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British Embassy
Paris

35 rue du Faubourg St Honoré
75385 Paris cedex 08

Telephones (1) 47 45 91 42
Facsimiles (1) 42 65 25 20

File 26

TO: PS/NO 10

FAX NO:

FROM: SIR EWENT FERLUSON,
HMA.

DATE: 6 MAY 1992

SUPPLEMENTARY MESSAGE

copy attached

WITH REFERENCE TO OUR TELEGRAM NO. *364*

NO OF PAGES:

LEADER + 6

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From The Ambassador

British Embassy
Paris

14 April 1992

Sir David Gillmore KCMG
PUS
FCO*My dear David,*

FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES

1. Franco-US relations are always complicated. They are currently poor. In the last six months there have been some major foreign policy clashes. GATT is probably the most prominent, but to that must be added the Bush initiative on GPALS, aid to the Soviet Union (the US conference in Washington) the role of the NACC and President Mitterrand's two nuclear proposals: four-power talks and a testing moratorium. The lack of personal contact at the top has prevented bridge-building. Baker and Dumas have never got on; Bush and Mitterrand have a correct relationship, but have used the telephone infrequently since the Gulf War; Lansdale's departure from the Elysée has broken an important link with the White House. Gompert (NSC) had talked of the worst atmosphere in Franco-US relations for 20 years.

2. "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" (Professor Higgins in "My Fair Lady"). Because of our long standing relationship with the United States, we tend to think that our own pattern is the norm. We tolerate our massive dependence on the Americans because of the advantages which it has brought, and continues to bring. We cannot quite understand why a right-minded country (and France, after all, is intelligent enough to have the capacity to be right-minded) should not act towards the United States as we do. Yet the French don't. Why? We need, every now and then - which in terms of the Whitehall memory means every two years or so - to ask ourselves in what way French attitudes to the US are different from ours, how far that affects our own interests, and whether there is anything that we can do about it.

3. I do not want to spell out the background in detail. Yet I should mention:-

(1) the legacy of de Gaulle and his war-time experiences; and his creation of a strident,

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nuclear-based French nationalism as a way of reconciling the tensions in a divided country, which to bring Left and Right together encouraged a certain distance from the USA.

(ii) The cultural jealousy of the "Anglo-Saxons" whose language has superseded French.

(iii) The conviction that France as a mainland power must not ultimately let itself be dependent on forces outside Europe, however useful the US military presence has been (and is) as a means of balancing the (waning) power of Russia and the (growing) power of Germany. N.B., for France, European relationships ultimately take priority over the Transatlantic relationship; the French believe, rightly, that with us it is the other way around.

(iv) The French believe that the United States' presence in and concern with Europe will last only so long as the Americans perceive it as in their self-interest to keep in that way. They expect such a change to occur unexpectedly. The French would say that experience shows that the Americans do not seriously consult their friends and partners when the big issues arise, and will not do so in future. I acknowledge that it is not only a US failing!

(v) Against the very different background of their and our relationships with the US, they tackle their exchanges differently. We try to take the inner track, working as far as possible within the existing framework of human and material interchange. The French do not have this option. In a way, they do not want it - though they resent their exclusion - because it implies a significant infringement on their liberty of action. They do not mind quarrels, as we do. And their starting point for a negotiation with the Americans tends to be to seek to build up independent negotiating strengths, and to use them to bring the terrain for negotiation away from ground of the Americans' choosing. Sometimes that has paid off.

(vi) They claim that we overestimate the negative effects of what they see as a robust, independent line of conduct which in the end forces the Americans to pay attention to them. They claim that we underestimate the closeness of their working relationships with the Americans.

(vii) Ultimately, the French assume the need for a choice between Europe and the United States. We don't.

4. None of this has prevented France from rallying to the US when fundamental interests have been at stake, nor from cooperating with the US when it has suited French interests.

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The problem is that French and American definitions of "fundamental" seldom coincide. Even when they do, the glow does not often last. France's participation in the Gulf War led many commentators to assume that Franco-US tensions would ease across the board, that France's military isolation was ending and that Mitterrand would be able to edge France back nearer to NATO's integrated military structure. But the Gulf War was a false dawn. Henry Kissinger got it right (The Times of 12 March 1991): "France for once resolved its ambivalence in favour of the American view; but it would be unrealistic to treat a practical decision as a philosophical commitment".

5. Two events explain why it was misinterpreted: German unification and the break-up of the Soviet Union. These affected the viewpoint of both the US and France. Seen from here, France has become at the same time both less and more important to Washington. Less important because the end of the Cold War has reduced the need to keep France on side. Africa, where French willingness to act as the policeman of the francophones attracted positive US approval, has dropped off Washington's priority list. French possession of nuclear arms is a less significant element in the nuclear balance in a world in which the notion of nuclear balance has ceased to have the same validity. And so on. But more important because France's continuing influence over Germany, and in Europe more widely, now gives her a greater capacity to damage important US interests.

6. The changing world has also affected France's viewpoint. The end of what the French like to call "the Yalta era" has allowed Mitterrand to break with a number of Gaullist dogmas in foreign and defence policy. But the dilution of France's cherished, if self-deluding, notion of "independence" has shifted things in the direction not of the US, but of Europe. The Americans should not be surprised if Germany is the dominant factor in the build up of Mitterrand's long term vision of Europe and the US as sovereign and equal partners. There is an increasing tendency in France to see the US as an obstacle to achieving this vision. Talk of US hegemony is back on people's lips in the wake of the G7ALS initiative and the Pentagon strategy paper. European reliance on US intelligence in the Gulf War is seen as further embarrassing evidence of European dependence on (if not subservience to) the US. Reducing that dependence is a prime objective. Even Atlanticist-minded Lanxade, the CDG equivalent, is suspicious of American intentions.

7. Of course, the French are victims of a certain myopia about US intentions. They talk in terms of a balance sheet: they accuse the US of failing to take account of French support during the Gulf War, over the Middle East peace process, over Lockerbie, at the Copenhagen/Rome Summits etc. And what, they cry, have we got in return? The domestic political factor comes into play here. It does Mitterrand no harm domestically to be seen to be defending French interests

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"against" those of the US. This is true, for example, of the GATT negotiations.

8. There are, however, limits to French anti-US rhetoric. The love-hate relationship between France and the US has never been easy to unravel. There is a tendency to burn the stars and stripes, but wear the Levis. I question whether anti-Americanism runs very deep at the popular level. If it did, it is on the wane. US "culture" continues to spread. Jack Lang (Arts Minister and traditional defender of French culture against the Anglo Saxon threat) recently decorated Sylvester Stallone for his contribution to the Arts! EuroDisney (which opened outside Paris this weekend) has excited hostile reviews in intellectual circles, but could well be a success with the French masses. And this alone of American culture is underpinned by \$4.5 billion of state money. Bilateral trade is on the increase; French investment in the US has trebled in the last five years. At the political level, anti-Americanism has traditionally come from two quarters: from the Left wing, prone to flirting with the Soviet Union; and from the Gaullist Right. Events have reduced the scope for both varieties.

Conclusions and Implications for the UK Policy

9. To sum up, Franco-US relations will remain tense and competitive for the foreseeable future. The possible advent of a Right wing government in Paris in 1993 is unlikely to ease the underlying strategic cross-currents. Despite the many layers of functioning dialogue and cooperation, serious differences are therefore likely to continue to occur on specific issues, most evidently and damagingly on defence and trade. There should be offsetting opportunities for joint policy or action (Libya is the current shining example) and enough commonsense at top political level to prevent the bilateral relationship from going completely off the rails. But it will be a bumpy ride.

10. Bad Franco-US relations are bad for the UK. There are inevitable implications for UK/French relations and probably also UK/US relations. Despite the new political focus in London ("UK at the heart of Europe") and our diplomatic efforts, the view in France remains widespread that the UK acts as an American Trojan horse in Europe. If we are objective with ourselves, the philosophy of the "anchor to windward" has confirmed that kind of prejudice, in the GATT as much as on European defence issues. France has long tried to force us and Germany into making a choice between our relationship with the US and our relationship with Europe. If Mitterrand and the Germans continue to force the pace on European integration, and we try to build on our "at the heart of Europe" image this dilemma risks becoming more real.

11. On the assumption that the preservation of our relationship with the United States remains our overriding priority, I doubt if there is much that we can do to smooth

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the path between Paris and Washington, and trying to act as referee would risk undermining our relationship with the US without any compensating benefits in our relationship with Europe. But, on specific issues, our pivotal position gives us an opportunity to play an influential role on whatever key subjects are in dispute, provided that it remains pivotal.

12. From what I have written so far, you will understand that I see a substantial and continuing divide between the French and ourselves on how to handle the Transatlantic relationship. Analysis does not lead, I fear, to panacea. However, since my concern is that we should use our weight and influence here to most effect, it is worth making some suggestions, even if they are largely presentational:-

- Tempting as it is, we should try not to luxuriate in American criticisms of French policy. In our exasperation with the latest French bouncer, we may forget that there is a more general European interest in educating the Americans about the pressures in France, of which Washington tends to understand less than we do (as a part of the more general inadequacies of American comprehension of what European construction is all about).

- In Paris we must consistently present our policies as defending UK, rather than US, interests. When we disagree with the US, we too often try to hide the fact from our European partners, not least the French. (And discreet alliances with the French can help to strengthen our hand in Washington - vide Lockerbie).

- It is also helpful, presentationally, if we can avoid being the first to desert European positions which are in our interests in the face of US pressure. There are times when the possible damage to our interests from antagonising the US may outweigh the intrinsic importance to us of the issue at stake. The French will understand that we must protect our intelligence and nuclear relationships. But this could hardly be said to be the case on CW verification and the international foundation for ex-Soviet scientists - where our recent switches of position caused a good deal of sadness in Paris.

- In reconciling the pressures flowing from the US/French relationship, we must seek to capitalise on our common interests with France. Military cooperation (particularly nuclear and out-of-area) is a field in which we have made some progress. It should continue to throw up possibilities. The then Prime Minister's long delayed and negative reply to Mitterrand's offer of closer nuclear collaboration in 1987 was a missed opportunity at the time, though we have come a long way since then. Leaving aside the question of ASIP, changes in the threat and financial shortages have opened up a number of options (next generation SSBNs, joint patrols etc). I hope that our bilateral dialogue on GPALS will provide an impetus for this. President Mitterrand's complaint to the Prime of

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Wales on 2 March about the lack of real Anglo-French military cooperation shows his lack of up-to-date briefing, perhaps, but confirms that high level interest remains alive. - Another interest which we share with the French directly relevant to US/European relations is the shape of an enlarged Europe. However badly handled by President Mitterrand vis-à-vis the East Europeans, his idea of "confédération" tackled the uncomfortable truth that it will be a long time before countries like Poland can contemplate assuming the full burdens of community membership, and some kind of half-way house may well be a useful way of reconciling them to their prolonged period of waiting. If we can find common ground with, rather than tend to undermine, this idea, we should be better placed than Paris to sell it in Washington, and to fit it into a wider European and transatlantic structure of the kind we should like to see.

Best wishes,

Ewen

Ewen Fergusson

cc: Sir Christopher Mallaby KCMG, Bonn
 Sir John Weston KCMG, UKDel NATO, Brussels
 Sir David Hannay KCMG, UKMis New York
 Sir Michael Quinlan KCB, MoD
 Sir John Kerr KCMG, UKRep Brussels
 Sir Roderic Braithwaite KCMG, Moscow
 Sir Robin Penwick KCMG, Washington

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Boston Embassy
Paris

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1235 Paris 04/05/92
Telephone: 01 42 55 98 42
Telex: 425532

File

TO: PS/NO 10

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FROM: SIR EWEN TERNUSON
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Best wishes

[Signature]

Even Ferguson

- cc: Sir Christopher Mallaby KCMG, Bonn
- Sir John Weston KCMG, UKOel NATO, Brussels
- Sir David Hannay KCMG, UKMIS New York
- Sir Michael Quinlan KCB, MoD
- Sir John Kerr KCMG, UKRep Brussels
- Sir Roderic Braithwaite KCMG, Moscow
- Sir Robin Perwick KCMG, Washington

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