FBC have now started planning for the Conference. They are confident from contacts with the French wing of the FBC that M. Chirac will decide to attend and senior Quai officials also expect him to do so. Despite being told that they should not count on the Prime Minister's attendance they very much hope that she will agree to be present if M. Chirac goes, and that both Prime Ministers will attend one of the Conference dinners. We understand that the FBC envisage a civic dinner on the first evening (29 May) hosted jointly by the City and County Councils at which Mr Callaghan or Mr Kinnock might be guest speaker on the UK side. The FBC's initial thinking is to invite Mrs Thatcher and M. Chirac to a dinner on the second and final night (30 May) at a venue outside Cardiff - Caerphilly Castle has been mentioned among other possibilities.

The Council appear to be approaching the planning of the Cardiff Conference in a more workmanlike way than on previous occasions. They are establishing a steering committee to identify suitable topics for discussion, select appropriate participants to match the topics chosen, and ensure a better balance between the British and French participants. They will be seeking sponsorship and support from private concerns as well as from the local authorities in Cardiff. They are devoting particular attention to publicity aspects - Lord Forte has offered the services of his public relations team, and a number of senior journalists will be invited to participate in the proceedings. We believe that the overall result should be a better and more cost-effective occasion.

/We

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We recommend that the Prime Minister be consulted with a view to deciding in principle that, if M. Chirac decided to go to Cardiff, she would also do so. The Conference could provide a useful opportunity for a meeting with M. Chirac at the mid point between the annual bilateral Summits and, subject to confirmation of dates, shortly before the Belgians' European Council. There should be no problem in ensuring that any speech by the Prime Minister receives good media coverage.

TEMPORARILY RETAINED G. Gray 29/9/2016

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RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

I am copying this letter to Colin Williams at the Welsh Office.

Done

Adrian (Culshaw)

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 July 1986

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 3 July giving further details of the next Franco-British Council to be held in Cardiff from 29-31 May 1987. Mrs Thatcher was grateful to be kept informed of your plans. But I am afraid that any decision about her participation will have to wait until nearer the time.

Charles Powell

Sir Philip de Zulueta

SPW

Cholera
Parachute
MKN 7/7

Prime Minister. ①

We did not have time to consider this at
our diary meeting. Agree Choles' line at 'x'?

MKN 7/7

MR. ADDISON

FRANCO-BRITISH COUNCIL

A decision was reached in 1984 that it should no longer be regarded as indispensable for Prime Ministers to take part in the meetings of the Franco-British Council. The natural level of representation should be Foreign Ministers. The Council were therefore told that they should not automatically assume that the Prime Minister would attend in future.

We were told last November that the next meeting would be held in Cardiff in May 1987. The organisers were told in reply that we had noted the dates, but that a decision on the Prime Minister's participation could only be taken nearer the time.

Sir Philip de Zulueta's letter is an attempt to pin the Prime Minister down now by saying that Monsieur Chirac and the Prince of Wales are likely to attend. In fact, neither has yet taken a firm decision. Any hint that the Prime Minister was likely to attend would be used by Sir Philip to extract a commitment from M. Chirac and the Prince of Wales.

X | I propose therefore that we reply that it is still too early to reach any decision about the Prime Minister's participation. You may like to mention this at the diary meeting, and I will then write back.

C.D.P.

CDP

4 July, 1986.

JD3ANF