

Courtesy Translation of a letter from M. Jacques Chirac to the Prime Minister.

Paris 30 January 1990

You will be aware of the difficulties currently being experienced by the Airbus programme as a result of the deadlock in the negotiations between management and employees at British Aerospace which has now lasted for nearly 3 months.

Despite efforts to be flexible, this conflict has already meant that the Airbus partners have had to undertake a costly industrial reorganisation and if the deadlock continues beyond the end of January, it could lead to lay-offs with all the social implications that such a move would entail.

The problem is of course a strictly British one, but its considerable consequences, especially for the Aérospatiale factory at Toulouse which houses the assembly line, must also be borne in mind. In fact, the Airbus brand image, and indeed to a certain extent that of European Industry as a whole, is being impaired, and that at the very moment when Boeing's production rate is recovering.

Bearing in mind the origins of the conflict, may I ask you to intervene so that consultation and dialogue might overcome a strike which could destroy the industrial infrastructure and which has already cost hundreds of million of dollars, of which the greater part will fall to British Aerospace, and perhaps to the British taxpayer.

I should be most grateful if you would agree to intercede with the relevant authorities so that a solution could be found to put an end to the present situation.

Thanking you in advance for any initiative which you might feel able to make, along these lines, I ask you, Prime Minister, to accept my highest regards and warmest friendship.

(signed) Jacques Chirac

Jacques Chirac

Paris, le 30 janvier 1990

Madame le Premier ministre,

Vous n'êtes pas sans savoir les difficultés que connaissent actuellement les programmes Airbus, en raison du blocage depuis bientôt trois mois des négociations entre la Direction et les salariés de la British Aerospace.

Malgré des mesures de flexibilité, ce conflit impose déjà à l'ensemble des partenaires du programme Airbus une réorganisation industrielle coûteuse et pourrait, s'il se poursuivait au-delà de la fin du mois de janvier, conduire à des mises en chômage technique avec les répercussions sociales qu'une telle mesure ne manquerait pas de provoquer.

Il s'agit, bien évidemment, d'un problème social strictement britannique, mais ses importantes conséquences, en particulier pour l'établissement Aérospatiale de Toulouse, responsable de la chaîne d'assemblage, méritent une attention toute particulière. En effet, c'est l'image de marque du programme Airbus et, d'une certaine manière, de la capacité industrielle européenne, qui s'en trouve altérée, au moment même où Boeing améliore ses cadences de production.

Compte tenu de l'origine de ce conflit, je me permets d'en appeler à votre médiation pour que la concertation et le dialogue prennent le pas sur une grève qui pourrait casser l'outil de travail et dont le coût s'élève d'ores et déjà à des centaines de millions de dollars dont la British Aerospace, et peut-être les contribuables britanniques, devront assumer la plus grande part.

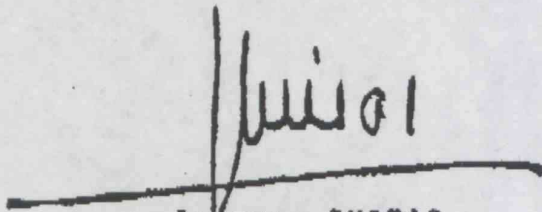
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Madame Margaret THATCHER
Premier ministre
du Royaume Uni

- 2 -

Je vous serais très reconnaissant si vous acceptiez d'intervenir auprès des autorités compétentes pour trouver une solution permettant de mettre un terme à cette situation.

Vous remerciant par avance de toute initiative que vous pourriez prendre en ce sens, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame le Premier ministre, l'expression de ma haute considération *de ma très cordiale et fidèle amitié.*


Jacques CHIRAC



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Our reference

185/1

Date

6 February 1990

Jean du Synnott,

Airbus: Letter to the Prime Minister from M. Chirac

1. The continuing strike at British Aerospace Chester is attracting a fair amount of attention in France, particularly since it will soon mean lay-offs at Aérospatiale's factory in Toulouse. M. Jacques Chirac has now entered the fray, asking the Ambassador to forward a letter on the subject to the Prime Minister.
2. A copy of the letter is enclosed, together with a courtesy translation; I should be grateful if you would arrange for it to be transmitted to the Prime Minister's Office. The letter does not specifically call for a reply, but if a reply is to be sent, you should be aware that M. Chirac has publicly mentioned the fact that he has written to the Prime Minister (although to the best of my knowledge the text has not been published), so that there is a strong likelihood that M. Chirac would also make public, in whole or in part, any response he might receive. I have not thought it necessary to acknowledge receipt of the letter at this stage.
3. Copies of this letter go to Barrie England MAED, and to Derek Marsh DTI Air Division.

Yours,

Shirley Lindsay

S.T. Lindsay
First Secretary Defence
Procurement and Aviation

6 January 1990