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SIR CHARLES POWELL

cc Mr Goulden, FCO
Mr Mottram, MOD
HM Ambassador, Paris
Air Commodore Adams, DA Paris

Prime Minister 6(a)

Useful background
for your meeting
with Brindley
Mitterrand on Monday.

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Meeting with Admiral Lanxade, 7 January 1991

I had a short meeting on 7 January with Admiral Lanxade, Military Adviser to President Mitterrand, and the new French Ambassador, Bernard Dorin. They were accompanied by Air Commodore Adams, our Defence Attaché in Paris.

Gulf

[ho! hum!]
2. I asked Lanxade how the French saw the situation developing in the next few days. What was the likelihood of fresh initiatives? He said that the French analysis was that something positive might emerge from the Baker/Aziz talks. However, they thought there should be further initiatives and President Mitterrand was not prepared to exclude these. He would, however, be consulting President Bush and the Prime Minister. He agreed wholeheartedly when I emphasised the need for detailed consultation, especially between those countries with forces deployed in the Gulf area. He also agreed that it would be a very difficult manoeuvre to say something capable of influencing the Iraqis without appearing to reward aggression. France wanted to ensure that the approach was not so heavy that the door would become closed on any negotiations. He doubted whether Saddam would believe Baker; the French might be more readily believed. Any war would be exceptionally brutal and bloody. Although France was prepared to accept 1,000 casualties (10 per cent) he did not think that in Saddam Hussein's eyes public opinion in the United States was ready for a comparable percentage.

3. I asked whether Lanxade felt Saddam Hussein would withdraw or announce a withdrawal, or alternatively stand and fight. Reason dictated the first option, but with each day that passed, he seemed to be painting himself further into a corner. Lanxade said that the French had the impression that Saddam might take some action just before the deadline to avoid a total rupture, but he was taking a grave risk. The Ambassador added that perhaps Saddam saw himself in the role of a martyr; after the rest of the Arab world saw the destruction in Iraq wrought by an allied offensive, they would rally to his cause. Lanxade felt there might be sympathy following the destruction of Iraq's industrial capacity which had taken some 20 years to establish.

4. Lanxade was at great pains to stress that there should be no doubts about French participation if it came to war. Clear authorisation had been given to undertake joint planning for the use of force against Iraq. Public opinion in France was not entirely solid, but this factor had been taken into account.

European Security

5. Turning to European security, I asked for Lanxade's views, emphasising that it was our wish to work very closely with France to achieve a suitable compromise which would cater for a European defence identify but also preserve the NATO Alliance and keep the United States in Europe. Without US forces, defence arrangements for Europe would become a theoretical structure only. Lanxade agreed that the Alliance and US presence must be maintained. Nevertheless, with aspirations for political union, Europe should take action itself in defence matters using the WEU as a vehicle. We must not have a point of contention where the Alliance was played against European defence aspirations. The US must not force our hands. France

wanted the roles of the Alliance to continue for deterrence against a Soviet threat and maintaining European stability. She did not like the idea of it being used for other problems. The Turkish request was a case in point: some European countries had been obliged, perhaps reluctantly, to become involved in the name of the Alliance for a purpose nothing to do with countering Soviet aggression. The WEU should be the basis for this. If we did not develop some form of dynamic and credible European defence identity, Germany would find a role of her own.

✓ 6. I said that I found his remarks encouraging; NATO would have to change, but there would have to be a gradual evolution and the pace should not be forced. We should not dismiss the idea of a threat from the Soviet Union. Despite the present flux there, the Russian Republic at least would remain the largest and best armed state in Europe and would probably retain the old Russian ambitions in respect of influence over Western Europe. NATO must not be allowed to become a moribund organisation like CENTO. It was the only organisation which justified for the United States their military presence in Europe. There was a danger of US isolationism; they must be handled carefully. Furthermore, without any corporate defence identity, European defence would be renationalised. WEU linked both to NATO and the EEC must provide the answer, but a clear distinction was needed between "security", which should remain predominantly at the political level, and "defence" at the military. I said I hoped we could move forward together in Europe and provide the right answers in the coming year. Lanxade expressed general agreement, though dissenting on the distinction between security and defence.

✓ ASLP

7. I explained that we had not yet made a decision on an air-launched nuclear missile. There was a consensus in Whitehall that we had not talked to France enough at a

senior official level about the issues involved in ASLP. Lanxade felt such discussion would be productive and described in outline the French requirement. With ASMP in service now, a new system was not required theoretically until 2007. The choice which would confront the Defence Council meeting on 16 January was basically between continuing with surface/surface systems or developing ASLP. The latter would be required in service in 2002 for strategic use and "sub-strategic" later; this would necessitate work starting in 1992. The basis for any British requirement must be jointly discussed, as would the implications of any extension to cover air-portable weapons in Europe. From his perspective it was more important that we maintain nuclear weapons in Europe than that we work together on an individual weapon system, but the usefulness, politically and economically, of a collaborative programme should not be understated. We must make a decision in 1991. France was prepared to assist with warhead development. I said I was aware of the need for a decision in 1991; but before this Anglo-French talks to clarify the situation would be helpful.

Soviet Union

8. I asked Lanxade for his views on the Soviet Union following his recent visit to Moscow. The apparent move to the right - now manifested by the day's news of Yazov sending a division to the Baltic States - was disquieting. Lanxade was not sure how far the Soviet Army would go; there could be a political limit to its involvement. Yeltsin, for example, was looking for budgetary constraints on military funds. It was also very naive of the Soviet armed forces to believe they could bypass CFE by moving personnel and equipment to the Navy. France felt that the West should retain a prudent approach to the USSR. He added that during his visit he had detected their traditional fear of the Germans; they had begun to view with anxiety German movement east and the first signs of

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potential co-operation between NATO and former Soviet allies. We should be cautious on this front. The problem was that at the same time East European countries were virtually obliged to look to the Germans for economic support.

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PERCY CRADOCK

9 January 1991